



Humanities and Social Sciences: History

Teaching and learning exemplar | Year 9

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 effects of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Different experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, colonisers and non-European settlers.

Lesson sequence outline

	Lesson	Lesson summary
Country and people	1	Australia's diverse Country (land) and language groups and how life prior to colonisation was defined by connection to Country/Place
	2	The Bindjareb Noongar people, Traditional Owners of the land in the Pinjarra area, and the significant impact of the arrival of Thomas Peel on their lives
The effects of colonisation	3–4	The effects of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and significant events leading up to the Pinjarra Massacre
The Pinjarra Massacre	5	The significant events of the Pinjarra Massacre, October 28, 1834
	6	Why the 'Battle of Pinjarra' has now been correctly renamed the Pinjarra Massacre
Truth-telling and remembrance	7	The Pinjarra Massacre Memorial as an act of truth-telling and community acknowledgement
	8	<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 (1750–1914), including colonisation and *terra nullius*, the Frontier Wars 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.]

AITSL – Trauma - Informed Teaching Strategies

 <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/trauma---informed-teaching-strategies>

Trauma-informed instructional strategies: enhancing learning for all students

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

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

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	• video clip • documentary • podcast
	Webpage	Online information source	• news article • museum website • government website
	Student resource	Resource that students need to access for learning	• student worksheet • graphic organiser template • interactive webpage
	Lesson materials	Materials that require teacher preparation prior to lesson	• collection of images • card-sort activity • materials for practical activities
	Teacher support resource	Additional information to support teachers in the suggested lesson	• thinking routine instructions • example of completed graphic organiser • additional information on topic

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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 history (1750–1914)

This teaching and learning exemplar supports the teaching of a sequence of lessons, using the mandated Humanities and Social Sciences curriculum for Year 9 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 effects of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, significant events and individuals of the time, 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 teachers have already delivered the Year 9 content description: The causes of European imperial expansion and the movement of peoples in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

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

Lesson 1

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).

Western Australian Curriculum

Australian history (1750–1914)

- The effects of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Different experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, colonisers and non-European settlers

Questioning and researching

- Identify current personal knowledge, gaps, misconceptions, currency of information, personal perspective and possible perspectives of others
-

Teacher information

The purpose of Lesson 1 is for students to understand the strong connection to land that is important to the Bindjareb Noongar people, as well as what life was like for them prior to colonisation.

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.

Teachers are warned that there are words and descriptions that may be culturally sensitive and that might not normally be used in certain public or community contexts. Terms and annotations that reflect the attitude of the author or the period in which the item was written may be considered inappropriate today.

Resources



The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) – Map of Indigenous Australia

<https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/map-indigenous-australia>



The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) – Welcome to Country (section titled 'What is Country?')

<https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/welcome-country>

Western Australian Naturalists' Club – Dr Noel Nannup: Living in a Land That Demands Movement



<https://www.wanaturalists.org.au/dr-noel-nannup-living-in-a-land-that-demands-movement/>



Margaret River and Districts Historical Society – Introduction to the Noongar People

<https://mrdhs.com.au/noongar-people/>



City of Cockburn – Beeliar Boodjar [PDF on Nyungar History page]

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



Pinjarra: Shire of Murray – Bindjareb Boodja (section titled 'A resourceful culture')

<https://pinjarra.destinationmurray.com.au/culture-history/bindjareb-boodja/>



Kura Kura (LONG LONG AGO) – OUR TOODYAY STORY

<https://noongarkaartdijin.com.au/truth-telling>



Project Zero: Harvard Graduate School of Education – Think, Pair, Share

<https://pz.harvard.edu/resources/think-pair-share>

Lesson outline

Learning intentions	Success criteria
Students will: • examine the different Country (land) areas and language groups of Western Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples • locate information from a variety of sources to identify what life was like for the Bindjareb Noongar people before colonisation.	Students can: • understand that the word 'Country' has significant meaning to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and encompasses many different elements • describe life for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples prior to colonisation and how it was defined by their connection to Country/Place.

Introduction

- As a class, view the AIATSIS *Map of Indigenous Australia*.
- Explain that 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. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the world's oldest continuous living cultures; cultures that continue to be expressed in dynamic and contemporary ways.
- As a class, discuss what 'Country' means and how it connects responsibility, language, diversity, identity and belonging for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- View the 'What is Country' section of the AIATSIS website and watch the video where Jude Barlow, Nggunawal Elder, talks about what Country means to her. Read the information in the 'What is Country' section of the website and explain that Country is about connection, not just the physical land itself, and it includes complex ideas about language, cultural practices, law, family and identity.
- Students use the *Think, Pair, Share* thinking routine to identify what they understand the term 'Country' means to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- As a class, revisit the AIATSIS *Map of Indigenous Australia* and identify the Bindjareb region (labelled 'Pinjarup'), and the location that students are currently in. Identify the Country and language group of each location and discuss what students know about each area.
- In pairs, students describe to their partners what they can see on the map (proximity to water, physical features of the land etc.) and what the map tells them about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and specifically the Bindjareb Noongar people.

Main activity

- Provide students with access to the four websites listed in the Resources section about life for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples prior to colonisation.
- Divide students into groups. Each group member looks at one website and completes the corresponding section of a *Placemat graphic organiser* (Appendix B). Group members then use the information to discuss what life was like for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples prior to colonisation and decide what to write in the centre section. Alternatively, each student can work individually to complete the *Placemat graphic organiser* before sharing information with the class.
- To extend student learning, give them access to the video *Kura Kura (LONG LONG AGO) – OUR TOODYAY STORY*, which highlights life on Noongar Boodja before 1836.

Review of learning

- Provide students time to individually think about how their understanding of Country has changed (or not changed) as a result of their investigations during the lesson.
- Students respond to the following question in the form of a paragraph or mind map: Why is connection to Country so important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

Lesson 2

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).

Western Australian Curriculum

Australian history (1750–1914)

- The effects of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Different experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, colonisers and non-European settlers

Analysing

- Analyse information and/or data in different formats
 - Account for different interpretations and points of view/perspectives in information and/or data
-

Teacher information

The purpose of Lesson 2 is to remind students of perspectives and how they are formed at a particular point in time. Students will develop their understanding of the different perspectives of the various groups of people who lived in the Pinjarra region prior to and during the time of colonisation. Students will revisit the historical skill of perspective. They will learn about cultural bias and perspective, what shapes different perspectives and how perspectives are formed. This will assist students to understand different perspectives about Thomas Peel, and how perspectives, but not facts, may change over time.

Teachers are warned that there are words and descriptions in the source material that may be culturally sensitive and that might not normally be used in certain public or community contexts. Terms and annotations that reflect the attitude of the author or the period in which the item was written may be considered inappropriate today.

Resources



City of Mandurah – First Nations

<https://www.mandurah.wa.gov.au/events-arts-heritage/first-nations>



ABC Education – ‘6.1 Whadjuk people displaced’ in 6. Aboriginal life impacted by settlers

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



Contos, N. & Murray District Aboriginal Association, in conjunction with Kearing, T. A., Collard, L., & Palmer, D. (1998). *Pinjarra Massacre Site Research and Development Project: Report for Stage 1*. (Appendix B)



Seymour, R. (1829). *Plucking or Peeling: Cousin Thomas, or the Swan River job* [Etching]. <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-135300439/view> (Appendix B)



Bradby, K. (1997). Peel-Harvey, the Decline and Rescue of an Ecosystem. 4 – Early Settlement in the Peel-Harvey. [PDF] <https://peel-harvey.org.au/about-us/our-story/our-history/>



Burke, S., Di Marco, P., & Meath, S. (2010). Australasian Historical Archaeology. *The land 'flow[ing] ... with milk and honey': Cultural landscape changes at Peel town, Western Australia, 1829–1830*. [PDF] <https://asha.org.au/journals/2010s/volume-28/>



Project Zero: Harvard Graduate School of Education – Circle of Viewpoints. [PDF] <https://pz.harvard.edu/resources/circle-of-viewpoints>

Lesson outline

Learning intentions	Success criteria
Students will: - examine European colonisation from the perspective of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples - understand who Thomas Peel was and why he was in the Pinjarra region.	Students can: - identify and outline why different groups of people have different perspectives of the same historical event - explain that the Bindjareb Noongar people are the first inhabitants of the Pinjarra area and how the arrival of Thomas Peel impacted their lives.

Introduction

- Review the historical skill of analysing perspective by providing students with the following definition:
 - A person's perspective is their point of view, the position from which they see and understand events going on around them.
- Ask students to share their prior learning of perspectives. Encourage them to think about all the things that they believe contribute to a person's perspective of a particular event and create a class brainstorm with students' responses.
- After the brainstorm is finished, provide students with the following addition to the definition:
 - People in the past may have had different points of view about a particular event, depending on their age, gender, social position, and their beliefs and values. Historians also have perspectives and this can influence their interpretation of the past.
- Briefly discuss the following questions:
 - Do the things identified in the brainstorm match the definition of perspective?
 - Why is examining different perspectives important in History?
- Show students the *First Nations* information on the City of Mandurah webpage.
- Provide students with access to the ABC Education video *Whadjuk people displaced* (7 minutes).
- After viewing the information in both resources, students complete the *Circle of Viewpoints* thinking routine to identify some questions about the different perspectives that exist within this topic. Discuss the questions that have been generated as a class.

Main activity

- Discuss that we can learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history in culturally appropriate and respectful ways by:
 - engaging with local Aboriginal communities
 - learning from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices through the use of oral histories, stories and articles created by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
 - recognising the diversity of cultures present in Australia in contemporary times.
- Explain to students that the *Pinjarra Massacre Site Research and Development Project: Report for Stage 1* (Appendix B) was written in conjunction with a Traditional Owner of the Bindjareb region.
- Pose the following question for students to think about:
 - Why are written accounts of European arrival by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people only being published now, in contemporary society?
- Provide students with access to the following sections of the *Pinjarra Massacre Site Research and Development Project: Report for Stage 1* (Appendix B):
 - 'The Wadjellas Arrive'
 - 'Initial Contact'
 - 'The Nyungars and Thomas Peel'.
- Students use the information from the *Pinjarra Massacre Site Research and Development Project: Report for Stage 1* sections listed above to complete a graphic organiser about the perspective of the Bindjareb Noongar people and the perspective of the colonists during the early 1800s (Appendix B).
- Extend student learning by posing the question – How are the perspectives that exist in contemporary times the same or different from those of the time period being studied?

Review of learning

- Students view the cartoon *Cousin Thomas, or the Swan River Job* (Appendix B) and answer the following questions (review source analysis skills prior to this activity, if required):
 - What is the message of the cartoon?
 - What is the author's perspective of Thomas Peel?
 - What are some reasons that the author would have this perspective of Thomas Peel?
 - How reliable is the cartoon as a representation of Thomas Peel?
 - Does the cartoon reflect the Bindjareb Noongar people's perspective? Why or why not?
- Students make a list of the ways that life changed for the Bindjareb Noongar people because of colonisation and the arrival of Thomas Peel.
- Extend student learning by asking them to debate the following question:
 - Should the name of the Peel region be changed? If so, what would you change it to and why? If not, explain why.

Lessons 3–4

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).

Western Australian Curriculum

Australian history (1750–1914)

- The effects of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Different experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, colonisers and non-European settlers

Questioning and researching

- Use a range of methods to collect, select, record and organise relevant and reliable information and/or data from multiple sources that reflects the type of analysis of information that is needed with and without the use of digital and spatial technologies
-

Teacher information

The purpose of Lessons 3 and 4 is to engage with the primary and secondary sources listed in the Resources section of the lessons and use them to create an annotated timeline. This will allow students to understand and explain the events leading up to the Pinjarra Massacre.

In the context of resources for students to read, the teacher should decide which parts of each resource to provide to the students.

Teachers are warned that there are words and descriptions that may be culturally sensitive and that might not normally be used in certain public or community contexts. Terms and annotations that reflect the attitude of the author or the period in which the item was written may be considered inappropriate today.

Resources



Photographs of the Pinjarra Massacre site and memorial. (Appendix B)



Grose, J. E. (1927). The background to the encounter: The Battle of Pinjarra. *Early Days: Journal and proceedings of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society*, 1(1), pp. 30–35. (Appendix B)

https://purl.slwa.wa.gov.au/slwa_b1147540_3



Contos, N. & Murray District Aboriginal Association, in conjunction with Kearing, T. A., Collard, L., & Palmer, D. (1998). *Pinjarra Massacre Site Research and Development Project: Report for Stage 1*. (Appendix B)



Project Zero: Harvard Graduate School of Education – See, Think, Me, We

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



DoHistory – How To Make a Timeline

https://dohistory.org/on_your_own/toolkit/timeline.html



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

<https://vimeo.com/1191463549?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=cj> (45 minutes)

Lesson outline

Learning intentions	Success criteria
Students will: - investigate the series of events leading up to the Pinjarra Massacre - explain the effects of colonisation on the Bindjareb Noongar people of the Murray region.	Students can: - identify events that were significant leading up to the Pinjarra Massacre - construct an annotated timeline showing the series of events leading up to the Pinjarra Massacre.

Introduction

- Display the photographs of the Pinjarra Massacre site from Appendix B. Explain to students that this is the land on which the Pinjarra Massacre took place, and today is the site of the memorial.
- Using the *See, Think, Me, We* thinking routine, students use the images to complete the following questions and share their ideas as a class after each step.
 - SEE: Look closely at the photographs. What do you notice? (make lots of observations)
 - THINK: What thoughts do you have about the photographs?
 - ME: What connection can you make between you and the photographs?
 - WE: How might the photographs be connected to bigger stories – about the world and our place in it?

Main activity

- Provide students with access to the following texts from the resources section of the lesson:
 - *The background to the encounter: The Battle of Pinjarra* by Jane Elizabeth Grose
 - 'Conflict in the Colony', 'Flour rations cut: The Nyungars respond' and 'The ambush of Barron and Nesbit' sections of the *Pinjarra Massacre Site Research and Development Project: Report for Stage 1* publication.
- Students read through the information in pairs and identify events in the texts that are relevant to the Pinjarra Massacre. If students have a physical copy of the text, it may be useful for them to highlight the events that they find.
- Students plot these events on their timeline and annotate significant events with a short description of who was impacted by the event and why.
- Extend student learning by asking students to include direct quotes from the sources in their annotations as evidence of the events leading up to the Pinjarra Massacre.

Review of learning

- Students use their completed timelines and evidence from the primary and secondary text sources to write a paragraph explaining the effects of colonisation on the Bindjareb Noongar people in the Murray region. Students may draw on examples from the list they created in Lesson 2.
- Extend student learning by asking them to identify which event they believe was most significant in the context of the Pinjarra Massacre and give reasons to support their choice.
- If time allows, students can share their paragraph and/or significant event choice with a partner.

Lesson 5

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).

Western Australian Curriculum

Australian history (1750–1914)

- The effects of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Different experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, colonisers and non-European settlers

Analysing

- Analyse information and/or data in different formats
 - Account for different interpretations and points of view/perspectives in information and/or data
-

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 members of the classroom are supported should they find the nature of this lesson distressing. The trauma-informed practice resources provided in Appendix B are recommended as a support for this lesson.

It is also important to note that the people who perpetrated the Pinjarra Massacre were British government officials; they were not members of the Australian government, as this did not exist until 1900.

In the context of the primary sources included in the lesson as resources for students to read, the teacher should decide which part of each resource to provide to the students.

The Bindjareb Noongar people's perspective is seen in the *Pinjarra Massacre Site Research and Development Project: Report for Stage 1* and the *Yaburgurt Education Pack*. The British colonists' perspective is seen in the field book of John Septimus Roe, Governor James Stirling's letter and the *Perth Gazette* article.

Teachers are warned that there are words and descriptions that may be culturally sensitive and that might not normally be used in certain public or community contexts. Terms and annotations that reflect the attitude of the author or the period in which the item was written may be considered inappropriate today.

Resources



State Records Office of Western Australia. (n.d.). [Photograph of the front cover of John Septimus Roe's registered field book no. 3]. (Appendix B)
<https://archive.sro.wa.gov.au/index.php/field-book-no-3-capt-j-s-ro-e-containing-surveys-in-the-districts-perth-murray-etc-roej-03>



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



Western Australian Museum Boola Bardip. *Pinjarra Unfolding* [Map]. Katta Djinoong (Appendix B)



The Perth Gazette and Western Australian Journal. (1834, November 1). *Encounter with the natives in the Pinjarra district, on the banks of the Murray*, pp. 382–383.
<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/641213?searchTerm=pinjarra#P401>



Stirling, J. (1843, November 1). [Letter from Governor Sir James Stirling to Mr. Secretary Stanley]. (Appendix B)
<https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-2030346251/view>



Contos, N. & Murray District Aboriginal Association, in conjunction with Kearing, T. A., Collard, L., & Palmer, D. (1998). *Pinjarra Massacre Site Research and Development Project: Report for Stage 1*. (Appendix B)



Our Knowledge, Our Land: City of Mandurah – *Yaburgurt Education Pack*, pp. 14–15. [PDF]
<https://www.ourknowledgeourland.com.au/gallery/yaburgurt-memorial-educational-resources/#>



Photographs of the Pinjarra Massacre site and memorial. (Appendix B)

Lesson outline

Learning intentions	Success criteria
Students will: - examine the events of the Pinjarra Massacre in 1834 - examine the different perspectives of the Pinjarra Massacre and why it is still relevant today.	Students can: identify and discuss the different perspectives presented in primary and secondary sources about the Pinjarra Massacre.

Introduction

- Students view the image of John Septimus Roe's field book (Resources and Appendix B). Explain to the class that he was the Surveyor General of Western Australia at the time of the Pinjarra Massacre. Consider and discuss the following questions in pairs, small groups or as a class:
 - What was John Septimus Roe's job, and why was he in the party travelling to the Pinjarra region? What would he have been taking notes on?
 - The field book is written in English language, most likely by a feather quill or steel dip ink pen. What does this tell you about British people?
 - The field book is handwritten. What does that tell you about the nature of this primary source? Does the fact that it is a primary source make it more reliable? Why or why not?
- As a class, watch the *Pinjarra Apology Curriculum Project Classroom Video* from the start to 3 minutes 26 seconds. Point out that Roe's field book appears in the video from 2.11 onwards. Ask the students what they learned about John Septimus Roe from the information in the video.

Main activity

- As a class, look at the map from Western Australian Museum Boola Bardip (Appendix B) that shows the movement of people during the Pinjarra Massacre. Discuss the following question:
 - What does the physical geography of the area tell us about the Pinjarra Massacre?
- Students form pairs and construct a two-circle Venn diagram on A3 paper with the title 'Perspectives of the Pinjarra Massacre'. The circle headings are 'Bindjareb Noongar people' and 'British colonists'.
- Provide students with the following documents from the Resources section (available online or in Appendix B). Teachers will need to ensure that the resources are appropriate for their students; in some cases they may need modification.
 - *Encounter with the natives in the Pinjarra district, on the banks of the Murray*, pp. 382–383
 - Governor James Stirling's letter to Colonial Secretary Stanley
 - *Pinjarra Massacre Site Research and Development Project: Report for Stage 1*
 - Our Knowledge, Our Land: City of Mandurah – *Yaburgurt Education Pack*, pp. 14–15.
- Students read the primary and secondary sources, and identify quotes that demonstrate the perspectives of the Bindjareb Noongar people and the British colonists. Students write the quotes into the appropriate place on their Venn diagrams.
- Alternative activity: small groups of students are each assigned one perspective. Groups examine their given perspective and then the class completes the Venn diagram together.
- Extend student learning by asking students to search for their own primary and secondary sources using the State Library of Western Australia website and digital archives.

Review of learning

- Watch the remainder of the *Pinjarra Apology Curriculum Project Classroom Video* and discuss the significance of the primary sources in the construction of The Governor's Apology.
- Review the contemporary photos of the riverbank where the Pinjarra Massacre took place (Appendix B) and discuss the following questions:
 - How did the physical geography of the land impact the events of the Pinjarra Massacre?
 - Do current photographs of the area support the descriptions of the events that were in the primary sources you viewed?
- As a class, discuss the question, 'Why are there more British colonial perspectives present in the primary and secondary sources than Bindjareb Noongar people's perspectives?'

Lesson 6

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).

Western Australian Curriculum

Australian history (1750–1914)

- The effects of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Different experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, colonisers and non-European settlers

Analysing

- Account for different interpretations and points of view/perspectives in information and/or data
 - Analyse the ‘big picture’
-

Teacher information

The *Colonial Frontier Massacres* map and the *Quirriup* and *River of Spirits* artworks may be confronting sources. Teachers will need to warn students about the content of the map and the artwork prior to showing them. The trauma-informed practice resources provided in Appendix B are recommended as a support for this lesson.

Teachers are warned that there are words and descriptions that may be culturally sensitive and that might not normally be used in certain public or community contexts. Terms and annotations that reflect the attitude of the author or the period in which the item was written may be considered inappropriate today.

Resources



University of Newcastle – Colonial Frontier Massacres, Australia, 1788 to 1930
<https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/map.php>



Laurel Nannup and the Australian War Memorial – *Quirriup* artwork
<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C2679424> (Appendix B)



Kearing, G. & Ewing, R. (n.d.). *River of Spirits* [Painting].
<https://bindjarebpark.com.au/product/river-of-spirits/> (Appendix B)



Bindjareb Park – Pinjarra Massacre site
<https://bindjarebpark.com.au/>



Project Zero: Harvard Graduate School of Education – Colors, Shapes, Lines
<https://pz.harvard.edu/resources/colors-shapes-lines>

Lesson outline

Learning intention	Success criteria
Students will: examine artworks created by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists that interpret the events of the Pinjarra Massacre.	Students can: explain why the 'Battle of/for Pinjarra' is now recognised as the Pinjarra Massacre.

Introduction

- Students view the *Colonial Frontier Massacres* map (available online).
- Ask students to write their responses to the following questions anonymously on sticky notes:
 - What patterns do they notice on the map?
 - Why might there be more sites on the East Coast of Australia?
 - Zoom in on WA – what do they notice about the location of massacre sites in WA?
 - Why is this map such an important piece of historical evidence?
 - The work was initially funded by the Australian Government through the Australian Research Council. Why is this an important step towards reconciliation in Australia?
- Select some sites from the map at random and discuss the information that comes up in the text box. This could include information about how these encounters may have started or the different weapons that the people involved could have used.

Main activity

- Students view the artworks *Quirriup* (2011) by Laurel Nannup and *River of Spirits* (n.d.) by Gloria Kearing and Rob Ewing, remaining silent for one to two minutes. Students then use the *Colors, Shapes, Lines* thinking routine to answer the following questions:
 - What colours do you see?
 - What shapes do you see?
 - What lines do you see?
- Students read the descriptions that accompany each of the artworks and complete a retrieval chart (e.g. a 5 *Ws* chart) about the information contained in both artwork pieces.
- Students use the information they have written in their retrieval chart to answer the following questions:
 - Outline the message of *Quirriup*. Use evidence from the artwork in your response.
 - Outline the message of *River of Spirits*. Use evidence from the artwork in your response.
 - Why are these artworks significant secondary sources about the Pinjarra Massacre?
- Extension question – If you could speak with the artists, what questions would you ask them about the subject or theme of their artworks?

Review of learning

- As a class, discuss the question: Why does the primary source material that we have examined call this event the 'Battle of/for Pinjarra' and contemporary sources about the event now refer to it as the 'Pinjarra Massacre'? Whose perspectives do the primary sources represent?
- Students write a paragraph to respond to the question, 'How do the *Quirriup* and *River of Spirits* artworks support the event being recognised as the Pinjarra Massacre?'
- Extension activity – Students make a list of reasons why perspectives have changed and how new perspectives have emerged over time.

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).

Western Australian Curriculum

Australian history (1750–1914)

- The effects of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Different experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, colonisers and non-European settlers

Evaluating

- Critically evaluate information and/or data and ideas from a range of sources
-

Teacher information

Teachers will need to preview the video clips in the Resources section and provide appropriate warnings to students prior to sharing these with the class.

Teachers are warned that there are words and descriptions that may be culturally sensitive and that might not normally be used in certain public or community contexts. Terms and annotations that reflect the attitude of the author or the period in which the item was written may be considered inappropriate today.

Resources



ABC News – The scars of the Pinjarra massacre still linger 185 years after one of WA’s bloodiest days

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-10-26/the-scars-of-the-pinjarra-massacre-still-linger-185-years-on/11639642>



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)



Reconciliation Australia – Truth-telling resource hub – What is Truth-telling? Fact sheet

<https://www.reconciliation.org.au/our-work/truth-telling/resources/>



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

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



Project Zero: Harvard Graduate School of Education – Feelings and Options

<https://pz.harvard.edu/resources/feelings-and-options>

Lesson outline

Learning intentions	Success criteria
Students will: • examine why the descendants were fighting for recognition • explain why using the term 'massacre' is significant to the Bindjareb Noongar people.	Students can: • identify elements of truth-telling and how this relates to the Pinjarra Massacre Memorial site.

Introduction

- Students read the ABC News article, *The scars of the Pinjarra massacre* [...]. This can be completed individually, in pairs or small groups, or as a whole class.
- Students use the *Feelings and Options* thinking routine to explore the different people involved in the situation and how they were feeling. Students should identify that it is the descendants of the Bindjareb Noongar people who are being referred to in the article.
- Extension question: Why do you think the local shire changed its position on recognising the events of 1834 as a 'massacre' in 2006?

Main activity

- As a class, watch the first 7.48 minutes of the *Pinjarra Apology Curriculum Project Full Interview Video*, then discuss the following questions:
 - What is the State Governor's job?
 - How does the State Governor's role today compare to that of the role of the first Governor of Western Australia in the 1800s?
- Read *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) in full. Ask students to write a summary about the Pinjarra Massacre based on their learning so far.
- Extend student learning by asking them to answer the following questions:
 - What have you learned about the Bindjareb Noongar people's perspective of the Pinjarra Massacre?
 - What have you learned about the British colonists' perspective of the Pinjarra Massacre?
 - What have you learned about Governor Dawson's perspective of the Pinjarra Massacre?
- As a class, read the *What is Truth-telling?* fact sheet. Discuss how the Pinjarra Massacre Memorial and the contemporary usage of the word 'massacre' are examples of truth-telling.

Review of learning

- Brainstorm reasons for why examining different perspectives in History is important and explain how this relates to the Pinjarra Massacre and truth-telling.

Lesson 8

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).

Western Australian Curriculum

Australian history (1750–1914)

- The effects of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Different experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, colonisers and non-European settlers

Evaluating

- Critically evaluate information and/or data and ideas from a range of sources
-

Teacher information

The purpose of this lesson is for students to critically analyse the full text of The Governor's Apology and identify the scope of archival research used to inform its production.

Teachers are warned that there are words and descriptions that may be culturally sensitive and that might not normally be used in certain public or community contexts. Terms and annotations that reflect the attitude of the author or the period in which the item was written may be considered inappropriate today.

Resources



ABC Behind the News – Pinjarra Massacre Apology

<https://www.abc.net.au/btn/classroom/pinjarra-massacre-apology/105966878>



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/>



Kura Kura (LONG LONG AGO) – OUR TOODYAY STORY

<https://noongarkaartdijin.com.au/truth-telling>



Reconciliation Australia – What is reconciliation?

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



Project Zero: Harvard Graduate School of Education – Headlines

<https://pz.harvard.edu/resources/headlines>



Project Zero: Harvard Graduate School of Education – The 3 Whys

<https://pz.harvard.edu/resources/3-whys>

Lesson outline

Learning intentions	Success criteria
Students will: - consider the intention of The Governor's Apology for the Pinjarra Massacre - identify what steps they can take in their own lives towards reconciliation and truth-telling.	Students can: - explain why The Governor's Apology is an important step towards truth-telling and reconciliation - explain why The Governor's Apology for the Pinjarra Massacre is significant.

Introduction

- Students view the 'What is Truth Telling?' section on the Noongar Kaartdijin Aboriginal Corporation website in the Resources.
- As a class, brainstorm all the things that students have learned about truth-telling, why it is important and why we should not be afraid of it.

Main activity

- Students view the ABC Behind the News *Pinjarra Massacre Apology* clip.
- Students use the *Headlines* thinking routine to write their own headline for an article about The Governor's Apology for the Pinjarra Massacre. They share their headline with a partner.
- Students review the full text of The Governor's Apology.
- Students use the *3 Whys* thinking routine to answer the following questions:
 - Why might this (topic/question) matter to me?
 - Why might it matter to people around me (family, friends, city, nation)?
 - Why might it matter to the world?
- As a class, create a list of all the primary and secondary source materials students are familiar with that have been used in the creation of The Governor's Apology for the Pinjarra Massacre.
- Watch the remainder of the *Pinjarra Apology Curriculum Project Full Interview Video* from the previous lesson.
- As a class, discuss how the direct quotes from the primary source documents are contained within The Governor's Apology.
- Students write a paragraph about why the exchanging of the trees was significant in this context. What do the trees represent and why are they important symbols of peace and reconciliation?

Review of learning

- As a class, list the reasons why The Governor's Apology to the Bindjareb Noongar people was such a significant step towards truth-telling.

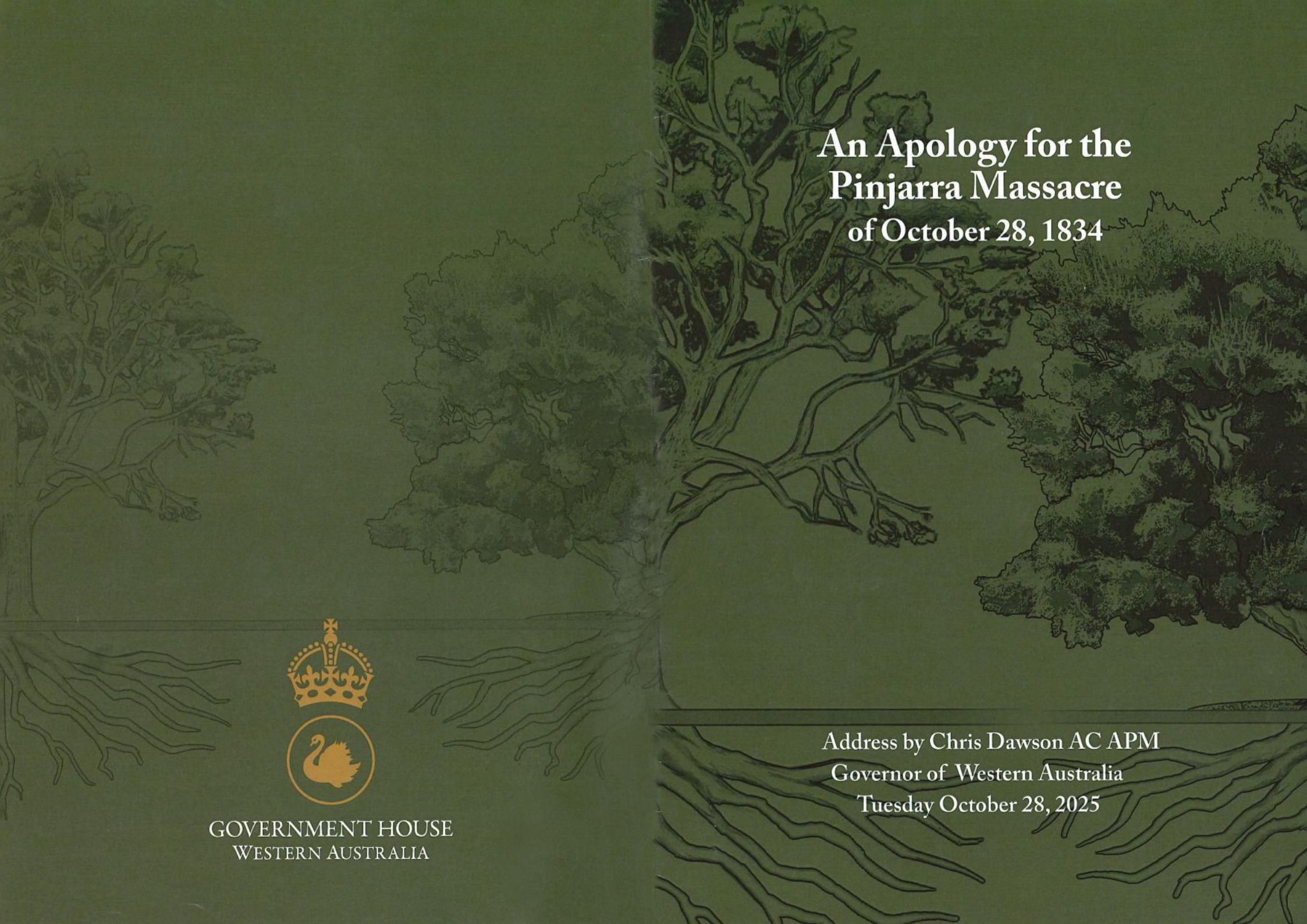
Appendix A

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 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, 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.

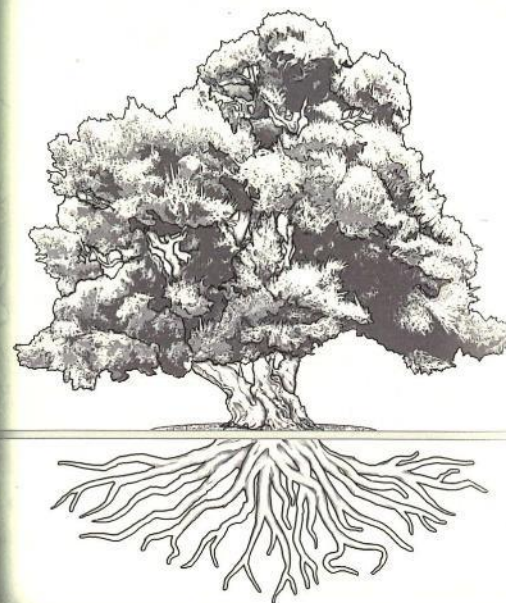
The precise number of deaths of the Aboriginal population are now impossible to determine. It has been noted in the records that women and children were numbered amongst the dead and injured. Oral histories handed down amongst the Bindjareb Noongar give a much higher casualty figure.

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".

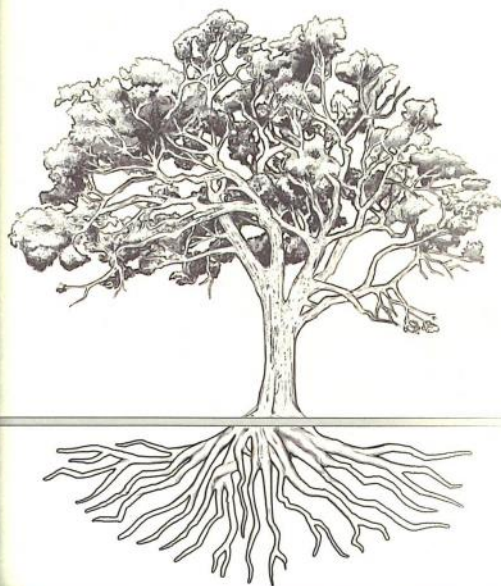
As Governor of Western Australia, I come to you today to say: I am deeply sorry for the actions of my predecessor and for the pain and suffering he caused.

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."

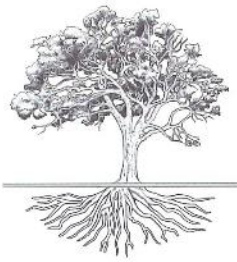
GROWTH - BOORDIYA

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.

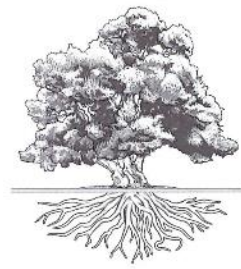
In return, the Bindjareb Noongar people gifted the Governor a tree, native to the area of Bindjareb country, to be planted on the grounds of Government House.

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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‘An Apology for the Pinjarra Massacre of October 28, 1834’ (Pamphlet) and ‘TRUTH HEALING GROWTH Medallion’ must each be presented in its entirety and in its original form, and must not be altered, adapted, separated into component parts or incorporated into other works without such permission.

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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

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.]
-  AITSL – Trauma - Informed Teaching Strategies
<https://www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/trauma---informed-teaching-strategies>
-  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

 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.

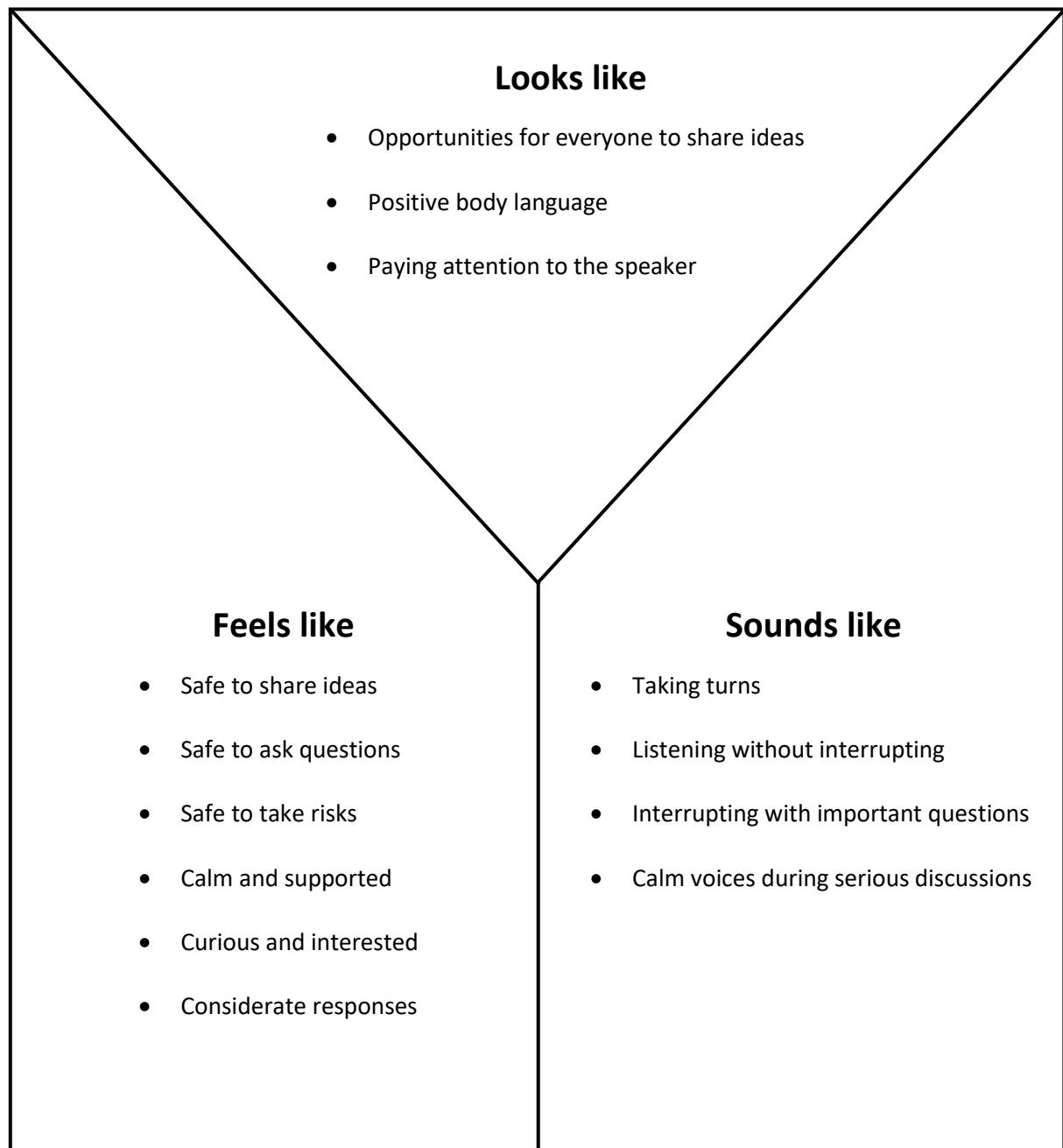
 Noongar Kaartdijin Aboriginal Corporation
<https://noongarkaartdijin.com.au/>

 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

 National Indigenous Times | Australia's Indigenous News & Views
<https://nit.com.au/>

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



Lesson 1: Placemat graphic organiser

**What life was like for
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
peoples prior to colonisation**

Lesson 2: Excerpt from *Pinjarra Massacre Site Research and Development Project: Report for Stage 1*

THE WADJELLAS ARRIVE

In 1494, the Pope drew a line from North to South on a map of the world, and through the Treaty of Tordesillas, effectively divided it amongst several European countries. Although the 'great southern land' was of no interest to the Europeans at the time, the division made the Portuguese part owners of the western half of Australia. When the English first invaded the eastern coast of Australia, the west was still nominally considered to belong to the Portuguese and Spanish. However, as the Dutch and French began to express an interest in this part of the country, the previous delineation was disregarded, and the English joined the race to invade (Duffield, 1997; Grassby and Hill, 1988). After a string of visits, some of which involved contact with local inhabitants, Stirling was sent from Britain in the position of lieutenant governor to form a settlement on the west coast. On June 18 1829, just two weeks after the first ship of settlers arrived from England, Stirling proclaimed English rule. All people living in the west henceforth became British subjects. The Nyungars' lives were about to change forever.

INITIAL CONTACT

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.

THE NYUNGARS AND THOMAS PEEL

Soon after the establishment of the Swan River settlement, Wadjellas began arriving in what is now called the Peel region. In November of 1829 Preston and Collie led an expedition to ascertain the potential for agricultural development in what we now recognise as the Mandurah and Murray areas. Within a short time a massive tract of land had been 'granted' to a Wadjella by the name of Thomas Peel and a syndicate of developers. The land included 250,000 acres from Cockburn Sound south to Peel Inlet, and inland along the right bank of the Murray River as far as Pinjarra and almost to the Darling Range.

Thomas Peel, cousin of British Home Secretary Robert Peel, was a man whose status in Western Australia appeared to have resulted more from his connections than any personal merit (Richards, 1993). While Peel had hoped to obtain land near the centre of Perth, his late arrival at the Swan River colony meant that he was granted the area further south. His initial attempt at establishing a settlement at Clarence (near the present site of Woodman's Point) was a dismal failure. After much illness and 30 deaths amongst his workers he was forced to move south to Mandurah. Many of his contemporaries saw this as a serious fault and a dereliction of duty (Richards, 1978). By the early 1830s, the Mandurah settlement was also on the verge of being abandoned.

However, all was not bleak for Peel. Early in 1834 it was reported that large numbers of stray cattle had begun grazing on rich land east of his Mandurah settlement. The land, it was found, included "a plain of the richest grass and the finest loam ...in the Colony, comprising an area of about 4,000 acres, the whole of which ...could be turned up with a plough, without the outlay of one shilling for clearing" (Perth Gazette, 1 March 1834). Peel was understandably overjoyed, for this land fell within his grant. He planned to develop this area, but an obstacle stood in his way

Almost from the moment that Wadjellas entered Nyungar boodjar (land), the Bindjareb Nyungars made a name for themselves as the strongest, most able and least willing group to relinquish control of their lands. As history now demonstrates, Bindjareb Nyungars, with their well crafted gidgis (spears), solid and able bodied old and young fighters and knowledge of their boodjar (country), were a force to be reckoned with, and would not be easily be intimidated.

There are reports that soon after his arrival in the colony Peel developed a distinct and strong dislike for Nyungars. Clearly by the time his settlement at Mandurah was facing closure Peel detested Nyungars even more. Nyungars, according to Peel, were the single most important cause of settler's failures. They destroyed stock, crops, equipment and buildings with their strategically lit fires. If their fires didn't get the stock then often they would gidjal (spear) or drive them away. According to Peel, Bindjareb Nyungars seemed to be hell bent on preventing Wadjella settlement and development. Indeed, he found that their presence was effectively preventing his intended development of the Murray Region.

By 1834 things were more than desperate for Peel and his settlement. Since he had arrived he had been pouring his capital into sustaining the Mandurah settlement. It seems he had been desperately waiting for things to improve between Nyungars and Wadjellas. By 1834 most of his capital had been exhausted. In Peel's view there was but one answer to this problem - military force to break the Nyungar stronghold.

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

Lesson 2: Graphic organiser – Perspectives of colonisation

Section/perspective	Bindjareb Noongar people	European colonists
The Wadjellas Arrive		
Initial Contact		
The Nyungars and Thomas Peel		

Note: Wadjellas refers to the British

Lesson 2: Plucking or Peeling: Cousin Thomas, or the Swan River Job.



Etching: Seymour, 1829

Caption: Cousin Bob's letter did the job I shall feather my nest however. (Speech bubble)

Caption: The best parts of the Swan River Settlement, only to be got at through the hands of Mr Tho's P__ _!!!! (Signpost)

Lessons 3–4: Photographs of the Pinjarra Massacre site and memorial

Photo A



Photo B



Photo C



Image adapted from: Warriner, 2019

Inscription: In memory of the men, women and children of the Binjareb Noongar people and a Colonial Officer who died here on the 28th October 1834 as part of confrontations in the early days of the Swan River Colony. Remembering the spirit of the traditional owners of this land, we go forward together in peace, building a united nation for future generations.

Lessons 3–4: Excerpt from *Pinjarra Massacre Site Research and Development Project: Report for Stage 1*

CONFLICT IN THE COLONY

The few years preceding 1834 were to prove the most conflictual in terms of armed exchanges between Nyungars and Wadjellas. Farms on the Upper Swan came under attack from Nyungars who were growing impatient and angry with what they saw as rude, ungracious and unjust behaviour. As Nyungars came to the realisation that their hospitality was rarely being reciprocated and their protocols were being ignored and violated, the incidence of reprisals increased. 'Careless' and malicious attacks on Nyungars were always followed by Nyungar reprisals. Attacks by Nyungars prompted retaliations by the Wadjellas.

Wadjellas believed that the way to deal with perceived Nyungar hostility or resistance to their actions was a show of military strength and superiority. For example, in response to his frustration with Nyungar systems of reprisals that resulted in what Wadjellas saw as petty pilfering, Captain Frederick Irwin, one of the colonial leaders, arranged a punitive raid against Fremantle Nyungars. Several were killed or wounded. Captain Irwin reflected that the object had been to "impress a salutary dread of our superiority and arms" (Hallam & Tilbrook, 1990, p. xiv).

Even before Wadjella settlement in the Bindjareb Nyungar or 'Murray' region had begun, there were clashes between the Bindjareb Nyungars and the newcomers. Stirling recorded that the "murders and outrages committed by the Murray or Mandurah Tribes were various" (Stirling, Sept. 1836), beginning when a party of three men visiting the area was attacked by the Nyungars before they had managed to communicate with them. The group was then held responsible for what was thought to be the first death of a settler as a result of Nyungar resistance; a young Wadjella called MacKenzie was killed near the Murray River (Hasluck, 1929).

Then in 1830, settlers at Clarence and Rockingham were attacked by the Bindjareb Nyungars, with at least two recorded deaths. Richards (1978) speculated that possibly several Nyungars died in these encounters, setting the stage for further retaliatory action. Furthermore, following the movement of Peel's settlement from Clarence to Mandurah in September of 1830, colonial soldiers mounted a most serious and direct attack on Nyungar economic and ceremonial life when they broke down mungah (fish traps) on the Murray and Serpentine Rivers (Hallam & Tilbrook, 1990). As earlier discussions demonstrated, these traps were at the centre of some of the Nyungars' most populated and important ceremonial meetings, and constituted one of the most sophisticated pieces of technology in the country.

A detachment of soldiers was situated at barracks about a mile south of Peel's village when a large group of Nyungars attacked the barracks with a shower of spears. The soldiers managed to defend themselves by opening fire and injuring the leader of the attacking party, at which the Nyungars turned and fled. In response, a group of settlers formed a local militia with Peel as their commanding officer (Richards, 1978).

Between 1831 and 1833 hostilities increased as exploration was extended. Nyungar resistance was met with an increasing level of violence. In areas closer to the Swan River settlement, Nyungar leaders like Midgegooroo and Yagan were singled out, criminalized and murdered for taking Wadjellas to task (e.g. Green, 1984; Hallam & Tilbrook, 1990). In the Mandurah and Murray areas, the conflict worsened.

In February of 1832, Private George Budge was ambushed by Bindjareb Nyungars, and speared to death near Peel's garden. The following July, Sergeant Wood of the 63rd Regiment was speared and nearly killed. The next month, the military post at Mandurah was again attacked by a strong force of Nyungar warriors. The post was saved by the arrival of Captain Ellis, Superintendent of Native Tribes, Ensign McLeod and a number of soldiers from the 63rd Regiment. The following day, the Bindjareb Nyungars threatened an attack on Peel. To aid in the protection of his settlement, four of the soldiers were thus left at Mandurah.

Subsequently, Ensign McLeod was appointed commanding officer of the soldiers, and a concerted effort was put into better defending the settlement. The Bindjareb Nyungars continued their efforts to drive away the settlers. In response, Captain Ellis returned with more soldiers, the party remaining at Mandurah until the threat from the Bindjareb Nyungars was seen to have passed (Stirling, 1836; Harries, 1998).

In August of 1833, a party of about two or three hundred Nyungars camped around Peel's settlement (Mercer, 1960; Perth Gazette, 31 August 1833). The group would likely have represented the three families from the Bindjareb Nyungar group, as well as Nyungars from other areas who were visiting the area for a ceremonial purpose. Although they offered no real threat to Peel, the size of the group clearly frightened many Wadjellas. The fear that Nyungars could easily rally forces to challenge Wadjella settlement, although based in fiction rather than reality, was often fuelled by such meetings between Nyungars.

In the same year, the Nyungars of the Lower Swan requested a hearing with Wadjella leaders to express their concern over the number of Nyungar deaths and the impact of settlement on Nyungar life. Their intent was to negotiate more peaceful and equitable arrangements with the newcomers (Hallam & Tilbrook, 1990). The Lieutenant Governor and his entourage responded with amusement. No action was taken. It is sad that the opportunity to dialogue and negotiate was not seized - that instead, the newcomers chose to continue using military force to settle what were cultural and political differences.

There is little doubt that the following year, 1834, proved to be the worst year for the newcomers. The Swan River settlement was in serious crisis. Despite attempts to entice large numbers of settlers from Britain, after five years there were only 1800 British who had made the journey to settle on the west coast of Australia. Since arriving, the newcomers had been let down by supply ships and found their knowledge of the country inadequate to carry out successful farming. Crops had failed a number of times, sheep numbers were not increasing and some strategic settlements had been badly mismanaged. By this stage many Nyungars had decided that those who they once saw as djenga (returned white relatives), were rather more like evil jennoks (spirits). The Wadjellas were finding themselves and their economic ventures under increasing pressure from Nyungars. 1834 became the year of the greatest number of armed clashes between Wadjellas and Nyungars (Green, 1984).

FLOUR RATIONS CUT: THE NYUNGARS RESPOND

In February of 1834, Captain Ellis, Superintendent of Police, made the decision to cut flour rations to the Nyungars. They had been receiving flour since the previous year and no doubt considered it to be an exchange payment by the Wadjellas for the use of their land and resources. Fletcher (1984) noted that the Captain Stirling subsequently reduced the settlers' quotas of flour in August of 1834,

upon his return from a visit to England. It is therefore likely that supplies of flour were critically low earlier that year, and that Ellis had cut the Nyungars' flour rations as a result of this shortage.

The Bindjareb Nyungars were duly indignant at being deprived of their rations. In March, they entered Thomas Peel's property and demanded what they considered to be their rightful allocation of flour. The Nyungar group marched up to Peel's son, Fred, pointed a gidgi (spear) to his chest and held soldiers at bay through the threat of violence (Fletcher, 1984).

Captain Byrne, who was stationed at Mandurah House (Peel's settlement) could foresee the future impact of cutting flour rations for the Nyungars. He conveyed as much to the Lieutenant-Governor. However, no action was taken and, as predicted, the situation escalated. In April, a group of Bindjareb Nyungars, reputedly led by Gcalyut, raided Shenton's Mill in South Perth. After a struggle, Shenton himself was restrained by the group of Bindjareb Nyungars who then 'stole' a large proportion of the flour. Captain Ellis and a party of the 21st Regiment quickly set off to capture those thought to be the offenders. At Mandurah they lay in wait, and eventually caught Gcalyut, Ye(y)dong, Gummol and Wamba. Monang was captured briefly, but managed to escape amidst a shower of bullets. Wamba was pardoned after Peel and another settler spoke on his behalf but the others were taken to Perth and publicly flogged, Gcalyut receiving an agonising 60 lashes (Perth Gazette, 3 May 1834).

Gcalyut was then held as a hostage for the good behaviour of the Bindjareb tribe until mid-June when he was given another 60 lashes, and then released (Green, 1984). During Gcalyut's incarceration, the Perth Gazette observed: "we have every reason to expect the example which has been made of them will not be without its beneficial effects" (May 3, 1834). However, the Bindjareb Nyungars were not deterred from their course of resistance to the white invasion. If anything, they were incensed by the 'punishment' to take further retaliatory action. The situation was escalating.

THE AMBUSH OF BARRON AND NESBIT

Edward Barron was a retired army Sergeant Major who had shot a Nyungar in the earliest of conflicts between Wadjellas and Bindjareb Nyungars. In July of 1834, Barron journeyed to Mandurah to buy one of Peel's most prized mares, only to discover that the horse had escaped into the bush. The next morning when Gcalyut's two sons, Monang and Unia (also known as Ninia), came into Peel's settlement for rations, Barron asked about the horse's whereabouts. They indicated that they knew where the horse might be, and agreed to search for the mare but returned claiming that they could not find it. Keen to buy the horse, Barron asked if Monang and Unia would accompany him in search of the horse. The Nyungars agreed on the condition that Peel would also join them. Peel refused to do this, but one of Lieutenant

Armstrong's servants, the 19 year old Hugh Nesbit, offered his services instead. According to later Nyungar reports, the mare had actually already been killed and an elaborate plan had been made to lure Peel into the bush and spear him (Peel to Stirling, 1 April, 1835).

After travelling about a mile towards Lake Goegrup, a number of extra Nyungars, including Gcalyut, joined the small search party. By the time they had made it to the lake, and after Barron and Nesbit had divided up, there were over twenty Nyungars involved. In addition to Gcalyut, Monang and Unia, they included Woodan, Meregá, Jack, Womba/n³, his brother Nundja, Moat, Nunar, Yadong, Yunga, Calboum, Wongup, Buggar, Gweerup, Denmar, Erit, Calliere, Yanmer, Berehan (Peel to Stirling, April 1, 1835) and possibly others. Later Barron reported that his suspicions had been

aroused for some time but when his attention was disrupted by the sound of Nyungar spears being placed into their throwing sticks he knew that there was to be trouble. According to Barron, three spears hit Nesbit and struck him to the ground. Barron also took a spear in his kidneys but was able to quickly retreat back to Peel's settlement.

The following day a party of soldiers went out in search of Nesbit's body. The Perth Gazette (July 26, 1834) had this report:

The soldiers in search of the body, were directed to the spot where the corpse was found by the howling of the deceased's favourite terrier dog, which had gone out with its master, and had stopped by his lifeless remains during the night.

Nesbit's body had been ritually mutilated with countless spear wounds inflicted on it apparently after death. According to Mr Reg. F. Cooper (1957), grandson of Mr Joseph Cooper (who established 'Redcliffe' below the town site of Pinjarra, on the western bank of the Murray in 1836), there is no doubt that Nyungars "were in fact after Peel's blood; that is why they wanted him to accompany Barron" (p2).

The killing of Nesbit prompted a fearful and angry reaction throughout the colony. Although Wadjellas had been injured and killed by Nyungars before, this was the first time it had happened to a Wadjella known to be on friendly terms with Nyungars (Green, 1981). Otherwise more humanitarian and 'responsible' Wadjellas now began to call for punitive action.

³While Peel named Jack and Wamban as two people, the Perth Gazette (3 May, 1834) referred to 'Wamba, or Jack' - thereby inferring that he was the same person.

The editor of the Perth Gazette, McFaul, wrote on the 26th of July 1834,

We earnestly and bitterly lament that another is added to the list of the murdered at the hands of the natives - and, although we have ever been the advocates of a humane and conciliatory line of procedure, this unprovoked attack must not be allowed to pass over without the infliction of the severest chastisement; and we cordially join our brother colonists in the universal call - for a summary and fearful example. We feel and know from experience that to punish with severity the perpetrators of the atrocities will be found in the end an act of the greatest kindness and humanity.

George Fletcher Moore, often thought to be a more rational and sobering influence on more reactive types, considered that there were but two options for the Wadjella leadership. He reflected in his diary that because of the actions of Bindjareb Nyungars it was necessary for Wadjellas to either terminate their plans for settling the area or take immediate military action:

The destruction of European lives and property committed by that tribe was such that they considered themselves quite our masters, and had become so emboldened that, either, that part of the settlement must have been abandoned or a severe example made of them (1884, p237).

Captain Ellis and a party of men were sent to the Murray area to hunt for Nesbit's murderers. Joined by soldiers from the barracks at Mandurah, the group combed the surrounding bush for many miles, continuing the search for a month. With the exception of two old women (whom they saw little point in capturing), no Bindjareb Nyungars were to be found. The offenders remained 'unpunished' (Richards, 1978).

Peel was obviously alarmed by Nesbit's murder, but, rather than withdrawing from the area, remained determined to take control of the land that belonged to the Bindjareb Nyungars.

After Stirling's return to the colony from England in August, Peel lobbied Stirling to increase military protection in the Pinjarra District, with the following letter on September 29, 1834.

Sir,

In a conversation with Your Excellency regarding the formation of a small Settlement in the Pinjarra District I was led to entertain hopes that a small military force would be directed to be detached from the Murray River station to that spot for a limited period as a protection to such Settlers as might be induced to locate there.

Your Excellency having expressed the determination at the earliest possible period of punishing such of the Natives in this Murray River District as have been implicated in the various Murders and other aggressions committed by them from time to time [author's italics] and particularly that of Nesbit a Private ip. the 21st Regiment, I take the liberty of urging the necessity of strengthening the Party of Military stationed there prior to any further(?) steps being commenced - inasmuch as the officer in command there as well as myself are fully aware of the numbers now stationed there being incapable of completing your Excellency's determination.

An addition of six men during this period likely to be required for a complete and salutary lesson to these desperate offenders - (this) would I believe under the Officer be required: - under other circumstances all he can do will be to defend himself.

With respect to the advance of flour from the Government Store for a limited period viz. 15 months to such of my indentured servants as might be induced to settle upon this 50 acres of land I am prepared immediately to put them in possession of - The repayment may be served by a Deposit of the Deeds of Grant from me in the hands of the Govt. - as I of course agree to postpone my chance for passage money until the Government be repaid the amount of flour advanced.

I fully understand that Your Excellency's concession of military Protection to the intended Settlement is upon the condition that there shall ultimately be but one military Post on the Murray and that on the expiration of the ensuing 12 months either the whole of the Murray Detachment will be removed from Pinjarra or that the temporary subdetachment at the latter will be moved down to the present post at Peel Town.

I have the Honour to be

Your Excellency's faithful servant,
Thomas Peel.

Charles Bussell, a contemporary of Peel's from Busselton (to the south), commented that it would be "absurd to hope to dwell in peace in that country... until the aboriginal inhabitants have been subdued" (cited in Mulvaney 1989, p. 170).

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

other groups lost their territory and east of the border of the Bibbulmun were the hated and feared cannibals of the interior. Little wonder that poor distracted mobs of homeless Bibbulmun wandered aimlessly among the settled areas. Some worked for the white men; others resented their coming to the last. Kindly men and women tried to Christianise and civilise them, but how could they absorb the ethics of either, while their teachers held possession of and fenced in their home fires? How could they venerate a religion while its teachers destroyed their religious shrines, cut down their sacred trees and trod upon their sacred hill that held the spirit of those who had made their laws and given them their foods since “Jang-ga Nyitting” (cold time of long ago)? All these and other thoughts of their lives were forever with the derelict groups as they sat at night in the huts built for them by well-meaning whites. They continually mourned for their dead, their lost totems and waters. They saw their children breaking every Bibbulmun law, marrying unlawfully, eating forbidden food and walking over sacred ground. The half-caste came among them, one who was neither white nor black and who was detested by all true Bibbulmun. Their bodies could not assimilate the food of the white man, nor their minds absorb nineteenth century civilisation. And so the Bibbulmun race that had occupied South-Western Australia for untold ages became practically extinct in less than eighty years and, except for the “manga” on the Serpentine, a flint or a hammer head here and there, the race has left no trace of its existence.

II.—THE BACKGROUND TO THE ENCOUNTER

By Mrs. JANE ELIZABETH GROSE

[Compiled from conversation with writer's mother, Mrs. John Thomas, who lived at “Redcliffe,” near Pinjarra, during the period under review, and from the diary of her grandfather, Mr. Joseph Cooper]

(Read before the Society, April 29, 1927)

Messrs. Peel, Hall, and Captain Byrne, late of the Rifle Brigade, were the chief settlers on the Murray in the '30s. They were settled a few miles inland. A few other grantees lived on their selections, principally because of the hostile and determined character of the Murray River natives. These three gentlemen were making great improvements. Mr. Hall was showing singular firmness in visiting among the blacks away from the other settlers. He mingled with the natives and

spent days in the bush alone with them; he acquired a knowledge of their habits and language and with their aid he conducted large fishing operations.

The pioneer, Mr. Thomas Peel, had during these years been in great tribulation. His labour was not applied to the best advantage; his servants were dissatisfied and caused him constant trouble; and he was in great need of ready money. He had been compelled to sell off part of his stock to obtain capital to go on with and he sold at half the original purchase money. By his indentures with his servants he was bound to pay them daily wages, generally three shillings per day. Like many others he invested most of his capital in stores and live stock, leaving him with very little for current expenses to tide him through the development period to a self-supporting stage. Hence, he suffered keenly and he early found it convenient to allow his people to work for other settlers, with the reservation that he could recall them when he chose. He arranged that if any servant desired to be discharged from his indentures he would relieve him upon payment of the passage money to Swan River. This opportunity was availed of by some servants, but with the remainder he still had his difficulties. Law was often resorted to, and several of his people were imprisoned for breaches of their indentures. Among the large number introduced was a splendid class of experienced men, and in this regard Mr. Peel conferred salutary benefits on the colony. Not only did he suffer as already described, but he lost considerably on his stores and his live stock by the natives.

The Governor (Sir James Stirling) more than once repaired to Mr. Peel's grant to improve matters. In 1834 he went down to choose a more convenient site for headquarters than Mr. Peel's original station. Pinjarra was his choice, and there he determined to establish a town. Mr. Peel made extensive improvements considering the obstacles he had to level, and it was deemed regrettable that one who had been such a primary instrument in establishing the colony and had introduced so much capital and so many people within its boundaries should be placed in such a position. Despite impediments he had sufficiently improved his grant of 250,000 acres as to obtain

the fee simple in 1834, and he immediately offered 100,000 to a projected company for 2/6 per acre, but a bargain was not made.

The agreeable respite from native attacks which lasted for some months after the death of Yagan was rudely broken in 1834. Weeip, the chief of the mountain tribe, was not their chief leader, and, notwithstanding his barbaric subservience to native law, he was so intelligent as to grasp something of the light in which Europeans looked upon murder and robbery. With such daring did these blacks carry out their depredations that the whites could not tell where the blow would next fall. One day it was on the Swan River, the next it was on the Murray River, miles away. They did not appear to know themselves.

In February, 1834, the campaign was resumed on the Swan. An opportunity occurred for spearing the white man's stock and they yielded to the temptation. They speared and killed the pigs of one settler, and the sheep of another. Moreover, a few days later, when the shepherd of Mr. Brockman attempted to keep them away from his flock, they threw spears at him, but did no harm. Other irritating tactics developed and areas of settled country were fired by them and caused great loss to pastoralists. Their presence became a constant menace and a spirit of opposition again arose among the Europeans.

Woodcutters at Rockingham and Clarence and in the immediate Swan River country so feared native spears that some of their number watched on the rising ground in the forest while others felled and prepared the timber for market.

About the middle of March the natives became more daring, the colonists more uneasy and the Government puzzled as to what should be done. It was not humane to disperse them by bloodshed, nor could sufficient of them be cast into prison. Some of the settlers advocated the wholesale removal of them to one of the islands.

Late in the month, Goodyak was caught stealing from a Guildford store and was taken into Perth. Goodyak was bound and given a dozen lashes and promised more if he committed the offence again. These were

Murray River natives. In April, a number of natives went to the house of Mr. Burges and stole nineteen bushels of wheat. Yeedamira was taken prisoner and secured in the soldiers' barracks nearby at the Canning. In a very short time he tried to get out and Dennis Larkins, a soldier, shot at and killed him.

Mr. Norcott (Superintendent of Natives) was foolishly convinced that the lesson taught would hold them in fear. He rode among the settlers on the Swan and told them this, but he had hardly completed his journey before the blow of retaliation fell.

Weeip and his companions went to the barracks where Larkins was on duty and appeared to be friendly. He talked with the soldiers, shook hands and took his leave. The soldiers were now off their guard and at a signal from Weeip a shower of spears was thrown at them. Larkins was leaning against the wall, and one spear penetrated his body with such force that it struck the wall behind him and rebounded out of the wound. Larkins fell dead and a woman and child near had a narrow escape. An inquest was held on the body and a verdict of murder was returned against Weeip. He was outlawed and £20 was offered for him, dead or alive, for he it was who threw the fatal spear.

Captain Ellis (Superintendent of Police), and his police corps penetrated the surrounding country in search of offenders. They seized several and inflicted whippings, but they could not come upon Weeip, Yagan's friend. He was such an intelligent native and his crimes seemed so excusable, that some of the settlers did not wish to place him in the hands of the police.

The scene of bloodshed was now centred on the Murray River. The tribe on the Murray were called the Kalyutes. They were a fine body of men. So strongly did these blacks press upon the whites on the Murray that it was seriously proposed to abandon settlement in the district. The first attack, in 1834, was made on two selectors, Budge and Morrell. The former was killed and the other severely wounded. The soldiers' barracks was on the Murray, above the Dandalup River, but so dangerous and fierce did the natives become that it was removed nearer the seaboard to Mandurah.

(Here Mrs. Grose gives an account of the murder of Nesbit, etc., similar to that found in Mrs. Ilbery's paper).

The Battle of Pinjarra eventuated from these incidents. While the Swan River natives were quiet, Captain Ellis decided to take a body of police to the Murray to apprehend these cruel murderers. He left Perth in October and Sir James Stirling, the Governor, also went to the Murray on business connected with Mr. Thomas Peel. The destruction of European lives and property by the treacherous tribe of Kalyutes placed the authorities under the painful but urgent necessity of meting out severe punishment.

Upon arrival in the Pinjarra district an expedition was organised. It was composed of Sir James Stirling, Lieutenant Roe, Captain Meares and his son, Captain Ellis, Mr. Thomas Peel, Mr. Norcott, Surveyor Smythe, Mr. Peel's servant, five mounted police, Mr. Fred Peel, a soldier to lead a pack horse, two corporals and eight privates of His Majesty's 21st Regiment. On the night of the 27th October, the party bivouacked at a place called Jim Jam, about six miles from the Murray mouth. An abundance of luxurious green grass grew upon this reach of the river and great trees provided shelter for the wanderers. Sir James was made comfortable at the home of Mr. Joseph Cooper, "Redcliffe," about three miles higher up the river.

(Here follows an account of the battle, substantially the same as that given by Mrs. Ilbery, with the addition of the following incident):—

The first shot fired by the party led by Captain Ellis, and the shouts and yells of the natives supplied a signal to Sir James, who rode forward at full speed, followed by the soldiers. At that moment Mr. Norcott saw a native ship a spear to throw. He called, "To your right Sir James," and he shot the native dead. They were on the opposite side of the river. All were well armed. It was a critical moment for the blacks. Some of them were in the river and others were scrambling up the right bank. They were utterly confounded when they saw the second party before them.

Only the faces of the natives could be seen peering out of the water, where they had taken refuge. The whites opened fire. About 80 blacks were killed and the

bodies of many of the dead floated down the river. A bugle then blew to cease fire, after which the native women and children were gathered together and Sir James Stirling warned them that similar punishment would come to blacks in the future if any more whites were killed or molested.

About 50 natives were buried in one great hole, which was afterwards located in Mr. Oakley's field beside Captain's Fawcett's property at Pinjarra Park. Upon that spot fruit trees were planted and I remember as a girl, gathering pears from one of these trees.

III.—THE OFFICIAL RECORDS OF THE ENCOUNTER

By Dr. J. S. BATTYE, Litt. D., Public Librarian of Western Australia

(Read before the Society, April 29, 1927)

Unfortunately the despatch from Governor Stirling to the Colonial Office, containing the official account of this occurrence, is missing from the duplicate file in the possession of the Public Library Trustees. Neither was there any official report made by Mr. Norcott, who at the time occupied a nominal position as Superintendent of the Natives. Apart, therefore, from any accounts contained in letters or diaries of the period, we are thrown back on the report of the occurrence published in the "Perth Gazette," written in all probability by one of those engaged in the encounter.

According to that report the party consisted of Governor Stirling, J. S. Roe, Captain Meares, Seymour Meares, Thomas Peel, Captain Ellis (Superintendent of Police), Mr. Norcott, Surveyor Smythe, five mounted police, eleven soldiers, and Peel's servant.

On the night of October 27, the party camped at a place called by the natives Jim Jam, some 10 or 11 miles from the mouth of the Murray, at a place on the river where there was abundant feed for cattle. Early next morning a move was made towards Pinjarra, another resort of the natives, where a site had been reserved for a town and where it was intended to leave the military detachment for the protection of Peel and any future settlers. Crossing the Murray at the ford, the party proceeded for about a quarter of a mile and then

(Grose, J. E., 1927)

Lesson 5: Registered field book no. 3, containing surveys in the districts, Perth, Murray, etc.

Image of front cover

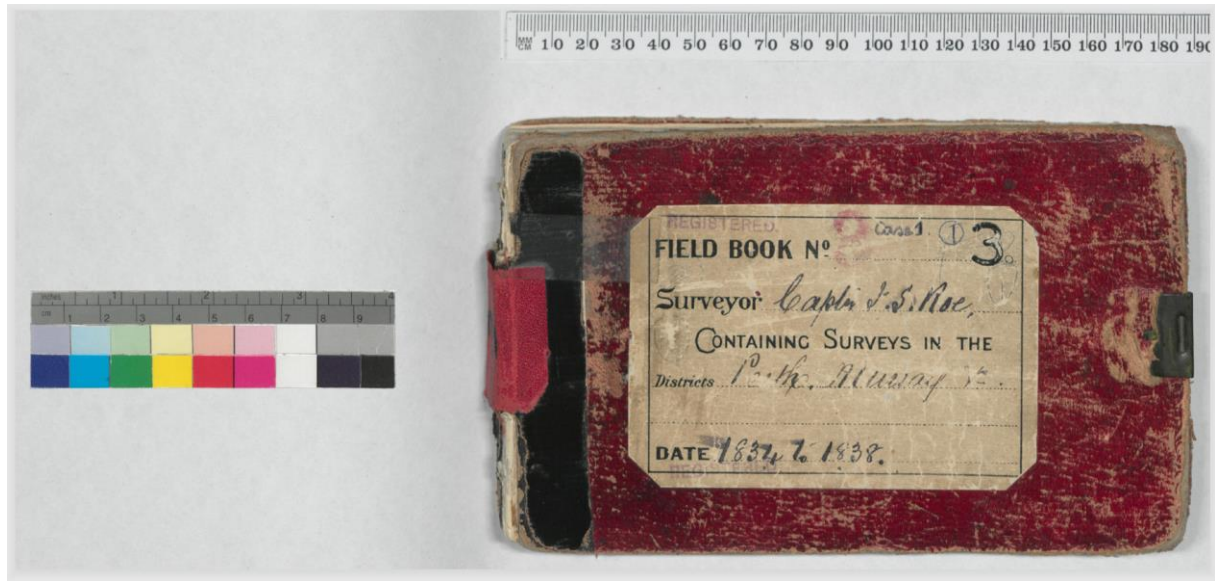
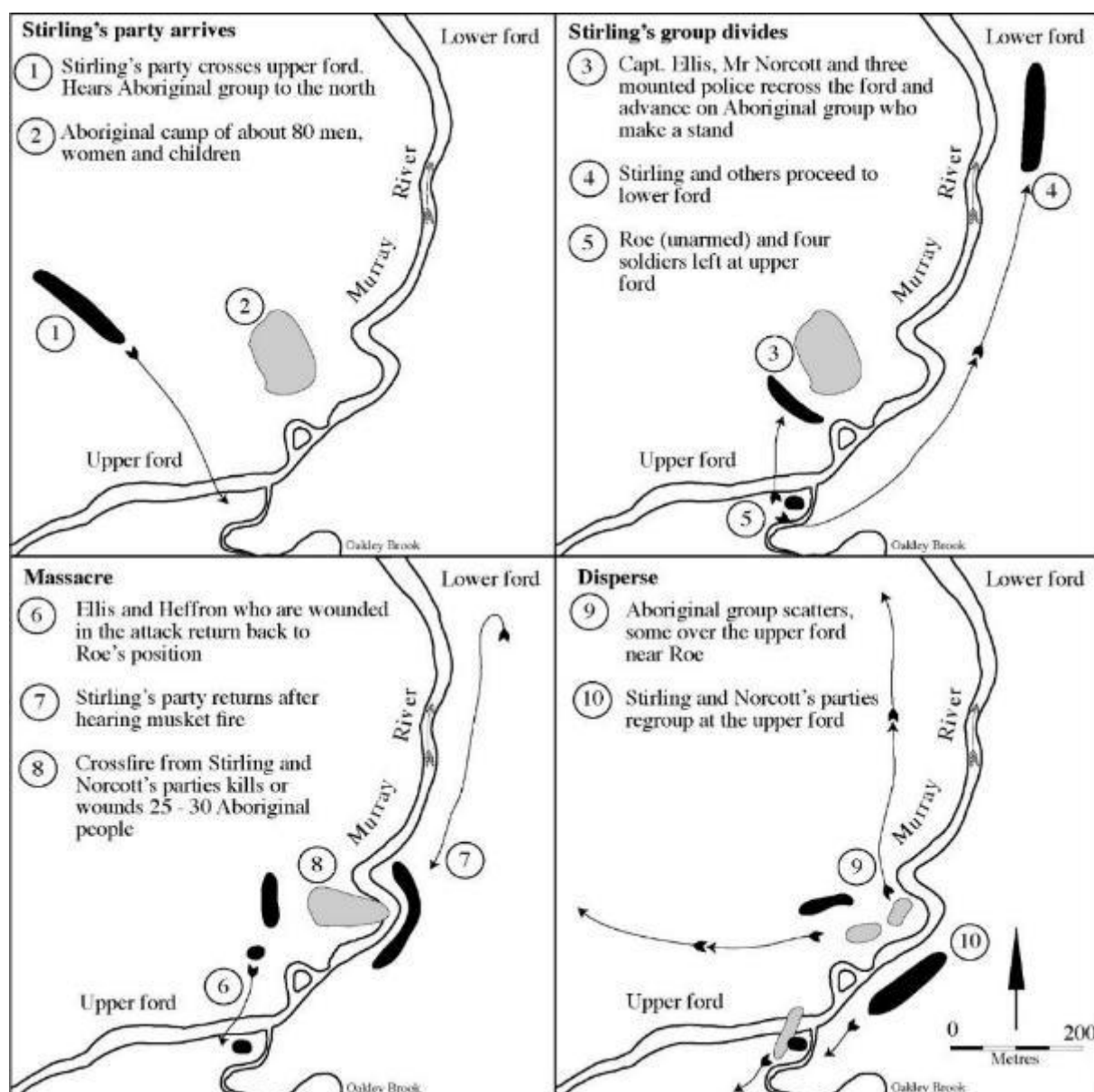


Image: State Records Office of Western Australia, (n.d.)

Lesson 5: WA Museum Boola Bardip 'Katta Djinoong' map of the Pinjarra Massacre



Lesson 5: Photographs of the Pinjarra Massacre site



Lesson 5: Copy of a despatch from Governor Sir James Stirling to Mr Secretary Stanley

Transcribed directly from the primary source documents.

The Duplicity and unprovoked Ferocity, of the Aborigines, on that occasion, were in accordance with the practices of the same tribe, throughout the last five years, in the course of which they have murdered 4 white men, and dangerously wounded 2 others; independent of sundry robberies of valuable horses, and of a mill near Perth.

The distance of their usual abode had made it impossible, to bring the members of that tribe, to any account, for their atrocities, and grown hold of impunity, and by the smallness of the force at that remote station, they threatened after the murder, in July to burn the barracks and houses on the Murray, and destroy all the whites in their district.

There was a danger, that their success in this species of warfare, might tempt other tribes, to pursue the same course, and eventually combine together for the extermination of the whites. It therefore became of the most urgent necessity, that a check should be put upon the career, of that particular tribe.

Perceiving this, I availed myself, of the first occasion, to proceed to that quarter, accompanied by a party of the new Corps, of Mounted Police, and by the Surveyor General, for the purpose of inspecting the country, at the same time, and having arrived at Mr Peel's station, on the 25th Ultimo, we proceeded thence, on the day following reinforced, by a Corporal's Party of 10 soldiers and Mr Peel.

In the forenoon of the 27th, we reached the upper ford of Daulgannup, on the Murray, and had just crossed the river, when we heard the natives, shouting, keeping the party out of sight, Capt. Ellis, the Superintendent of Mounted Police, was sent with Mr Norcott, for the purpose of ascertaining whether they were the offending tribe.

This he accomplished with great celerity, and on his approach towards them, he recognised several of them, to be those who were present at Nisbett's murder, and amounting in all to about 60 or 70.

He accordingly made a preconcerted signal to me, and advanced towards them. 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's 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, 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 on this side of the mountains, upon this, they were dismissed, and after a long march, we succeeded in getting the wounded men back to the station.

I trust Captain Ellis's wound, will not prove to be of serious import to him, and beg leave to state that I cannot too much commend his conduct, on the occasion, as well as that of all the persons, engaged in this skirmish.

I have been thus particular, in the detail of these circumstances, because doubtless, this affair will have considerable effect, upon our communication in future, with the native tribes. My hope is, that it may impress them, with the conviction of our power, to defend ourselves and to avenge violence, and restrain them from practices, which have repeatedly threatened, the existence of the settlement.

But if unfortunately, the effect be otherwise, the most decisive measures, must be resorted to, for the protection of life and property. In the meanwhile, I have reinforced the post at the Murray and have given orders, for the frequent examination of the country around, by patrolling parties, and for the apprehension, of those other natives who were concerned in Nisbett's murder and not present on the 27th Ultimo.

(Stirling, 1834)

Lesson 5: Excerpt from *Pinjarra Massacre Site Research and Development Project: Report for Stage 1*

THE ATTACK

There are three known original accounts of the actual confrontation. Namely, Roe's field notes of the trip (referred to previously), the letter by Stirling to the Colonial Office in London written to explain the incident to the British authorities, and an account provided to the Perth Gazette by an 'unidentified eyewitness' – a member of Stirling's party, which was published on 1 November 1834. The three accounts are included in full in Appendix 1 to this report.

As one would expect, the accounts are similar, overemphasizing some details while being sketchy on others. Their information obviously reflects the British perspective of the incident, and is written with a particular agenda in mind, particularly in anticipation of later judgment by the wider community. However, the Nyungar experience of the event was not recorded in written form at the time, and as a result, the written versions of the incident have tended to be accepted as the objective truth of the matter.

The three accounts implied that the Wadjella party acted slowly and with restraint. On the other hand many Nyungars, and indeed other Wadjellas writing about the event later, talk about full scale charges and a carefully planned Massacre.

Roe's account of their initial contact with the Nyungars is as follows:

...Mr Peel who was acquainted with the many of the natives of this part advancing for the purpose of an interview. On approaching an abrupt rising ground the rest of the party halted out of sight. At this time it began to rain, heavy clouds having been rising from the southward since 6 o'clock. Finding that the natives, although making much noise amongst themselves, would not answer the calls to them, Capt. Ellis and Mr Norcott with three of the mounted police were despatched across the ford to ascertain if the party belonged to the tribe of Kal-yute (which had recently committed some great outrages, and for which purpose, jointly with that of protection if the present exploring party, the mounted force had accompanied us).

Roe's account implies that Peel's intentions in approaching the camp were conciliatory. While it is possible that there was an attempt to make contact with the Nyungars for the purposes of announcing the party's presence and negotiating peaceful discussions, Grassby and Hill (1988) argue that it is more likely that Peel was interested in establishing who was in the camp and, if spotted, tricking Nyungars into a dangerous position by appearing to be alone.

While the unidentified eyewitness (in the Perth Gazette) also mentions that an 'interview' was sought, he clearly states that the intention was to ascertain whether the Nyungars were the 'offending tribe', in the event of which the intention was to 'punish' them.

Furthermore, Stirling's subsequent response does not reflect peaceful intent. Immediately upon receiving Peel's information Stirling sent Ellis, Norcott and three of his troopers across the river, around to the west of the Nyungar camp. This was an ideal location for the setting up of an ambush:

Keeping the party out of sight, Capt. Ellis, the Superintendent of Mounted Police, was sent with Mr Norcott, for the purpose of ascertaining whether they were the offending tribe. This he accomplished with great celerity, and on his approach towards them, he recognized

several of them, to be those who were present at Nisbett's murder, and amounting in all to about 60 or 70. He accordingly made a preconcerted signal to me, and advanced towards them (Stirling to Stanley, 1 November 1834).

In the meantime, Stirling was positioning the rest of the party for what was almost certainly an ambush. Roe was sent to guard the ford that they had previously crossed, while Stirling and the remainder of the party took up strategic positions on the eastern bank of the river at the ready.

What happened next was described most graphically by the 'unidentified eyewitness' who had 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 first shot, and the loud shouts and yells of the natives, were sufficient signal to the party who had halted a quarter of a mile above, who immediately followed Sir James Stirling at full speed and arrived opposite Capt. Ellis' party just as some of the natives had crossed and others were in the river. It was just the critical moment for them. Five or six rushed up the right bank, but were utterly confounded at meeting a second party of assailants, who immediately drove back those who had escaped the firing. Being thus exposed to a cross fire, and having no time to rally their forces, they adopted the alternative of taking to the river, and secreting themselves amongst the roots and branches and holes on its banks, or by immersing themselves with the face only uncovered, and ready with a spear under water to take advantage of any one who approached within reach. Those who were sufficiently hardy or desperate to expose themselves on the offensive, or to attempt breaking through the assailants, were soon cleared off and the remainder were gradually picked out of their concealment by the cross fire from both banks, until between 25 and 30 were left dead on the field and in the river. The others had either escaped up and down the river, or had secreted themselves too closely to be discovered except in the persons of eight women and some children, who emerged from their hiding-places (where in fact the poor creatures were not concealed) on being assured of personal safety, and were detained prisoners until the termination of the fray. It is however very probable that more men were killed in the river and floated down with the stream. Notwithstanding the care which was taken not to injure the women during the skirmish, it cannot appear surprising that one, and several children were killed, and one woman amongst the prisoners had received a ball through the

thigh. On finding the women were spared, and understanding the orders repeatedly issued to that effect, many of the men cried out *they* were of the other sex – but evidence to the contrary was too strong to admit the plea.

As it appeared by this time that sufficient punishment had been inflicted on this warlike and sanguinary tribe by the destruction of about half of its male population, and amongst whom were recognized, on personal examination, 15 very old and desperate offenders, the bugle sounded to cease firing, and the divided party reassembled at the ford, where the baggage had been left in charge of four soldiers, who were also to maintain the post. Here Capt. Ellis had arrived, badly wounded in the right temple, by a spear at 3 or 4 yards distance, which knocked him off his horse, and P. Heffron, a constable of the Police, had received a bad spear wound above the right elbow. No surgical aid being at hand, it was not without some little difficulty the spear was extracted, and it then proved to be barbed to the distance of five inches from the point.

Having re-crossed the river in good order, with the baggage on three horses, the whole party formed a junction on the left bank, fully expecting the natives would return in stronger force - but in this were disappointed. After a consultation over the prisoners, it was resolved to set them free, for the purpose of fully explaining to the remnant of the tribe the cause of the chastisement which had been inflicted, and to bear a message to the effect that “if they again offered to spear white men or their cattle, or to revenge in any way the punishment which had just been inflicted on them for their numerous murders and outrages, four times the present number of men would proceed amongst them and destroy every man, woman and child.” This was perfectly understood by the captives, and they were glad to depart even under such an assurance; - nor did several of their number, who were the widows, mothers and daughters of notorious offenders shot that day, evince any stronger feeling on the occasion that what arose out of their anxiety to keep themselves warm.

Being stationed south of the action at the ford the party had first used to cross the river, Roe did not see events unfold. His account of the action was presumably derived from the stories of the other men as they made their way back to Peel’s homestead later that day:

- on the approach of the police towards the natives, they started up from their fires, about 70 or 80 in number and began retreating. So soon however, as it was ascertained that they were the obnoxious tribe, the firing commenced at a full charge, in which the chief, Capt Ellis was wounded in the temple and knocked off his horse by a spear thrown at four or five yards distance. The same native wounded one of the police (P. Heffron) in the right arm, so as to completely disable him. The native was however, almost instantly shot dead – After the first charge which killed four or five, the natives retreated to the river, intending apparently to cross over by another ford about half 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 among the bushes and dead logs of the river banks, and were picked off by the party on either shore. This was not however, done without much resistance on the part of the natives, who although crouched in very small and scarcely discernible holes and places, and in many instances had immersed themselves in water, having only their nose and mouth above water, nevertheless threw numerous spears with amazing precision and 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 eight women and several children prisoners... In the meantime, Capt. Ellis and Heffron had arrived across the ford to the right bank, and everything was done for them which our very limited means would admit. Although a perfect novice in the art of surgery, the circumstances of the case required immediate and prompt measures, and with the assistance of another man I extracted Heffron's spear, which was hacked and had penetrated about seven inches above the elbow. No time was lost in crossing the party over to the left bank, and as the idea of prosecuting the object of our expedition was now at an end, on account of the severe example made of the natives, at 10.35 a.m. we remounted and proceeded towards the mouth of the Murray

Finally, Stirling's 'official' account offers the least detail, and is the most conservative. After describing the advance by Ellis and his men toward the camp, Stirling described:

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. Upon this they were dismissed, and after a long march, we succeeded in getting the wounded men back to the station. I trust Captain Ellis' wound will not prove to be of serious import to him, and beg leave to state that I cannot too much commend his conduct, on the occasion, as well as that of all the persons engaged in this skirmish.

Stirling's account suggested that the men on the south-east side of the bank split into two groups – he and one party of men positioned slightly south of another group – the 'Corporal's party', who stationed themselves at the head of another ford across the river to the north. With Ellis' party positioned to the west of the Nyungars, Roe's party blocking the southernmost ford, and two groups of men occupying two key positions on the south-east side of the river, the Nyungars were, as Stirling put it, 'completely surrounded and overpowered'.

There are a number of important differences between these accounts that are informative. The 'eyewitness' and Roe clearly stated that Ellis' party initiated the attack against the *retreating* Nyungars. The 'eyewitness' account also conveys the unpreparedness of the Nyungars, describing how they 'started on their feet' when they noticed the party approaching. On the other hand, Stirling's account is worded so as to suggest that he and his men acted in self defence. He claimed

that as the party advanced, the Nyungars threw a 'volley of spears', wounding Captain Ellis and another of his men, thereby putting them at great peril and necessitating a hostile response from both the advancing party, and Stirling's party poised on the opposite bank. In fact, the wording of his account insinuates that the bloody attack by Stirling's party was *provoked* by the Nyungars.

Directly contradicting the implications of Stirling's account, the 'eyewitness' also commented that the noise of the Nyungars under attack from Ellis' party were 'sufficient signal' for Stirling's party to join in the attack. The wording of this account supports the notion that the event was a well conceived ambush.

Other important differences between the accounts include the number of Nyungars apparently killed, and the involvement of women and children in the massacre. As would be expected, Stirling's account is the most conservative on these matters. He downplayed the number killed, estimating 15, where the eyewitness account suggested more than 30. Similarly, he implied that no women and children were amongst the casualties. This is directly contradicted by the eyewitness' statement that "Notwithstanding the care that was taken not to injure the women during the skirmish, it cannot appear surprising that one and several children were killed... ". These issues will be discussed further in a moment.

In conjunction, the three accounts suggest that the charge by Captain Ellis and his soldiers prompted the remainder of the Nyungars to race toward the river in the hope that they could cross it and seek refuge in the hills. However, Stirling and the Corporals' parties were positioned strategically along the eastern bank of the river. As the Nyungars attempted to slide down into the river, the parties on the eastern bank opened fire. Some Nyungars would have died as they approached the river, others shot as they attempted to swim to safety, and still others shot as they reached the shallow waters of the ford. Other survivors scattered into the bush and were chased by Stirling's horseman: "the firing continuing and following the retreating voices of the natives for upwards of an hour" (Roe, 1834).

Neville Green's interpretation of events provides a rather graphic description of the 'bloodbath'.

Norcott and the troopers pressed the stragglers towards the river, where they were caught in the crossfire from both banks; the flood scoured slopes provided very little cover as men, women and children huddled behind logs, ducked behind trees or held their breath under the water until gasping for air, they were forced to surface. Valiant men leapt out of concealment to hurl spears with more desperation than accuracy. They were all easy targets and were soon picked off by the marksmen. Some Aborigines submerged and attempted to float downstream out of sight and out of the range of guns, but the shallow waters at the ford exposed their ruse and they too were shot; 'very few wounded being suffered to escape', wrote John Roe in his journal. The soldiers fired indiscriminately at any movement. When the Aborigines caught in the trap had been wiped out, the posse remounted to pursue others who had escaped the ambush. From his position at the ford, Roe heard faintly the diminishing wretched cries of the hunted as the pursuit moved upstream (1984, p. 104)

On Stirling's side there were only two injuries sustained. Corporal Heffron was wounded in the arm by a spear. He was given treatment immediately and went on to recover fully. Captain Ellis, who it has been claimed had already sustained head injuries in an earlier skirmish, received concussion from either a spear blow or a fall from his horse. On the return journey Ellis was 'operated on' by a private who had little medical experience. Rather than receiving the blood transfusion that would

occur today, Ellis was bled. He stayed in a coma for two weeks and later died. It may be that this procedure significantly contributed to his death.

While they sustained great losses, the Nyungars clearly fought hard and with much persistence. Troopers were to note their amazement at how Nyungar warriors, despite being forced into a desperate situation, did not surrender. However, their comments may reflect less their desire to acknowledge the bravery of Nyungars, and more their desire to hide the fact that Nyungars camped at Pinjarra were brutally attacked and given little opportunity to surrender or negotiate a dialogue.

REPORTED DEATHS

The actual number of Nyungars killed has been the most contested 'fact' relating to the massacre. As we have seen, Stirling's official report to Britain stated that 15 Nyungar men were killed in the 'exchange'. This contrasted with Roe's estimate of between 15 and 20 dead (based on the reports of others in the midst of the action), and the eyewitness account that more than 30 people had died.

Although Stirling, Roe and the Gazette 'eyewitness' were present at the scene, the accuracy and authenticity of the number reported dead in their accounts is doubtful. For a start, they all differ. Second, by their own admissions, Stirling and his men were forced to leave the area in haste and did not attempt any kind of review or examination. Third, the interests of men involved in leading such an attack would not be best served by reporting high number of Nyungar casualties. This reality is borne out by the fact that the highest estimate of Nyungars dead was by the *anonymous* Gazette 'eyewitness'. In sum, it is not surprising that these accounts offer the lowest figures of deaths from the massacre.

The subsequent findings of Captain Daniell and his party suggested that more were killed than Stirling and Roe, and even the Gazette 'eyewitness', reported. Stirling sent Captain Daniell, Mr Norcott, Lieutenant Armstrong, Peel and 10 men of the 21st Regiment to review the scene. Two weeks after the incident, on the 11th of November, they examined the area where the confrontation had taken place. According to the Perth Gazette (22 November), Norcott's account offered these details:

On arriving at Pinjarra, they found that the bodies of the natives who were killed, were all decently interred, in one spot there being three graves of large dimensions, about twelve feet each in length, supposed to contain the members of separate families, and at a short distance from them were the graves of thirteen men. The party was unable to reach the quarter where the heaviest firing took place, owing to the brooks being much swollen from the incessant rains, but it was generally believed, that in this spot, also, there were several graves, - and but one opinion prevails, that, during the night after the encounter, the natives returned and buried their dead, in the manner we have described.

Captain Daniell's party bivouacked within 400 yards of the scene of action, and returned to their quarters, at Peeltown, after a three day's march, without crossing any recent traces of the natives.

This report confirms that many more were killed in the attack than Stirling acknowledged. Daniell's party discovered several graves, and believed there to be a number more that he was unable to access. In terms of the contents of the graves Daniell's party could access, there were apparently "three graves of large dimensions" which were 'supposed' to contain the members of three separate families; nearby were "the graves of thirteen men". Assuming that the family graves contained a

minimum of 2-3 people, this would take the tally to well over twenty in an area peripheral to where the majority of the firing (presumably from the two parties on the south-eastern bank) took place. One would assume from the report that at least as many again were buried in the area where the attack was heaviest.

It is uncertain what information guided the assumptions made by Daniell's party concerning the contents of the graves. Were they given some information from the Nyungars in this regard? Did they have knowledge of Nyungar burial traditions, for example, knowledge that initiated men were buried in single graves, and others in family graves? Or were they merely guessing on the basis of the sizes and layout of the graves? As long as the basis of their assumptions is unknown, this aspect of their account must be viewed with caution.

Further information concerning those who died in the massacre emerged in April of the following year, when Thomas Peel set out with Lieutenant Armstrong and two soldiers with the intention of shooting swans on the Southern Estuary. On their expedition they encountered "a party of natives – about a dozen". Having established their benign intentions, two 'lads' apparently came forward, identifying themselves as Ninda and Dollion (or 'Dolliong'). They claimed that they had been present at Pinjarra on the 28th of October, concealed in the roots of some trees just opposite where Stirling had stood during the incident. They made a statement to Peel that he recorded and sent to Stirling (Peel to Stirling, 1 April 1835). In the statement, the lads described the incident where Nesbit and Barron were speared, and named the men involved, including: Monang, Unia (otherwise known as 'Ninia' – Gcalyut's son), Woodan, Calliut (Gcalyut), Merega, Jack, Moat, Womban, Nunar, Yadong, Yunga, Calbourn, Wongup, Buggar, Gweerup, Marmong (Gcalyut's son), Denmark, Erit, Calliere, Yanmer, Nundja (Womban's brother) and Berehan. Peel then went on:

They are convinced no peace will be had in the Murray River District until Calliut, Woodan, Nunar, Erit, Buggar, Gweerup, Yunga, Yadong, Berehan, Marmong and Yanmer are shot. That they and the whole tribe are desirous of aiding Mr Peel, Mr Armstrong and the soldiers in securing the parties above named and will take them to the spot where they are bivouacked where the whole can be shot. That they consider it very hard that the parties who were slain at Pinjarra by the soldiers and the police should have been made to suffer for crimes in which they had had no participation – save the lads Unia and Merega who were killed at Pinjarra as will appear by the following list given by the informants of the killed and wounded thus on the 28th of Oct.

Wandal	Ninda's father
Unia	Calliut's younger son (involved in the Nisbet and Barron affair)
Gualver	Wandal's brother
Gumbal	Flogged at Perth for robbing Shenton's Mill
Yagong	a mountain man not Yadong who speared the mares
Merega	the one who threw the 3 rd and deadly spear at Nisbet
Canjem	Weewan's brother
Ballang	Wingen's son
Baywup	a girl of Wandal's, sister to Ninda
Nogul	Yadong's mother
Geewing	an old woman, Jack's mother

Yamup	Calliut's youngest wife her right leg shot off below the calf and two balls through her right thigh.
Mandrup	Gualver's wife shot in the right thigh and left arm
Bungup	Merega's wife shot in the left arm

Hallam and Tilbrook (1990) compiled a list of names of Nyungars of the Southwest Region in these times, partially based on Peel's information in conjunction with other early sources. A list of the casualties from the Massacre was compiled from a review of their information, and is presented alongside Peel's list for comparison on the following page.

The two lists suggest that between 10 and 14 people died – from Peel's report a total of 8 males and 6 females, at least one of which was only a girl (Baywup). One cannot be certain whether a number of those referred to as 'sons' and 'brothers' were adults or children. Nevertheless, the high proportion of females listed directly contradicts Stirling's report to England that about 15 *men* were killed - that "...on this occasion the women and children had been spared..." (Stirling to Stanley, 1 Nov. 1834).

The familial information contained in the list points to the fact that there were at least three family groups who particularly suffered in the Massacre. Wandal was killed along with his daughter Baywup and his brother Gualver, and Gualver's wife Mindrup was either badly injured or killed. Note that these were all members of Ninda's family – his father, sister, uncle and aunty respectively. Gcalyut lost his youngest son Ninia, his wife Yarnup, and Gumbal, who many believed to be one of Gcalyut's close moort (family). Finally, Winjan lost his son Ballang, and his wife Bungup was either badly injured or killed. Perhaps the three graves identified by Captain Daniell and his party "supposed to contain the members of separate families" may have been the graves of these three family groups.

However, the question must be asked: how reliable was the information given to Peel by Ninda and Dollion (presuming that Peel's documentation of their information was accurate)? Although Peel and Armstrong may have been able to gain some confidence from the two Bindjareb Nyungars, it is considered unlikely that their account represented a complete list of those who died (e.g. Richards, 1978). In those days Nyungars were highly reluctant to speak the names of the dead after the event, so it seems curious that Ninda and Dollion presented Peel with a list of names. We cannot be sure of their motivations for reporting the deaths. It may have been to ensure the protection of the rest of the tribe - those not 'wanted' by the wadjella authorities, as Peel's account infers. Indeed, Ninda had a strong motivation to speak out, because he had lost so many members of his immediate family. However, it is possible that it may have been in the tribe's interests to deliberately mislead the wadjellas about those involved in the Massacre.

At any rate, it is interesting that Ninda and Dollion claimed that, with the exception of 2 'offenders' (Unia and Merega), *innocent* people were slain in the Massacre. This directly contradicts the claim by the Gazette 'eyewitness' that about half of the male population of the tribe had been destroyed "amongst whom were recognized, on personal examination, 15 very old and desperate offenders". This issue will be considered further shortly.

The estimates made in the three eye-witness accounts on the incident varied, of course, from Stirling's conservative '15' to the Gazette eyewitnesses' '30 plus'. However, subsequent accounts have suggested considerably more. Joseph Hardy's diary entries supported the account offered by Roe, although he added that it had been a "shocking slaughter" and "more so than needed" (Burton,

cited in McNair & Rumley 1981, p. 10). George Fletcher Moore wrote in his diary that information returning with Stirling's party from Pinjarra was that 35 Nyungars had been killed:

A strange rumour has reached us here (Thursday 30th October) that the party who went to the Murray River have fallen in with the natives there, and killed 35 of them... " Moore, 1884, p236).

He later quoted the above eyewitness account which stated that possibly 30 or more had died (p242).

Published in the Perth Herald on June 27 1868 under the section "Church of England Magazine" a settler claimed that:

Corporal Haggarty of the 63rd regiment told me the following story...Governor Stirling for some time gave the natives no quarter, and while he was acting as orderly at Government House Sir James Stirling ordered him to take a party of soldiers and go out and shoot some natives. After a good march in search of a native camp, they espied a party of blacks sleeping down in the shade in the dry bed of a creek, during the heat of the day, when they at once fired a volley on them, and on going up found they had killed eight women and a child.

This crime may appear incredible to those who are unacquainted with the indiscriminate slaughter of a harmless and unoffending tribe by a detachment of soldiers headed by Sir James in person, and several heads of the civil as well as military departments. There were 200 or 300 peaceable natives deliberately shot down, and this unprovoked carnage was dignified with the name of "the battle of Pinjarrah," and was painted on a large scale by Captain M-, 2nd Life Guards, with Sir James Stirling in the foreground (Western Australian Church of England Magazine Vol VII - No 2 June 1868, pp. 11-14).

However, this allegation was hotly refuted a few days later with the comment by one of the first settlers in the colony, and a friend of Governor Stirling. He claimed that it was:

...a gross misrepresentation of facts...made (for) the malicious purpose of a good man (by someone whose) pen was dipped in the gall of bitter revenge ... " (Perth Gazette, July 3 1868).

The author claimed that Stirling's party had proceeded to Pinjarra to take up land grants – heavily armed for the purposes of self defence after the previous incident where Nesbit was speared, and, chancing upon a group of Bindjareb Nyungars, responded in self defence to the tribe's immediate aggression towards them. He continued:

...but in place of 200 or 300 *peaceable* native being deliberately shot down...there were not *twenty* of those savages shot.

Though his words reflect contempt for the Aboriginal people and were obviously chosen to downplay Stirling's aggressions towards the Nyungars, the reply does cast doubt upon the 35 allegations of the former author.

Then in 1927, a woman by the name of Jane Grose claimed that 80 Nyungars had been killed, with the bodies of many of the dead floating down the river (Grose, 1927). She said that her information had come from conversations with her mother, Mrs John Thomas, and from the diary of her grandfather, Mr Joseph Cooper who lived in the area around the time of the massacre.

Later, in 1967, Mr Reg Cooper, great grandson of the same Mr Joseph Cooper, claimed that:

The report (the eyewitness account in the Perth Gazette) says that about 30 were killed, but according to the report the number killed was not definite as it was thought that others may have been killed and carried away by the stream. *As a matter of fact, the belief in the district was that at least 70 men, women and children were slaughtered* [author's italics] (Cooper, 1967, p4).

As their reports were apparently based on the same original source, Mr Joseph Cooper, it is not surprising that their estimates of the number killed were similar.

Interestingly, another thirty years on, a member of an established family in the district, whose relatives were some of the first European settlers in the area, gave a similar estimate. He stated that the number killed could have been anywhere up to 50 people. This is interesting, in light of the fact that the predominant opinion about the massacre in the community has in past years been that the incident was a skirmish that has been overdramatized and exaggerated (these views are considered in later chapters).

A fundamental question bearing upon estimates of numbers killed is: how many Nyungars were present at the Murray River camp at the time of the attack? The three eyewitness reports claimed that there were about 70 people there. Richards (1978), for one, found this estimate reasonable. He stated that:

When the fight took place, it was calculated that approximately eighty natives were camped at Pinjarra. This was not all of the tribe, but would almost certainly have included nearly everyone from the Pinjarra and Mandurah groups (of the Bindjareb Nyungars) (p19).

However, Nyungar oral history maintains that:

...at the time of the incident, each year, the various clan groups of the Bibbulmun (and possibly other tribes) gathered around Pinjarra to undertake ceremonies and to make and conclude marriages. This would mean that a large population was brought together (Consulting Headquarters, 1997).

The possibility that there was a much larger gathering that day, including other Nyungars in addition to the Bindjareb Nyungars, cannot be discounted.

Nyungar oral histories about the number killed follow from their belief that there were many more Nyungars present at the Massacre than reported in wadjella accounts. According to one old Aboriginal informant who spoke with Neville Green in the early 1970s, local accounts at the time put the number dead at 750 (Green, 1984). Green suspected that this estimate is not accurate in the literal sense, as it is unlikely that 750 Nyungars were at a particular site at any one time. Rather, Green believed that the informant (not a Nyungar from the region) offered his account less in a literal sense and more to symbolize the severity of the attack on Nyungars (personal communication). One can certainly imagine that if half of the tribe had been murdered in the attack, the devastation would have been enormous. The high figures no doubt reflect the degree of devastation felt by the community, if not the literal figure affected.

It should be emphasized, however, that the above speculation is a Wadjella analysis of a Nyungar report. Nyungar oral history has always maintained that many more people died than were reported in the white history books. It is therefore vital that these versions of history are not dismissed. Oral

history served the Aboriginal people for thousands and thousands of years, and is of equivalent importance to Aboriginal culture as written history is in Western culture. At the time of the massacre, and for many years after, Aboriginal people did not have the opportunity to record in writing their experience of the Massacre. With these points in mind, it is vital that Nyungar oral accounts are taken seriously, and accorded the same weight as Wadjella written accounts of the event.

Determining exactly how many Nyungars died in the massacre is obviously impossible. What is important is that debates about numbers do not obscure what the massacre represents. Whether there were 15 or 500 people murdered that fateful day, the act served the purpose of demonstrating to the Aboriginal people that resistance to the invasion of their land would not be tolerated. Resistance would be punished by death. No negotiation was considered. The motivation for, and implications of the attack are considered in more detail in the next section.

NYUNGARS PRESENT ON THE MORNING OF THE MASSACRE

The following section considers evidence regarding the presence or absence of the Nyungar men at the Massacre. The conclusion reached is that many of the men were most likely absent from the camp, and that Stirling's party therefore attacked a group of largely innocent and defenseless older men, women and children.

As we have seen, Stirling implied in his account to Britain that there had been no women and children killed in the massacre. However, the Gazette eyewitness stated that at least one woman and several children were killed, and Ninda and Dollion's list of the dead and wounded included five women and several children. Furthermore, the Gazette eyewitness statement that 15 'very old and desperate offenders' had been killed was obviously false. Ninda and Dollion stated that only two of the twenty or so men wanted by Stirling's party in connection with the 'crimes' against the Wadjellas were killed in the massacre. Indeed, most of the remaining warriors reappeared in historical writings after the Massacre (Hallam & Tilbrook, 1990). For instance, Ninda and Dollion apparently named eleven whose presence in the Murray River District they considered to be a continued threat to peace:

They are convinced no peace will be had in the Murray River District until Calliut, Woodan, Nunar, Erit, Buggar, Gweerup, Yunga, Yadong, Berehan, Marmong and Yanmer are shot (Peel to Stirling, 1 April 1835).

If Stirling's party had fought against this formidable contingent of warriors, the fact that only two of his men were injured seems rather strange. In 1834, forty or so years before cartridges were available, all the guns and rifles used by colonial soldiers and police were muzzle loaded. The rifles, with an accurate range of about 200 metres, took around a minute to load by competent soldiers who had to force lead balls down the rifle into the barrel. The muskets, with an accurate range of, at most 35 metres, could fire an absolute maximum of four shots a minute in the hands of well trained soldiers (Blackburn, pers. comm. 1998). On the other hand, Bindjareb Nyungar gidgis (spears) were the strongest, most accurate, dangerous and most sought after in the whole of the Southwest. Wadjellas regularly recorded Bindjareb Nyungars as the most fierce of fighters in the Southwest. In preparation for fights, Bindjareb Nyungars would make sure that they had hundreds of gidgis at the ready. One old Nyungar claims that a competent fighter could throw as many as 20 to 30 spears a minute. Hammond (1933) describes how men were able to pick up spears with their toes, not even

having to stoop for a pick up. This allowed fighting men to constantly throw gidgees at the same time as being alert to their enemy. According to Bates (1992, p. 189),

...the flint-shafted spear of the Bibbulmun (sic) was a deadly war weapon. The flints were attached with blackboy or sandalwood gum along both sides of the spear blade, and usually one of more blades broke off inside the victim. A Bibbulmun (sic) or any native can hurl his spear as quickly as an American gunman can handle his gun, and as the Bibbulmun (sic) used no shields, they were specially expert spearmen.

This made exchanges between Nyungars and Wadjellas less one sided than is often recorded in the history books. Although it is rarely mentioned in history, many of the early military exchanges between Indigenous groups and colonists prior to the use of cartridge loaded ammunition were 'won' by Indigenous groups who were able to predict the path of musket balls. In the first years of the colony, competitions between Nyungars and Wadjellas saw Nyungars throw six spears to every one shot taken by Wadjellas.

Thus the question arises: why didn't the most powerful Nyungars in the Southwest offer more resistance on October 28 1834? In the early stages of the attack, after the spearing of Ellis and Heffron, only three Wadjella soldiers were left on their horses attacking the Nyungars. If there was a large group of Nyungar warriors fighting back, one would expect there to have been more casualties on the Wadjella side. It may have been that the commencement of firing from the eastern bank by Stirling and the Corporal's parties threw the men into sufficient confusion and peril that they were unable to retaliate. The ambush was certainly an effective one. However, with a force of at least as many Nyungar warriors as Wadjellas, it seems strange that none were successful in causing more injury to their attackers. Could it be, then, that the men were in fact elsewhere on that fatal morning?

Where were the men?

Reg. Cooper (1967; whose great grandfather Joseph Cooper was one of the first settlers in Pinjarra) claimed that the story passed down through his family came from some of the 'natives' who had been involved in the massacre, with whom his great grandfather was acquainted. He stated that:

Two days prior to the event half the Kalyutes were camped in Mandurah and the rest of the tribe were at Ravenswood... Apparently, as a result of some form of 'bush telegraph', the natives became aware of the fact that the 'punitive expedition' was on foot. Those natives who were in Mandurah moved up and met the rest of the tribe who were at Ravenswood. The night following this meeting, they camped two miles south of Pinjarra on the west bank of the Murray (p2).

This information would suggest that the Gcalyut's entire group were camped together on the banks of the river on the morning of the 28th, in anticipation of some kind of assault. This is consistent with Richards's position (1978) that the Mandurah and Pinjarra sub-groups of the Bindjareb Nyungars were present on the morning of the Massacre. Richards concurred with Cooper in saying: "It appears that they knew the Europeans were 'up to something' and a full tribal gathering may have been called to formulate future action' (1978, p19). Moore, too, reflected this idea in his diary when he wrote: "They (Stirling's party) came upon the tribe in a position which I dare say the natives thought most favourable for their manoeuvres, but which was turned into a complete trap for them" (1884, p236).

In a letter to Stirling accompanying the statement he obtained from Ninda and Dollion, Peel claimed that they:

...moreover assert(ed) Chief Calliutt, Gweerup, Nunar, Moat, Berehan and almost all the men concerned at Nisbet's murder were present when the Police first routed them at Pinjarra but the leading characters escaped up the opposite side of the Bank and passed close past Mr Roe...without a scratch. Nunar it appears speared Captain Ellis as well as his horse, but escaped without a scratch (Peel to Stirling, 1 April 1835).

The eyewitness account published in the Perth Gazette just after the event (1 Nov. 1834) verified that Nunar was indeed present on the morning of the Massacre. Note that while Nunar was originally thought to have been shot dead, two Nyungars from the Mountain Tribe later revealed to Mr Norcott that he had in fact managed to escape, and that it was a man called Munna* who fell (Perth Gazette, 22 Nov. 1834).

However, the account in the Perth Gazette on November 1 directly contradicted Peel's later assertion as to the presence of Gcalyut at the Massacre. After regaling the reader with details of the event, it stated that the only subject of regret was:

...that Kal-yute and some other similar characters were, according to the accounts of the women, absent in another part of the country:- being most probably in the vicinity of the settlement where so many traces had been observed.

Note that Peel's claim that the warriors escaped from the conflict was not included in the 'statement by Ninda and Dollion' that he forwarded to Stirling. He actually added this information in a letter accompanying the statement. This extra information may therefore have represented some of Peel's assumptions about the event, rather than fact. The information in the Perth Gazette would suggest that this was so.

Historians have speculated over the years about the presence of particular 'wanted' men (involved in the murder of Nesbit) and their sons at the Massacre, namely: Boogar (Buggar), Erit, Woodan, Yadong (son of Nogul), Yanmar, Yaburgurt (George Winjan, son of Winjan), Dulgat and Ngooee (both sons of Boogar). However, there appears to be little concrete evidence to verify that they were in fact there on that fatal morning. An exception to this is Yaburgurt – known to the Europeans as 'George Winjan' - whose father was Winjan. Young Yaburgurt was a small child at the time, and was reputed to have witnessed the fight. He was quoted as describing the encounter as follows:

They rush camp, they shoot-em man, shoot-em gins, shoot-em picaninnies and they shoot-em dogs too (Southwestern Advertiser, 3 January 1957).

The Nyungar perspective: women, children and older men attacked

From the written accounts of the Massacre, there is clearly reason to doubt that the majority of the warriors were present on that fatal morning. Nyungar oral history validates this doubt. There is a unanimous belief amongst the Nyungar community that most of the men were in fact elsewhere on the morning of the Massacre. In other words, Stirling and his party attacked a group that was largely defenseless – made up of women, children and older men.

*The consultant was unable to find 'Munna' cross-referenced in any other historical writing. It may be that he has been merely overlooked, or that he was actually more commonly known by another name. With this ambiguity in mind, he should perhaps be considered for inclusion on the list of victims of the Massacre.

In an article in *The West Australian* in 1926 (July 13), Daisy Bates claimed that she was given the names of those men involved in the massacre by their children and grandchildren such as Yaburgurt, Ngalyart and Baaburgurt, who spoke with her in the early 1900s. Interestingly, the names of the men she says were involved in the massacre do not appear to be cross-referenced in any other historical writings, with the exception of Noonar, Wandal, and Doolyung (possibly 'Dollion'). These other men were apparently Wandin, Karrie, Yoogal, Dollbuk, Yoonggup, Kwegan, Luntup and Woobung, as well as others who were not named. Given that none of these men were implicated in the guerrilla activities of the Bindjareb Nyungars, it is likely that they were the older men of the tribe.

The accounts of Stirling and the Gazette eyewitness indicated that the party went to great lengths to make sure that women and children were spared from death and injury. Yet the attacker's accounts acknowledged that on that fatal morning it would have been almost impossible to tell the sex of those involved (Mercer, 1960). The Gazette eyewitness stated (as quoted earlier) that upon noticing that the women were being spared, the Nyungar men cried out that they were women also, but the 'evidence to the contrary was too strong to admit the plea'. However, considering the chaos that ensued when the troops started firing, and the rainy conditions and poor visibility that morning, it may be that those crying out that they were women *were* in fact women.

The early Wadjella accounts, considered in conjunction with one another, suggest that the Nyungar men who were at the camp attempted to present a defence to Captain Ellis' charging party while the women and children fled into the river and up the eastern bank. Almost by their own admission, it was the women and children who the Wadjellas then caught in the crossfire.

Reg Cooper (1967), recounting his great grandfather's knowledge of the event, stated that:

Many of the women rushed and covered their dogs with their own bodies to protect them...
Can anybody imagine a more shocking atrocity than women and children, while retreating into the bush for safety, being shot down?

Nyungar oral accounts suggest that in the 'old days' it was most unusual for initiated Nyungar men to camp with women, children and older men during important ceremonies. It is well recorded in the anthropological literature referring to Nyungar cultural practices and social organisation that men and women would do business separately. On the morning of the Massacre, it is believed that the initiated men were camped at a site located between Pinjarra and Herron Point on the Peel inlet, carrying out initiation rituals with some of the older boys (e.g. Joe Walley, pers. comm. 1998). Those attacked at Pinjarra were women and children camped near a women's ceremonial area, only protected by a small number of male guardians and older men. Nyungar accounts claim that Stirling's men were conscious of this and therefore fled the area quickly after the Massacre, anticipating that the warriors would soon discover what had occurred and pursue them.

As suggested earlier, consideration of the list of dead and injured reported by Ninda and Dollion reveals that the majority were women, children and old men. Initiated men were customarily referred to by name, while others were described in relation to another member of their family, for example "the son of", "brother of" or "the daughter of" (Richard Walley, pers. comm. 1998). Ninda and Dollion appear to have abided by this custom. Wandal was referred to as the father of Ninda, Unia (Ninia) was described as the youngest son of Gcalyut, Gualver the brother of Wandal, Canjern the brother of Weenan, Ballang the son of Winjan, Baywup the daughter of Wandal, Nogul the mother of Yadong, Geewing the mother of Jack, Yarnup the wife of Gcalyut, Mandrup the wife of

Gualron and Bungup the wife of Merega. Of the eight males on the list, only three were mentioned without reference to other family members. Namely, Gumbal - identified as 'flogged at Perth for robbing Shenton's Mill', Yagong' a mountain man' and Merega 'the one who threw the deadly spear at Nisbet'. If we accept Nyungar protocols for naming, Ninda and Dollion's list suggests that old men, women and children were killed and wounded in far greater number than were initiated men.

In sum, the one-sidedness of the affair at Pinjarra is explained in Nyungar oral history as due, at least in part, to the fact that there were very few Nyungar men present to protect the camp from attack. Those men wanted for crimes against the newcomers were camped elsewhere on that fatal morning, and in consequence, innocent women, children and older men were attacked and killed.

PLANNED OR REACTIVE ATTACK?

Stirling's motivations for the attack have already been considered, as have the preparations for the expedition that ensured its success. There is no doubt that Stirling's party set off in the direction of the Bindjareb Nyungar boodjar with the intention of quelling the resistance of the Bindjareb Nyungars to the invasion of their land.

However, Stirling's letter to the Colonial Office (1 Nov. 1834) suggested that his party had merely intended to apprehend the wanted men, and that the slaughter that ensued was a response to the Nyungars launching an attack on Ellis and his men. As has been suggested previously, the various accounts of the attack give a rather different picture.

The positioning of the three parties on the morning of the Massacre is the first and perhaps most important indication that Stirling was fully intending to surprise the Nyungars and force them into a position where the Wadjella party could inflict serious damage. The majority of Stirling's party were carefully positioned to shoot Nyungars who would be cornered by Ellis' troops and almost totally powerless to resist.

Given the events that were about to transpire, it is highly unlikely that Stirling intended to engage in dialogue with the Nyungars.

[continues next page]

**NINDA AND DOLLION'S LIST
(1835)**

Those killed and wounded at the massacre:

Wandal	Ninda's father
Unia	Calliutt's younger son (involved in the Nisbet and Barron affair)
Gualver	Wandal's brother
Yagong	a mountain man not Yadong who speared the mares
Merega	the one who threw the 3 rd and deadly spear at Nisbet
Canjern	Weenan's brother
Ballang	Wingen's son
Baywup	a girl of Wandal's, sister to Ninda
Nogul	Yadong's mother
Yarnup	Calliut's youngest wife her right leg shot off below the calf and her (?) through her right thigh.
Geewing	an old woman, Jack's mother
Mandrup	Gualver's wife shot in the right thigh and left arm
Bungup	Merega's wife shot in the left arm
Gumbal	Flogged at Perth for robbing Shenton's Mill

**HALLAM AND TILBROOK'S LIST
(1990)**

Those killed at the massacre:

Wandal	Father of Baywup
Unia (Ninia)	Gcalyut's younger son
Gualver (Gualron)	Wandal's brother
Yagong	A mountain man
Merega	Son of Weiwar
Canjern	Weenan's brother
Ballang	Winjan's son
Baywup	Daughter of Wandal
Nogul	Yadong's mother
Yarnup (Yamup)	Gcalyut's wife – had her right leg shot off below the calf; later died.

Those injured at the massacre:

Mindup (Mandrup)	Wife of Gualver: Shot in right thigh and arm.
Bungup	Wife of Winjan: shot in the left arm
Gummal (Gumbal)	(Male)

Those definitely present at the massacre but escaped:

Dollion	Son of Karrul and Waanar
Ninda	Son of Wandal; later adopted by Winjan
Nunar	Threw the spear that glanced Captain Ellis.
Moat	

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

Lesson 6: *Quirriup*

Laurel Nannup, 2011 – *Quirriup* artwork (woodcut print)

<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C2679424>

Lesson 6: *River of Spirits*



Painting: Kearing & Ewing, n.d.

Acknowledgements

Appendix B: Resources

- 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. 11 & 12.
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- Lesson 6 Kearing, G., & Ewing, R. (n.d.). River of Spirits [Painting]. Retrieved May, 2026, from <https://bindjarebpark.com.au/product/river-of-spirits/>

