



Self-determination

Tasmanian Aboriginal people have demonstrated great resilience through the survival and revival of their culture. They also show this resilience in their calls to become self-determining in all aspects of their life. The following article provides evidence of this drive for self-determination.





CROSS CURRICULUM PRIORITIES

-  Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures
-  Sustainability

CONTENT AREAS

- E** English
- H** History
- CC** Civics and Citizenship
- A** Dance

GENERAL CAPABILITIES

-  Intercultural Understanding
-  Critical and Creative Thinking
-  Literacy
-  Personal and Social Capability

KEY CONCEPT

All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

Australian Human Rights Commission

SUPPORTING CONCEPTS

- › culture
- › activism
- › protest
- › land claims
- › First Peoples

GUIDING QUESTION

In what ways can Aboriginal people become truly self-determining?

This printed material is to be used with Ochre – a Living Cultures multimedia curriculum resource that can be found at www.theorb.tas.gov.au

The Living Cultures Ochre resource and this supplementary printed material have been designed to foster culturally responsive practice when learning about Tasmanian Aboriginal Histories and Cultures.

Introduction

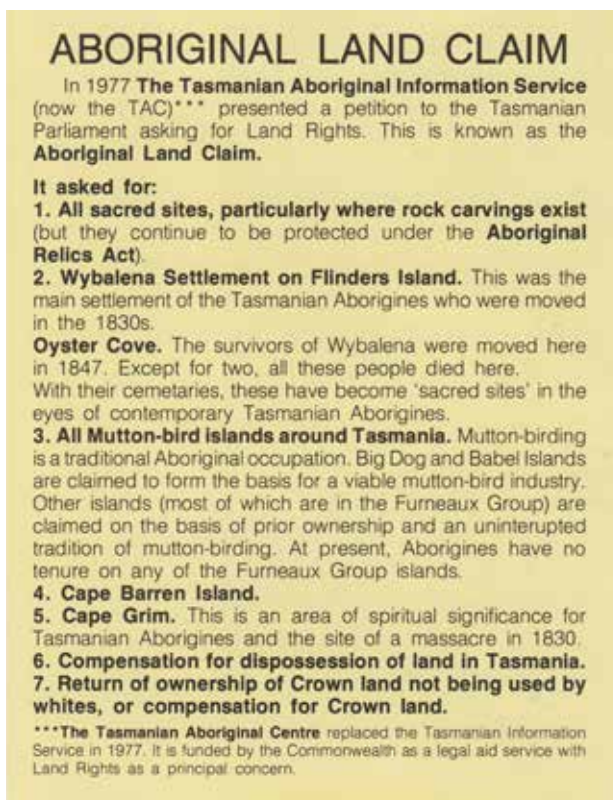
In 1973, after nearly two centuries of loss and dispossession following European colonisation, Tasmanian Aboriginal people demonstrated their resilience and practice of self-determination by establishing the Aboriginal Information Service (now the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, or TAC).

For the first time since colonial disruption, Aboriginal people could access legal representation and have a voice to lobby the authorities to recognise and address the needs of Aboriginal people in Tasmania.

From Gumnuts to Buttons; A walk through Tasmanian history from an Aboriginal perspective

Land Claim

The pamphlet below is an example of some of the issues that concerned Aboriginal people in the 1970s.



Part of a pamphlet produced by the Aboriginal Treaty Group in 1982 | Clark 1991: 51

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- › How does this land claim relate to Aboriginal people's concerns about ensuring their continuing culture and their connection to and custodianship of country?
- › Have any of these claims been resolved?

Protest at *kutalayna*

While this gave a political voice to Tasmanian Aboriginal people in a society that had seen them marginalised, it also brought attention to their strong desire to continue traditional cultural practices, strengthen connections to country and maintain strong and sophisticated family and kinship structures.

The stories told by the people included in the Ochre resource demonstrate the continuation and revival of Tasmania's oldest continuous living cultures through their engagement in deep knowledge traditions and holistic world views shared by their Aboriginal communities.

The image below shows Tasmanian Aboriginal people protesting against the construction of the Brighton bypass, which was built over a site of cultural significance. An archaeological excavation of the site uncovered stone tools dating back more than 30,000 years. Aboriginal activist Michael Mansell called for the bypass to be scrapped stating that to continue "would be cultural vandalism, on an extreme scale".

The Brighton bypass was approved in 2011 and subsequently built. A Federal government report estimated that alternative bridging options would increase the overall cost by at least \$127 million.



Protesters at *kutalayna* | Image: Kelly Tall, 2011

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- › Why were Tasmanian Aboriginal people protesting against the construction of the bypass?
- › Should an alternative bridging option have been considered?
- › Why/why not?

Aboriginal Seats in Parliament

Michael Mansell has been a long-time advocate for designated seats in parliament, both state and federal, for Aboriginal people. He refers to other governments where Indigenous or First Peoples have representatives in parliament.

This doesn't exist anywhere else in Australia but the Maori have had this for over 200 years. They have seven seats in the New Zealand parliament.

In the United States, the Indians have two seats in the parliament. In Columbia, they have three Indigenous seats, so there's nothing unusual about trying to find ways for minority groups to be represented in the parliaments of that country.

Michael Mansell, *The Examiner*, March 3, 2017



Michael Mansell, 2017 | News Ltd / Newspix

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- › Should Tasmania and Australia follow the lead of other countries and include First Peoples as members of parliament?
- › If so, how many Indigenous seats should there be in the parliament of Tasmania? Other states? Federal parliament?

A Modern Australian Treaty

Michael Mansell also believes that a treaty is the key to better outcomes for Aboriginal people.

In his book, *Treaty and Statehood*, Mr Mansell argues that a modern Australian treaty would address five key issues: "Land, empowerment, resource guarantee, social, cultural and education improvement, and a commission to oversee the process." It could draw on aspects of treaties in New Zealand and Canada.

Most significantly, he argues that a modern treaty:

would be expected to provide for self-determination (and) as a result, Indigenous peoples would again be able to govern themselves.

The Australian, December 16, 2016

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- › How might a modern Australian treaty draw from examples in other countries?
- › In what ways would a treaty improve life outcomes for Aboriginal people in Australia?
- › How would a treaty help Aboriginal people to be truly self-determining?
- › In what ways have Tasmania's Aboriginal people become more self-determining over time?

www.theorb.tas.gov.au/living-cultures/ochre/teacher-drawer

REFERENCES

Australian Human Rights Commission, Right to Self Determination.

Retrieved from <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/right-self-determination> 19/03/18

Clark J, 1991. Aboriginal People of Tasmania. Canberra: Australian Government Publication Service

News Ltd / Newspix, 2017, Michael Mansell, Examiner Newspaper



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