



A walk through Tasmanian history  
from an Aboriginal perspective

ISBN 0 7246 7996 0

3rd Edition 2021

### Acknowledgements and References

*Eddystone Point: larapuna in lumaranatana*, Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, Hobart 2001

Images on pages 10, 11 and 16 supplied by Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania,  
Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE)

Artist: Peter Gouldthorpe 2013

Image of plaque on page 40 courtesy of Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania (ALCT)

*Friendly Mission The Tasmanian Journals and Papers of George Augustus Robinson  
1829-1834* (edited by NJB Plomley 1966) 2nd Ed. p:284

Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG) for use of image on pages 7, 14 and text  
from *Our land: Parrawa, parrawa! Go away!*

Poem *Risdon Cove* on page 43 courtesy of Merinda Sainty

Second Edition Project Manager – Theresa Sainty

# Contents

Petition to Her Majesty Queen Victoria, 17 February 1846	4	Flinders Island 1833	30	2012	40
Overview	5	Flinders Island 1839	31	2013	41
Lead-up	6	North West 1841	32	2014	41
Tuning in	7	Aboriginal women on the islands 1800s	33	2015	41
Setting up procedures	8	Flinders Island 1847	34	2016	41
Setting up	8	Oyster Cove 1847	35	2017	41
Narration	10	Cape Barren Island 1897	36	2019	41
South East 1642	12	Cape Barren Island 1912	36	Tasmania Today	41
Oyster Bay 1772	13	Cape Barren Island 1930s	37	Debriefing	42
Risdon Cove 1804	15	Cape Barren Island 1950s	37	One final thing	43
North East 1804	17	Hobart/Launceston 1960s	38	Risdon Cove	43
South East 1806	18	1970s	38		
North East 1810	19	1984	39		
South West 1823	21	1985	39		
Big River 1824	22	1995	39		
Northern Midlands 1825	23	1997	39		
North 1825	24	1999	40		
North West 1826	25	2000	40		
Ben Lomond 1830	27	2001	40		
Big River 1831	29	2005/06	40		
		2010/11	40		

Key

-  Note
-  Discussion Point
-  Action
-  Debriefing

## Petition to Her Majesty Queen Victoria, 17 February 1846

The humble petition of the free Aborigines Inhabitants of V.D.L. now living upon Flinders Island, in Bass's Straits &c &c &c.

Most humbly sheweth,  
That we Your Majesty's Petitioners are your free Children that we were not taken Prisoners but freely gave up our Country to Colonel Arthur then the Govr after defending ourselves.

Your Petitioners humbly state to Y[our] M[ajesty] that Mr. Robinson made for us & with Col. Arthur an agreement which we have not lost from our minds since & we have made our part of it good.

Your Petitioners humbly tell Y.M. that when we left our own place we were plenty of

People, we are now but a little one.

Your Petitioners state they are a long time at Flinders Island & had that plenty of Supd'ts & were always a quiet & free People & not put into Gaol.

Your Majesty's Petitioners pray that you will not allow Dr. Jeanneret to come again among us as our Supdt as we hear he is to be sent another time for when Dr. Jeanneret was with us many Moons he used to carry Pistols in his pockets & threaten'd very often to shoot us & make us run away in a fright. Dr. Jeanneret kept plenty of Pigs in our Village which used to run into our houses & eat up our bread from the fires & take away our flour bags in their mouths also to break into our Gardens & destroy our Potatoes & Cabbages.

Our houses were let fall down & they were never cleaned but were covered with vermin & not white-washed.

We were often without Clothes except a very little one & Dr. Jeanneret did not care to mind us when we were sick until we were very bad. Eleven of us died when he was here. He put many of us into Jail for talking to him because we would not be his slaves. He kept from us our Rations when he pleased & sometimes gave us Bad Rations of Tea & Tobacco.

He shot some of our dogs before our eyes & sent all the other dogs of ours to an Island & when we told him that they would starve he told us that they might eat each other. He put arms into our hands & made us to assist his prisoners to go to fight the Soldiers we did not want to fight the Soldiers but he made us go to fight.

We never were taught to read or write or to sing to God by the Doctor. He taught us a little upon the Sundays & his Prisoner Servant also taught us & his Prisoner Servant also took us plenty of times to Jail by his orders.

The Lord Bishop seen us in this bad way & we told H[is] L[ordship] plenty how Dr. Jeanneret used us.

We humbly pray Your Majesty the Queen will hear our prayer and not let Dr Jeanneret any more to come to Flinders Island. And We Y.M.'s servants & Children will ever pray as in. duty bound &c &c &c

Sgd. Walter G. Arthur, Chief of the Ben Lomond Tribes  
King Alexander, John Allan, Augustus, Davey Bruney,  
King Tippoo, Neptune, Washington.

From: Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus, *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights: a documentary history*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1999, pp38-39.

# Overview

## Aboriginal voices have been largely ignored in the portrayal of Australian history since invasion.

Increased awareness of significant events and themes in our shared history contributes to better understanding of matters affecting Aboriginals today. Issues such as dispossession of land and sea rights, protection of Aboriginal heritage, self determination, Aboriginal identity and social status will really only be addressed when an enlightened Australian population understands the need for change to allow Aboriginals once again to lead healthy and fulfilling lives. This interactive activity gives participants the opportunity to reconsider Eurocentric interpretations of early 'settlement' of Tasmania and look through the eyes of Aboriginal people. The original Tasmanian version of this activity was developed by Project Leader Philip Kelly in 2001. Aboriginal Education Services (AES) acknowledges the work done by Philip, and the people and organisations involved in the development of the original materials. AES would also like to acknowledge June Sculthorpe of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre and Vicky Nicholson, AES for their work on the second edition. We would also like to thank the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG) for allowing us to include content from the *Our land: Parrawa, parrawa! Go away! and ningina tunapri* Galleries.

Ideas for this activity have been adapted from:

- Role play of *Aboriginal history in South Australia since 1788*, Adele Pring, Aboriginal Education Unit, South Australia, 1992
- *Friendly Mission: the Tasmanian journals and papers of George Augustus Robinson 1829-1834*, edited by NJB Plomley, Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 1966
- *The Westlake Papers: records of interviews in Tasmania by Ernest Westlake, 1908 – 1910*, NJB Plomley, Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston, 1991
- *A Word-list of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Languages*, NJB Plomley, Launceston, 1976
- *Living with the Land: Aboriginals in Tasmania*, Heather Felton, Tasmanian Department of Education and the Arts, 1990
- *Fate of a Free People: A radical re-examination of the Tasmanian wars*, Henry Reynolds, Penguin, 1995
- *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*, 2nd Ed., Lyndall Ryan, Allen & Unwin, 1996
- *The Story of the Great Brown Land*, interactive story written by Nel Smit, Landcare Education Officer, Teacher and School Development Branch, Tasmanian Department of Education, 1995
- *My Past – Their Future: stories from Cape Barren Island*, Molly Mallet, Blubber Head Press, Sandy Bay, 2001
- Anecdotes from Tasmanian Aboriginal Elders and community members.



This activity is suitable for use with students in schools from grades 4 and up, across all education, health and community services sectors, and with the Aboriginal community. For this reason AES is pleased to offer the updated version including new packaging, and up-to-date information and research.



*It is important to set the scene. Prior to commencing the activity, the narrator should explain to participants that they are about to embark on a walk through Tasmanian history from an Aboriginal perspective. While the content may be confronting, the purpose of the activity is to educate and inform, not to blame or make people feel angry or guilty.*



#### **Debriefing**

*It is also important to allow time for debriefing at the end of the session. See note at the end.*



*Where possible we have used the **palawa kani** alphabet to spell Aboriginal people's names, place names and tribes. For example, **Manalakina** is the **palawa kani** spelling of a very important Tasmanian Aboriginal leader. You will be more familiar with the English spellings of his name, one of which is 'Mannalargenna'.*

*The **palawa kani** alphabet consistently shows the original Aboriginal sounds of each word. The Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC) is responsible for the revival of language, and should be contacted regarding language-use protocols.*

*When the **palawa kani** spelling of a word is not available, we use an English spelling as written down by European recorders, for example, 'Pye.dare.rer.me'.*

## Lead-up

This activity is designed to support educators to include Tasmanian Aboriginal content and perspectives within learning programs that align with the Australian Curriculum, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures cross curriculum priority.

Suggested resources to enhance learning opportunities include:

- Visit the *ningina tunapri* and *Our land: Parrawa, parrawa! Go away!* Galleries at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG)
- View and discuss *The Needwonne Walk* DVD, booklet or YouTube clip
- View and discuss *First Australians, Episode 2 Her will to survive*
- Contact Aboriginal Education, DoE to discuss inviting an Aboriginal community member in to your class to work with students and perhaps talk about their life and work
- View and discuss the AES-produced Country Series DVDs *Coastal Places* and/or *Inland Places*

- Use the oral history kit *As I Remember: Recollections of Tasmanian Aborigines* Department Education 2000 to research the lives and experiences of Tasmanian Aborigines
- Contact the Aboriginal Education Resource Centre for a list of these, and other resources, in the collection
- Organise an On Country excursion with one or more Aboriginal community members.

## Tuning in

- View the painting *The Landing of Lt. Bowen at Risdon*, by the artist Gregson. It is described as “A painting of several longboats in a cove off the river and others on land with a group of Aborigines watching from a hill in the foreground.”
  - What do you see in the painting?
  - What does the painting depict?
  - Imagine what the Aboriginal people were thinking
  - What happened to the Aboriginal people of the area?
  - What has changed since the events depicted in the painting?
  - Imagine what the people in the painting would say and feel if they were to visit the area today
  - What would you see today if you were standing in the same place as the Aborigines?
  - Familiarise students with the important areas/roads used by Aborigines before invasion
  - Research the quality of life in England, Ireland, and Europe around the late 1700s
  - Research the geographic features in Tasmania. Consider the relationship between the geographical environment and the suggested boundaries of nations

Undertake a local area study. Gather as much information as you can about Land, Language, Culture, Place and Relationships (e.g. between people and the environment; different Aboriginal nations; flora and fauna). Explore the above topics in the context of the following four time periods.

1. Pre-contact: before 1642
2. Contact: 1770s – 1820s
3. Post-contact: 1830s – 1970s
4. 1970s – present day



*The Landing of Lt. Bowen at Risdon.*  
Courtesy Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery



## Setting up procedures

You will need to allow 2 hours to deliver this activity.

Materials needed to deliver the activity are provided in the kit

- Large map of Tasmania
- Tall ships
- Gumnuts
- Wooden buttons
- Aboriginal flags

Map representative of suggested boundaries and (English) names of Language Regions

1. Oyster Bay
2. Ben Lomond
3. North East
4. Northern Midlands
5. Northern
6. North West
7. Big River
8. South West
9. South East

You will need **colour pencils/crayons for the nine groups to create drawings** and 9 sheets of A3 paper on which language groups will be written on the corner of the page.



*A3 paper with the language group titles written on the corner of the page are placed around the outside of the map*

## Setting up

- It is preferable, but not essential, to have two people to facilitate the activity. It is also preferable for one presenter to be a Tasmanian Aboriginal community member. One person will be required to read the narration. The second person carries out the actions e.g. tearing up the drawings, placing boats, removing gumnuts/adding buttons.
- The facilitator lays out the map with space around it for participants to sit on the floor in language groups.
- *Place the nine sheets of A3 paper, with the language region titles written on the corner of the page, around the outside of the map. The titles are listed above.*

- Ask participants to imagine that they are Tasmanian Aborigines pre-invasion living in their own country – e.g. “Imagine you are a Tasmanian Aborigine – what would you be doing if we were at this place over 200 years ago? What was life like for you? What was important to you and your family?”
- Discussion should include the things that are vital for healthy and fulfilling lives (e.g. shelter, fire, food, water, ceremony, storytelling, song, dance, spirituality, ochre). Ask participants to represent these things and their country in drawings.
- When the drawings are complete, ask participants to write down the names of some people (real) who are important to them (e.g. family members, carers). These names can be written down anywhere on the drawing.
- Participants then place the drawings on the map of Tasmania in the language region relevant to them (see adjacent diagram).
- Participants then place gumnuts on each of the drawings. These represent Aboriginal people belonging to each language group. Participants are asked to arrange the gumnuts on their drawing any way they like, e.g. in circle groups or in relation to images in the drawing.
- Participants sit on the floor around the map close to their homeland. The groups are each given scripts for their region to be read when instructed to by the narrator.



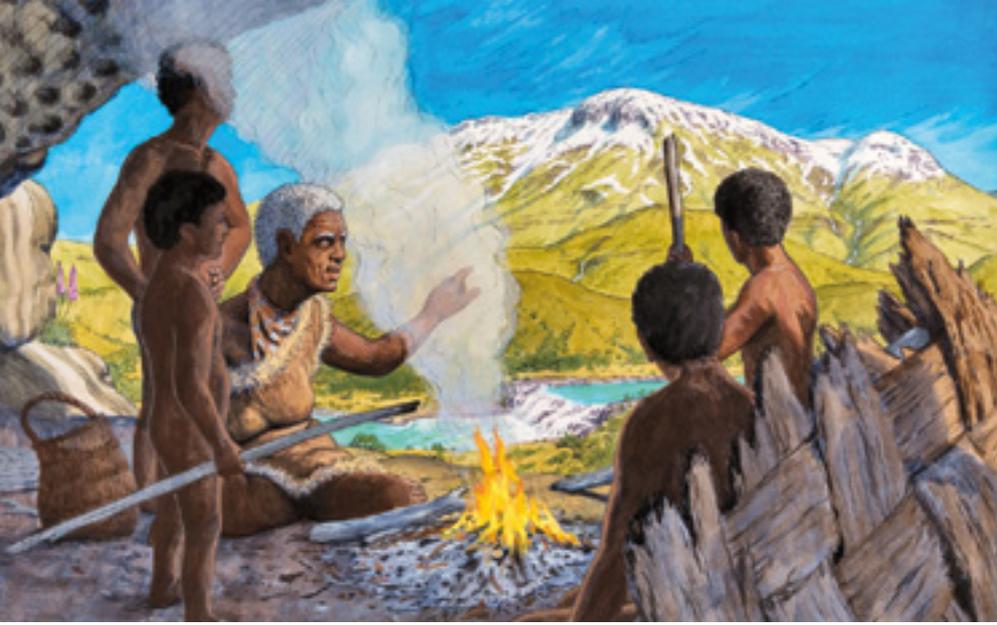
*Keep cards from Flinders Island 1833 onwards aside. Distribute when the narrator gets to that point in the narration.*



*Drawings placed on map*



*Gumnuts placed on drawings*



## Narration

Historical information suggests that before invasion **lutruwita** (lu tru wee tah), also known as Van Diemen's Land and Tasmania, supported approximately nine language groups. Each language group, or nation, was divided into smaller groups, possibly speaking dialects of the same language.

Their life was rich and varied, and generally peaceful and fulfilling.



*A **dialect** is a regional language or local variety of a language that is specific to a particular region or social group.*

Men, women and children had specific roles and responsibilities within their family. Women gathered fruit, vegetables, seeds, small animals and shellfish. Men hunted for larger animals and gathered some bush foods as they hunted.

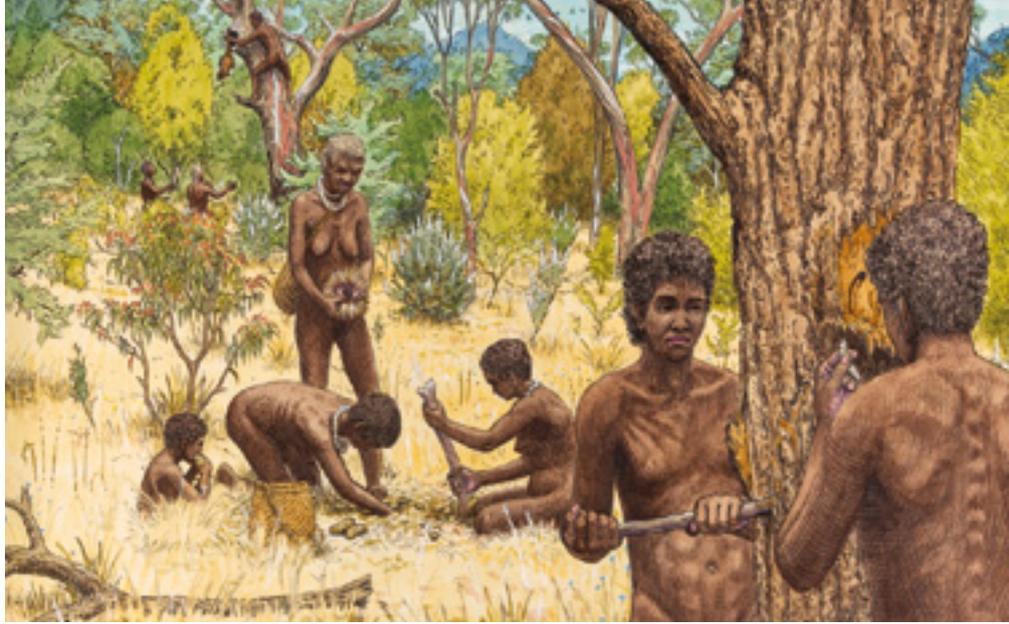
Time was spent around the campfires telling stories, making tools and other artefacts, and teaching the children.

Dancing and singing were important ways to pass on knowledge, and these formed a regular part of life.



### Discussion Point

*Family groups – think about these in relation to your own family, neighbourhood and home.*



The family group met regularly with relatives from the same language group for ceremonies. Sacred sites were respected and maintained. Tasmanian Aborigines were healthy, proud and dignified.

Several times a year the extended family moved to different campsites within their country, usually visiting the same places as in previous years. The time of moving camp depended on seasonal conditions. For example the Big River people would come down from the Central Highlands to the coast during the cooler winter months.



### Discussion Point

*What are some special times, events or ceremonial gatherings that we have today? What were the occasions or events that traditional Aboriginal people were celebrating? What are special events that Aboriginal people celebrate today?*

*What sites would be regarded as 'sacred' to the wider community today?*

On 24 November 1642 Aborigines first sighted Abel Tasman's ship off what is now called Frederick Henry Bay. History tells us that Abel Tasman 'discovered' Tasmania.



### Discussion Point

*What is the meaning of 'discovered'?*



Boat off South East

## South East 1642

We were gathering some mutton-fish when we saw two floating islands with tall trees coming towards us from the sea. Our children were frightened. They thought that it might be evil spirits coming to get them. Not even our wisest Elders could explain what they were. We were frightened and ran back to the scrub.



### Action

*Place one of the boats off the coast of South East Tasmania.*

Over a century later, from the 1770s through to the 1790s, various French and English ships visited the southern and eastern coastline of Tasmania.

Aboriginal people had contact with some of the French and English explorers who collected information about the languages and cultures of people in the south-east and Oyster Bay. They noted that Tasmanian Aborigines had a rich and complex culture and were a healthy and happy people.

On 7 March 1772 Pye.dare.rer.me men, women and children watched sailors from the Marion Dufresne expedition land at North Bay near present-day Dunalley.

This was the first ever encounter between Tasmanian Aborigines and Europeans. The Pye.dare.rer.me exchanged gifts, including precious fire, with the French. They were curious about these strange pale beings from beyond the sea.

When a third longboat approached the shore, Pye.dare.rer.me warriors resisted by throwing rocks and spears. The French retaliated by firing their muskets, killing at least one warrior and wounding several others.

This first contact between the Pye.dare.rer.me and Europeans began with goodwill and curiosity, but ended in tragedy. European 'civilisation' had arrived.

## Oyster Bay 1772

Strange floating islands with tall trees came near the beach not far from our camp. People with white faces and wearing strange coverings came in two large canoes onto the shore. The Elders were not sure who they were – if they were good or bad spirit ancestors.



### Action

*Place the boat and some buttons on the shore (near the location of Marion Bay).*

One of the Elders went down and greeted them with a burning firestick as a sign of welcome. The white-faced people appeared to accept the welcome, and more of us walked down onto the beach. They seemed interested in our weapons, tools and necklaces, so we swapped some of our tools for some of theirs.

We were puzzled – why were they here? As a third craft full of these strange white spirits came towards the shore, we became concerned that there were too many of them.



### Action

*Place a few more buttons on the shore.*

We warned them and signalled for them to go back. We threw some rocks and spears. We wanted to scare them off but they kept on coming! The white spirits pointed sticks at us. They made a loud bang! Some of our people felt sharp burning pains and began bleeding. One of our men fell on the beach and died.



### Action

*Remove a gumnut from the Oyster Bay land.*

Who sent these bad spirits? Why had they come? We were scared and ran.



*Buttons on shore*

In 1803 the British invasion and occupation of Tasmania commenced.

A **Mumirimina** (mu mee ree mee nah) leader watched boatloads of strangers row into Risdon Cove on the eastern shore of the River Derwent, in the early spring of 1803. He accepted gifts offered to him and defined the boundaries across which the strangers should not pass. He probably expected them to leave, like other visitors in recent years. But these newcomers did not go away.



### Action

*Place a few more buttons on the shore.*

---

The colony's commandant, Lieutenant John Bowen, hoped he wouldn't meet any more Aborigines. Both the invaders and Aborigines kept a wary lookout.

A number of years later, **Wurati** (wu rah tee), from Bruny Island told Robinson that *"I saw the first ships when they come. The people come to nipaluna, Hobart Town."* (Wurati 11/7/1831- FM: 408.)

Less than one year later, on 3 May 1804 the **Mumirimina** gathered at Risdon Cove to hunt wallaby and kangaroo as they always had. As they were going about their business, soldiers at Lieutenant Bowen's camp opened fire, and many Aboriginal people were massacred.



*The Landing of Lt. Bowen at Risdon.  
Courtesy Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery*

## Risdon Cove 1804

Today we were hunting wallaby and kangaroo for an important ceremony at the camp of the **Mumirimina** people. A big mob of people were coming, including the Big River people. We were driving the animals towards the river as we had always done, when we saw strange shelters. White-faced people were standing next to them. They pointed their sticks at us. We were frightened, but kept on chasing the kangaroo and wallabies towards the river.



### Action

*Place some buttons on the shore (near present-day Risdon Cove).*

Suddenly there was much thunder, smoke and awful burning smells. Many of our people fell down bleeding. Many of them were dead. At our camp tonight there is much sadness and crying over the killing and hurting of so many of our people.



### Action

*Remove many gumnuts from the Oyster Bay land. Tear a section of the Oyster Bay drawing off and discard. Add some more buttons.*

*Relocate 1 gumnut to a place near Hobart on the map to represent Robert Hobart May being removed from his family.*

Guns and two carronades (small cannons) were used in this massacre. Jacob Mountgarret, the settlement's doctor, collected some of the bodies. He dissected the bodies, packed them in lime to remove the flesh, and sent two barrels full of human skeletal remains to Sydney for 'scientific interest'. This was the beginning of the long and grisly practice of grave robbing and of using Aboriginal bodies for 'research'.

A little **Mumirimina** boy who survived the Risdon killings was taken from his people that day. At the request of Dr Mountgarret, the Reverend Robert Knopwood christened him. Disregarding the name the little boy had been given, he was given the name Robert Hobart May.

This little boy was possibly the first stolen child.

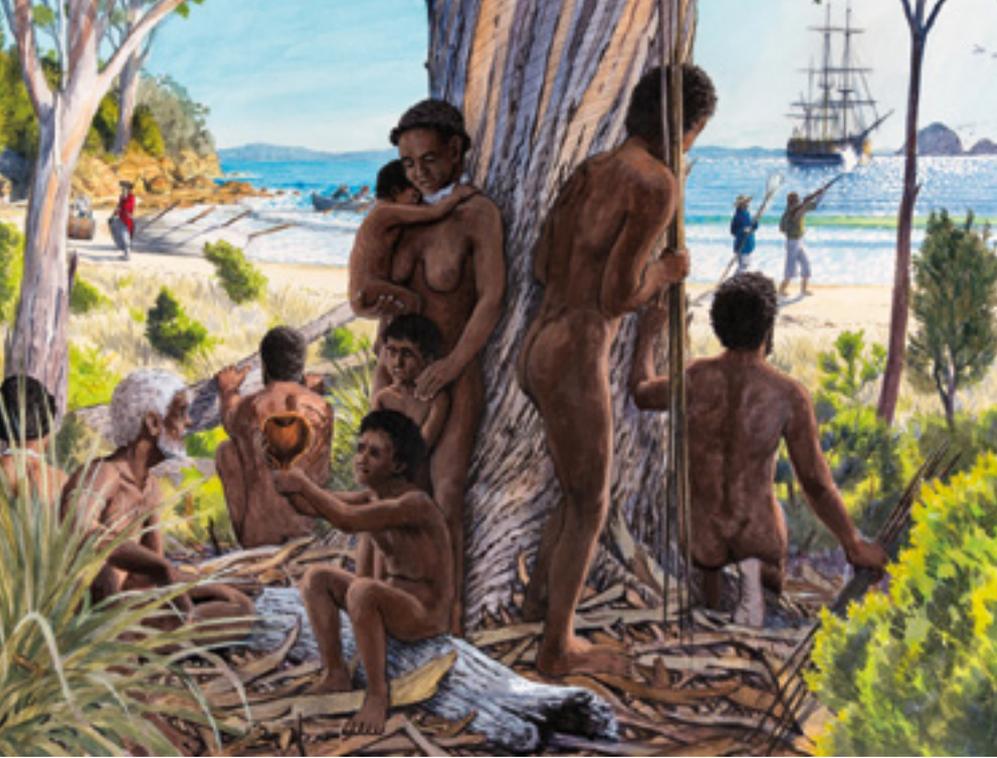


### Discussion Point

*How do you think the little boy would be feeling after witnessing the killing of his people – possibly his own parents, siblings or other relatives? Do you think this boy would have trusted and felt safe with these foreigners?*



*Risdon Cove drawing torn*



In November 1804 four ships arrived at Port Dalrymple near the mouth of the Tamar River. Colonel Paterson came from Sydney with orders to establish a new colony in northern Tasmania.

## North East 1804

Four strange craft carrying many white people came from the sea to our land. We watched them and waited for two days before gathering our group together to welcome them.

The 'white ones' gave us gifts – we think they must be payment for using our food and land. They had many gifts but only let us have a few. These gifts were not enough in return for using our land and food. So we returned the next day and pulled down one of their shelters. We told them to leave our land and go back to the sea. One of the white men set off his stick. This caused one of my brothers to die and another to begin bleeding very badly.

We have watched the white people for a while now. They continue to break important rules.



### Action

*Place boats off the North East coast (near the mouth of the Tamar River).  
Place buttons on the map at Port Dalrymple and more buttons in the South.*

During 1806 Tasmania experienced a prolonged drought. This extremely dry year put pressure on food resources for both Aborigines and Europeans. Europeans had been killing animals and birds since they arrived, as this was a major food source for them.

Aborigines considered this as stealing but hadn't worried too much previously, as there had been plenty of food to go around. The shortage of food, however, led to conflict, which often resulted in deaths of Aborigines.

It was not until 1807 that a white person was killed by Aborigines.



### Discussion Point

*How would you feel if people moved into your backyard without your permission and then wouldn't leave?*



### Action

*Remove a gumnut from the North East land. Tear a small section of the North East drawing.*



### Discussion Point

*What important rules were being broken?*



North East drawing torn



## South East 1806

There has been no rain for a long time and no new growth since the last burnings.

White people are stealing more and more of our land and food. Our people are becoming hungry. We are having trouble finding enough food.

We have been putting up with the whites stealing our animals. There used to be plenty, but we cannot let our people go hungry while white people take our food. We have tried to drive these people from our land and away from our food, but they kill and hurt us with their sticks.



### Action

*Tear more off the drawings of the South East, Oyster Bay and Northern groups.  
Add more buttons around the Derwent River and Tamar River.  
Remove more gumnuts from these areas.*

In 1810 around the settlements of Hobart and Port Dalrymple, Europeans were stealing Aboriginal children.

Throughout the 1800s, sealers living on Bass Strait Islands were stealing Aboriginal women and girls as there was an acute shortage of labour. Many sealers treated the women very badly. The sealers depended on the skills and resourcefulness of these women for survival.



### Action

*Add buttons. Move some gumnuts from their lands to Hobart and Launceston.*

## North East 1810

Our children are going missing. We have heard that this is happening in other places too. Our Elders tell us that this is being caused by the bad spirits. We should hide when we see or hear them. At night, we sing and dance and listen to stories told by the Elders. Sometimes white men come and steal young women and girls. Many of our men have been killed while trying to stop these white robbers.



### Action

*Selectively remove gumnuts from various groups and place these with some buttons on Cape Barren and other Furneaux Islands (representing the women taken to islands with sealers).*

According to official government figures, by 1817 fifty Aboriginal children had been stolen from their families. By 1820 the problem of child stealing was so bad that Governor Sorell ordered the invaders to give up these children unless they could prove the children had been found wandering lost or that their parents had been killed.



### Action

*Relocate some people to the Furneaux Group to represent Aboriginal women and girls being removed from their families.*

Only a few children were handed in. They were taken to the government orphan school. Aboriginal children continued to be taken from their families by the government – a practice that continues.



### Action

*Relocate people to the government orphan school in Hobart to represent the children who were stolen from their families.*

During the 1820s there was a significant increase in the number of arrivals from Britain. English law and livestock spread over the land, depriving Aborigines of their country and way of life.



### Action

*Remove more gumnuts. Add more buttons.*

The first lands the invaders took were the many grassed plains scattered over the island. These grasslands had been created and farmed by Tasmanian Aborigines for thousands of years. The invaders were not going away.





The British government wanted to reach some form of treaty with Aborigines, but still believed much of the land was unused.

In over twenty years of occupation, the government was not aware of the diversity of languages and cultures or indeed that there were numerous Tasmanian nations.

While many Aborigines quickly learned to speak English, there is no record of any British subjects having learned an Aboriginal language.

The government possibly assumed that Tasmanian Aborigines must have ONE leader, and was waiting for that leader to come forward and negotiate an agreement.



### Action

*Add more buttons to regions around the Derwent River, Tamar River, Midlands etc.  
Tear more pieces from drawings.*

---

## South West 1823

Our land is being stolen by the whites at an alarming rate. We are very upset by this. The white people have taken our grasslands and our food. Many of our people are dying. We know this is being caused by the whites but we don't know why.

There are more white people than us now.

---



### Action

*Tear more drawings. Remove more gumnuts. Add more buttons.*

---

By 1824 some of the new arrivals were writing to the newspapers expressing concern at the ill-treatment of Aboriginal people.

In outlying areas, shepherds and stockmen were afraid of Aboriginal people and attempted to kill any Aborigines that they saw.

---



### Action

*Tear more drawings. Add more buttons. Remove more gumnuts.*

---

The British Government was becoming more and more anxious to reach some form of treaty with Aborigines. The Tasmanian Governor was ordered to ensure that Aborigines were treated well and that they were allowed to come and go freely through European settlements.

*"...why wriggle, and shuffle,  
and twist! Out with it at once.*

*We require the property of  
these people – we would  
spare their lives if they would  
become our slaves."*

The Tasmanian,  
24 June 1831



## Big River 1824

We have decided to try to force the white people to leave our lands.

We have been prepared to share our land and food with them but they don't seem to want to share their things with us.

The whites do not seem to be intending to leave. They hunt our food, use our land and pathways but do not let us hunt their food or use any of the land they have taken.

We will fight the white people and try to drive them from our hunting grounds and back out to sea if they continue to use the land without following our rules.



### Action

*Remove gumnuts from all regions.*

---

Aborigines had no resistance to introduced diseases such as smallpox and influenza. These diseases spread rapidly amongst the Aborigines with devastating effect, particularly for the elderly and the very young.

## Northern Midlands 1825

Our people are dying from strange illnesses that we have not seen before.

Our medicines do not stop us from dying. We believe the white people are causing these illnesses.

This is a very sad time for us. Our Elders are dying with all of their knowledge. Our babies are dying before they grow.

The government was unable to control the shepherds, stockmen and others in outlying areas who were becoming increasingly violent towards Aborigines.



### Action

*Tear more drawings. Add buttons. Remove gumnuts.*

The Big River people in particular were carrying out well-planned raids on the huts of the stockmen and their families, in order to force Europeans to leave their land.

The government commissioned more military posts around the island to try to counter these attacks. However, Aboriginal people's knowledge and skill enabled them to carry out these raids and disappear without trace.



## North 1825

The Pal.lit.tor.re people from the Meander River area have told us that they are being attacked and brutally treated by white men. White people are building barriers across their hunting grounds. There are stories about murder and ill-treatment of our people at the hands of white people – they do it for fun and are proud of it!

A boy from the Pal.lit.tor.re people told us he saw some white men get his mother to show them how she climbs large trees. She gets **timita** (possums) from their nests in the high branches. When his mother reached the nest, the men pointed their guns at her and fired.

The boy's mother fell from the tree and died. The white men laughed.

In 1826 the Van Diemen's Land Company was granted vast landholdings in Tasmania.

A British pastoral company, the VDL Co brought large numbers of sheep and cattle to graze the extensive grasslands that had been managed by Aboriginal fire burning regimes. The largest of these landholdings became known as 'Woolnorth'. The grasslands around Woolnorth had been one of the largest hunting grounds in Tasmania.



### Action

*Place buttons on the North West tip of the map (Woolnorth/Cape Grim).  
Tear a small piece off the North West drawing.*

---

## North West 1826

Our largest hunting grounds at Woolnorth have many of the white people's strange animals on them. They won't share these animals with us, even though they are on our hunting grounds. The white men who have come here treat us very badly. They try to kill us or hurt us whenever they see us. We do not understand why they do this. Elders believe these pale people are bad spirits. We do not trust them and have learned to stay away from them.

Recently about 30 or 40 of our women were mutton birding up the coast. A large group of white men riding on horseback began chasing and shooting them. The white men threw all of the women and children off the cliffs onto the rocks below. They were all killed.

There is much sorrow and anger in our camp.

The men decided that they will try to kill all the white people's animals and burn their huts to drive these people from our land.

By 1830 an unknown number of Aborigines and 200 colonists had died during the Tasmanian War – a war of survival and attrition.



### Action

*Remove most gumnuts from the North West region. Tear a large section of the North West drawing up. Add more buttons to the map.*

Aborigines were angered that the white invaders did not leave. Instead, thousands more came. They took the best Aboriginal hunting grounds to graze their sheep and killed the Aborigines' main food source, kangaroos and emus. Conflict erupted, with Aboriginal warriors and convict stock-keepers attacking each other, while the colony's officers and gentlemen became wealthy from selling meat to the Commissariat Store and wool to Manchester in England.

As sheep and cattle overran the country and kangaroos were killed, Aboriginal life became increasingly difficult. Aborigines fought bravely against the invasion of their country.



Frustrated at not being able to end the war with Tasmanian Aborigines, Governor Arthur made a desperate attempt to drive Aborigines on to the Tasman Peninsula by invoking 'Government Order No.9'. This military operation involving over 2000 soldiers, convicts and settlers became known as the 'Black Line'.

The line captured just one man and a boy, but made plain to Aborigines the colonists' determination to make the whole of the island theirs.



### Discussion Point

*Why was the Black Line unsuccessful?*

---

## Ben Lomond 1830

Walyer, a woman from the Emu Bay people, came to our camp last night. She has been in the white people's camps. She warns us that they are planning to send many white men with guns to fight against us and force us out of our homelands. She told us that they are noisy and brightly coloured. When they travel through the bush it will be easy to hide from them.

Our people are frightened and angry that the white people seem to want to take all of our land from us. They have already taken a lot of our land and food. They seem to want more and more and yet offer us nothing in return. We thought the white people might have stayed a little while and left again, but it seems that they are here to stay.



### Action

*Add more buttons. Remove more gumnuts. Tear more drawings.*

George Augustus Robinson was employed by the government to travel around the island and try to negotiate an end to the war.

In return for ending the war, Aborigines would have exclusive ownership of land not already taken by Europeans. Food, clothing, shelter and protection were also to be provided to Aborigines in perpetuity.



### Action

*Add buttons.*

Robinson seemed to believe his mission was to save Aborigines.

On 31 December 1831, high up on the Central Plateau, the Oyster Bay and Big River people finally allowed Robinson to approach them.

**Tukalunginta** (tu kah lung een tah) told Robinson that the acts of war on the whites was in retaliation for the abuse his people had suffered at the hands of white people, the invasion of their country and the continued violation and abduction of their women. He indicated that '...they were willing to accept offers of the government...'

Robinson promised them that the Governor would hear their grievances, and '...readily comply with all their wishes and supply all their wants'.



### Action

*Gather up gumnuts and place on Flinders Island (Wybalenna) with some buttons.*



*On Saturday last the twenty-six  
Aborigines captured by  
Mr. Robinson, marched into  
town... arrayed in battle order,  
each male carrying three  
spears of twelve to fifteen feet  
long in the left hand,  
and only one in the right.  
As they continued advancing  
they shrieked their war song...  
These men, it is said, were bent  
upon spearing  
His Excellency, provided he  
did not grant them the redress  
they were seeking. The whole  
mob immediately proceeded to  
Government House.*

*Colonial Times 17 January 1832*

The group of twenty six people (16 men, 9 women and 1 child) led by Big River chief Mont.pe.li.atter and Oyster Bay Chief **Tukalunginta** arrived at Hobart on the morning of 7 January 1832. They walked through Hobart, fully armed, a free people confident they would later return to country. Within days they were dispatched to Flinders Island. They never saw their country again.



### Action

*Rip up all remaining pieces of paper.  
(i.e. there is no more Aboriginal land nor Aboriginal people on mainland Tasmania).*

---

Robinson was paid nearly £1000 and granted 2500 acres of Aboriginal land for his 'success'.



### Action

*Add buttons.*

---

## Big River 1831

A group of people including **Manalakina** visited our camp. They have seen many more boatloads of pale people arriving. **Manalakina's** group say that the number of whites is much greater than the number of us. If we continue our war against them, in the end we will probably all die. The white Elders want to reach an agreement with us. They want to know what our terms are for stopping the war.

We held talks around the campfires throughout the night. After much discussion it was agreed that we would stop the war. We would give up the land that the whites have already taken. In return for this we can live in the remaining areas (north-east, west, south-west and Bass Strait Islands). We can continue to make seasonal visits to our homelands for food, trade and ceremonial purposes without fear of being attacked by white people. The white Elders must also provide us with food, shelter and clothing forever, to make up for the land they have taken.

We will agree to take refuge on some coastal islands while the white Elders make arrangements for their people to share our land. **Manalakina** and others who speak the language of the white people informed Robinson, who said the white Elders accept our terms to stop the war. Soon we will be able to return to our own lands. Some of our people do not trust this white messenger, Robinson.

From 1833 through to 1847 the 'settlement' on Flinders Island was established. This was the first official segregation of Aboriginal people from others to occur in Australia. White people named this place 'Wybalenna'. During 1833 and 1834 more than two hundred Tasmanian Aboriginal people from different language groups were taken to Wybalenna by Robinson.



### Action

*Remove some gumnuts to Wybalenna.*

---



## Flinders Island 1833

There are more of our people arriving here from their homelands. We have great ceremonies and there is much singing and dancing to celebrate the new arrivals.

About thirty of our people have died of white people's diseases this year. We cannot speak much of this suffering as we are too sad to talk. We are being forced to stop using our languages, our own names, singing our songs and performing our dances. We are being told that we must believe in the white people's spirits called 'Jesus' and 'God'.

We do not like being here. We look forward to the white messenger, Robinson, keeping his promise of coming to collect us for return to our homelands.

By 1835 there were officially 37,000 Europeans and 150 Aborigines in Tasmania.

Robinson had never been in a position to keep his promise to the people at Wybalenna. He never returned to take them back to their homelands.

With Aborigines out of the way, the European colony on the Tasmanian mainland began to expand rapidly with farming and new industries, such as mining and timber-milling, providing work for the growing population.

By the end of 1839 only fifty-four Aboriginal people were surviving at Wybalenna. There were approximately 55,000 non-Aboriginal people in Tasmania.



*Distribute the remaining cards.*

---

# Flinders Island 1839

Many more of our people have died.

We are feeling betrayed and let down. We know now that Robinson is not going to keep his promise. Dr. Jeanneret, the white man who is now in charge, treats us badly. He jails us if we use our own language or if we won't be his slaves.

Dalrymple Mountgarret Briggs (also known as Dolly Dalrymple), a granddaughter of **Manalakina** was born on the Furneaux Islands, and taken to live with the Mountgarret family before she was 2 years old. She married and settled on the north-west coast.

In 1831 the government granted Dolly twenty acres of land.



## Action

*Place a small piece of torn drawing on the map of Tasmania in the North West area.*

---

Dolly made a number of requests for her mother, **Watamutiya** (wah tah mu tee yah), to be released from Wybalenna. In 1841 permission was granted, and **Watamutiya** was released to join her daughter and family in north-west Tasmania.

This was the only time an Aboriginal person was released from captivity at Wybalenna.



## Discussion Point

*Research Dolly Dalrymple's life.*

*Find out the following:*

*Who were Dolly's birth parents?*

*Why was Dolly raised in a 'foster' family and was this common for Aboriginal children in the 19th century?*

*Why did the government grant land to Dolly in 1831?*

---



*"The custom of the sealers in the straits was that every man should have from two to five of these native women for their own use and benefit, and to select any of them they thought proper to cohabit with as their wives;..."*

*Captain James Kelly – Log 1816*

## North West 1841

The Governor has finally agreed to my request to allow my mother to leave Wybalenna to come and live with us. I cannot remember my mother, as I wasn't even two years old when I was taken to live with the Mountgarret family. It has been very sad knowing my mother is being held captive on the island and that there is much death, sickness and sorrow there.

I am so happy she is coming; she will at last be free again. My children will be able to learn from, and teach things to, their own grandmother. Too many children of my people have missed out on this important part of growing up.



### Action

*Remove a gumnut from Wybalenna and place it in North West area.*

Since approximately 1798, British and American sealers had begun violent raids on tribes to steal women to take to the islands to use as slaves. Most of the women were taken from the country between Port Dalrymple (now Georgetown) and Swanport on the east coast. The women were treated cruelly and many died.

## Aboriginal women on the islands 1800s

If the women take biscuits or sugar, the white men tie them to trees and stretch their arms and flog them. There is lots of blood and lots of crying.

Nine women who survived began families on the islands. Most Tasmanian Aborigines today are descended from those families and a few other women from the east and north-east.

During the Wybalenna period, these women often visited Aborigines at Wybalenna where they learned about the treaty reached with the government.

Knowledge of the treaty was passed on to their children.

In 1846 Aborigines at Wybalenna sent a petition to Queen Victoria. In this petition they indicated that the treaty agreed to is still clear in their minds and that the government had yet to honour its side of the agreement.

## Flinders Island 1847

There are only forty-seven of us left here at Wybalenna. We are to be taken to a place white people call Oyster Cove. This pleases us, but there is also a great sadness and despair.

We have kept our word and maintained our part of the agreement with the government, but they have not yet kept to theirs. We are very sad that conditions forced on us led to many more deaths of our people here at Wybalenna. A deep sadness has been upon many of us. We really miss our home. **Trukanini** and Myyung.ge know Oyster Cove and are looking forward to going there.

## Oyster Cove 1847

We are disappointed when we arrive at Oyster Cove. This place is considered unfit for white prisoners, but they say it is okay for us!

It was hard moving to Oyster Cove. We left knowing that many of our people had died at Wybalenna. We know that many Aboriginal families are living on the Bass Strait Islands. At least at Oyster Cove we can hunt and fish in our own way. It's great to go on hunting trips, as it means we don't go back to that awful place for weeks at a time.



### Action

*Move most gumnuts from Flinders Island to Oyster Cove.*

By 1855 only sixteen Aborigines remained at Oyster Cove.



### Action

*Add buttons.*

Among the Aborigines who were moved from Wybalenna to Oyster Cove were **Tanganutara** (tahng ah nu tah rah), from the north-east, her son Adam, and her daughters Mary-Anne and Fanny Cochrane. Fanny had been born at Wybalenna in 1834.

By 1889 Fanny had moved from Oyster Cove, married and had eleven children. In 1857 the government granted 100 acres of land to Fanny.



### Action

*Pick up small piece of torn drawing from the floor and place on the map near Cygnet (return of land).*

She would later be granted a further 500 acres in acknowledgement of her being Aboriginal. She continued to hunt and gather bush foods and medicines, make baskets, dive for shellfish and carry out Aboriginal religious observances.



### Action

*Place another small piece of torn drawing on the map near Cygnet.  
Remove gumnuts from Oyster Cove.*

In 1876 **Trukanini** died. The government and historians say that **Trukanini** was the 'last Tasmanian' and there are no more Aborigines in Tasmania.

In 1881 approximately 6000 acres was established as the Cape Barren Island Reserve. There were about ninety Aboriginal people living on Cape Barren Island at this stage. The reserve system acted to control the Aboriginal community's livelihood and movements. By 1892 there were forty Aboriginal children attending Cape Barren Island school.





## Cape Barren Island 1930s

The school teacher took one of the boys to the front of the class and scrubbed his legs with a brush until they bled because the teacher thought they were dirty. We don't like the school teacher, we think he wants to rub the colour off our skin.

Some scientists have come here to measure our heads and bodies and cut bits of skin and hair from us. They say they are doing it for science. The scientists call us hybrids and half-castes.

In accordance with the assimilation policy, in the 1950s the government abolished the Cape Barren Island Reserve Act of 1912. The Cape Barren Island reserve was closed. Aborigines were forced to leave.

## Cape Barren Island 1950s

The government does not want to recognise us as Tasmanian Aboriginal people and has cancelled all services to the island. This is forcing us to move to the Tasmanian mainland to places such as Invermay, Penguin and Moonah.

We have great difficulty getting jobs when people find out where we are from. Other kids call our kids niggers, half-castes and dirty Abos. This hurts our children and us, but our kids are the ones who get into trouble when they try to set the name-callers straight.



### Action

*Remove most gumnuts from Cape Barren Island and disperse around map to areas like Hobart, Launceston, Burnie, Queenstown etc.*

---

During the 1960s, people from families forced to leave Cape Barren Island were increasingly likely to end up in prison.

## Hobart/Launceston 1960s

The police seem to pick on our family. My uncle was put in jail for being drunk. My cousin is in for swearing at the cops. Dad hasn't been able to get a job because people reckon us 'half-castes' are lazy.

Mum hasn't got enough food to feed us kids. When I was out with my cousins the cops pulled us up and blamed us for stealing and other crimes.

The cops called us 'boongs' and 'coons'. We called them 'pigs'.

I'm now in jail because I belted a bloke for calling my sister a 'dirty half-caste'. At least in here I get to see some of my relations!

Over one hundred and fifty years have gone by and we are still oppressed by the whites. We are frustrated and confused. People are racist towards us because we are Tasmanian Aborigines and yet they say there are no real Tasmanian Aboriginal people.

Since 1846 Tasmanian Aboriginal people have maintained that the Tasmanian Government should honour the treaty.



### Action

*Place Aboriginal flags around the map (Hobart, Launceston, Cape Barren/Flinders, Burnie etc.).*

---

In 1973 the Aboriginal Information Service (now the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, TAC) was established. For the first time in Tasmania, 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.

During the 1980s the Tasmanian Government still denied the existence of Tasmanian Aboriginal people.

## 1970s

**Trukanini's** skeleton repatriated from the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG).

The first successful repatriation of Ancestral remains to occur in Tasmania.

## 1984

Legislation was passed to repatriate all Ancestral remains held in Tasmanian museums.

## 1985

TAC began many years of campaigning for the repatriation of Ancestral remains held in overseas institutions.

## 1995

*The Aboriginal Lands Act 1995* was enacted. The Tasmanian Government returned twelve areas of land to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community:

- Chappell Island
- Babel Island
- Badger Island
- Big Dog Island
- Cape Barren Island – 40 hectares
- Preminghana (Mt Cameron West)
- Steep Island
- Ballawinne Cave
- Kuti Kina Cave
- Wargata Mina Cave
- Risdon Cove
- Oyster Cove.



### Action

*As each place name is read, tear small pieces off the torn drawings and add them to the map. (See Maps booklet 'Land returned to the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community' for locations.)*

---

## 1997

The Tasmanian Government offered a formal apology for past policies that resulted in children being stolen from their families.



1999

Wybalenna was returned to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community. Asbestos Range National Park became the first park to revert back to the original Aboriginal name for the area – **Narawntapu** (National Park).



### Action

*Return another piece of torn drawing to Wybalenna.*

2000

Approximately 25,000 people supported reconciliation by participating in the Walk for Reconciliation across the Tasman Bridge.

2001

The Tasmanian Legislative Council rejected the return of eight more areas of land to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community.

2005/06

**truwana** (Cape Barren Island) and **lungtalanana** (Clarke Island) were returned to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community.

The *Stolen Generations of Aboriginal Children Act 2006* was passed.

Nine hectares on Bruny Island were returned to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community.

A long term lease on Eddystone Point was signed by the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania (ALCT) on behalf of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community.

2010/11

**titima** (Trefoil Island) was returned to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community.

2012

The Brighton Bypass went ahead at **kutalayna** (Jordan River) at the expense of Aboriginal heritage, although heritage listing was approved prior to bridge construction.

In June 2012 legislation to amend the *Aboriginal Lands Act 1995* to allow the return of **larapuna** and Rebecca Creek Quarry to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community was introduced to Parliament. The Bill was unanimously passed on 21 June 2012 and referred to the Legislative Council.

After debating and adjourning its decision the Legislative Council is yet to make a decision.

## 2013

The Aboriginal and Dual Naming Policy was launched.

## 2014

In early 2014 the Nomenclature Board and Tasmanian Government finally endorsed and approved the dual naming of the first six locations. On 5 February 2014 the locations were published in the Tasmanian Government Gazette.

The locations will be dual named with the (original) Aboriginal name and the European name on signage and maps.

Locations are:

**kanamaluka** (Tamar River)

**kunanyi** (Mount Wellington)

**larapuna** (Bay of Fires)

**laraturunawn** (Sundown Point)

**nungu** (West Point)

**pinmatik** (Rocky Cape)

**putalina** (Oyster Cove)

**takayna** (Tarkine)

**taypalaka** (Green Point)

**titima** (Trefoil Island)

**truwana** (Cape Barren Island)

**wukalina** (Mount William)

**yingina** (Great Lake).

## 2015

**Karadi** (Rothsay Circle, Goodwood) was returned to Karadi Aboriginal Corporation and **panatana** to Six Rivers Aboriginal Corporation.

## 2016

**Murrayfield**, a 4000 hectare coastal property on Bruny Island was returned to weetapoona Aboriginal Corporation.

## 2017

**Kings Run**, a 338 hectare property in takayna was returned to the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania.

## 2019

Jane and Tom Teniswood returned half of their 220 hectare property in **Little Swanport** to the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania, the first private land return in the state.

## Tasmania Today

When we reflect on the past we remember the hurt and sorrow our people have suffered. Public apologies, recognition and acceptance are part of the healing process.

Creating a new future where our history is known, our culture is respected and our children are proud to be Aboriginal is important to us.

Walk in our shoes, see through our eyes and journey alongside us... the Tasmanian Aboriginal community.

# Debriefing

Participants should be given a few minutes to reflect and discuss in their groups what they have learned from the activity and how they feel. One person could record the comments.

Make it clear to the participants that the aim of the activity is to raise awareness and encourage understanding. IT IS NOT to try and make anyone feel guilty. When people are more aware of past injustices they are more able to prevent them from occurring in the future.

Participants should be invited to share their learning and feelings with the whole group.

Possible discussion starters:

- What did you learn of importance that you didn't know before?
- What would you like to find out more about?
- How did you feel when your drawing was torn up?
- Is this activity better to learn from than watching a video or reading a book about the same events? If so, why?
- Was there anything in the story or activity that surprised you? How or why?

Some key questions:

- How long have Aboriginal people been living in Tasmania?
- What do you think the Tasmanian Aboriginal people would have thought when they first saw white people arriving on their shore?
- How did traditional Aboriginal culture vary in different regions of the state?
- A number of French and English ships visited Tasmanian shores during the 1700s. What was the purpose of these visits?
- What did the first Europeans say about Tasmanian Aborigines? Did they view them as equal, or inferior human beings?

# One final thing

Before discussion completely winds up, ask participants to find their ‘country’ – the pieces of paper – and then, together put it back to how it was before the activity.

Discuss the analogy.

---

## Risdon Cove

*A short walk away from where the two pyramids stand,  
now a place for healing was once a massacred land.  
Reclaimed by my people, standing strong for our rights,  
which used to be nothing but dreams that caused fights.  
Political battles for hours on end,  
for this place to be given back for us to mend.  
While now some of our ancestors are there at rest,  
there are still remains out there under scientific tests.  
Even today, our rights have caused some commotion,  
and each step of our journeys are filled with emotion,  
Some people say it's a step forward at last,  
But for us, it's a step back to learn more of our past.*

*M.J. Sainty 14/7/07*

---



*The Healing Garden, Risdon Cove*



30 Raminea Road,  
Lindisfarne Tasmania 7015

GPO Box 169  
Hobart Tas 7001

Email: [aboriginal.education@education.tas.gov.au](mailto:aboriginal.education@education.tas.gov.au)



**Aboriginal Education**

Department of Education Tasmania

knowledge | learning | empowerment



**Tasmanian  
Government**