

# CROSS CURRICULUM UNIT



*"Connecting to Country" workshop on Gadigal tools*

**Kate Corcoran, Santa Sabina College**

## Rationale

The study of Geography provides important opportunities for students to understand and value the rich culture and history of Australia's First Nations People and the role that First Nations knowledge systems play in ensuring a more sustainable, just and reconciled future for Australia. Along with the broader inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander themes as a cross-curriculum priority, the NSW Geography Curriculum recognises the importance of this area of knowledge by explicitly embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content across a range of topics in the mandatory and elective courses. But it is often a challenge to address this content in such a way that students develop a deep understanding and appreciation of the history, culture, politics and present-day issues faced by First Australians.

## A New Approach

In our attempts to achieve more successful learning outcomes, we decided a more sustained focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and contemporary issues was required. So, a few years ago, we trialled a more interdisciplinary approach that involved the concurrent teaching of the relevant themes across Geography, History, English and Religious Education.



*"Coming Together in Country" - Discussion on Reconciliation led by Yolngu Elder, Djapirri and Culture College facilitator, Maeve.*

During this trial, we were thrilled to discover how quick students were to make connections between the ideas being addressed in each of these subjects and the robust and respectful discussions that ensued. It was also during this trial that we realised the many ways that the History *Rights and Freedoms* and the Geography *Human Wellbeing* topics overlap and that a natural sequence of events could be created by reshuffling and integrating these topics. With this goal in mind, the Geography and History faculties came together to create a program that integrated the relevant components of these two topics.



*Gadigal Country" workshop with Gadigal artist Kate Constantine*

# CROSS CURRICULUM UNIT

Here is a summary of this 7 Week Program:

CONTENT	TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES
<p><b>The origins &amp; significance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), including Australia's involvement in the development of the declaration</b> (ACDSEH023)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>outline the purpose of the UN and describe the origins of the UDHR, including Australia's involvement</li> <li>explain the significance of the UDHR</li> </ul>	<p>Using resources on the UDHR site, students consider the origins of the UN, the declaration and the meaning of human rights.</p> <p>Students choose one UNHR article to create a classroom poster to show an understanding of this right. They present their findings briefly to the class</p>
<p><b>Spatial variations in human wellbeing</b> (ACHGK077, ACHGK078, ACHGK079)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>investigate causes, issues &amp; consequences of spatial variations in human wellbeing</li> </ul> <p><b>Human wellbeing in Australia</b> (ACHGK080)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>investigate the reasons for and consequences of spatial variations in human wellbeing in Australia</li> </ul>	<p>Students are introduced to the Closing the Gap Campaign and ABS data to identify indicators &amp; consider reasons for the current gap in Indigenous wellbeing</p> <p>Students evaluate the success of the campaign and examine the revised National Agreement approach</p> <p>Students use media reports to assess current political views on the First Nations issues</p>
<p><b>Background to the struggle of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for rights and freedoms before 1965, including the 1938 Day of Mourning and the Stolen Generations</b> (ACDSEH104)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>explain the purpose and significance of early twentieth-century Aboriginal activism including the 1938 Day of Mourning protest for Aboriginal &amp; Torres Strait Islander peoples</li> <li>outline the rights and freedoms denied to ATSI peoples pre-1965 &amp; the role &amp; policies of the Aboriginal Protection Board</li> <li>using a range of sources, describe the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were forcibly removed from their families (Stolen Generations)</li> <li>describe the effects of the assimilation policy for rights and freedoms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples</li> </ul>	<p>Students are pretested using a stimulus-based thinking routine stimulus showing historical statues now considered offensive by some</p> <p>Students use stimulus to consider two perspectives on Australia Day</p> <p>Teacher uses the Black Lives Matter Movement short clip to find parallels between the struggle of African Americans and First Australians</p> <p>Students use a range of sources to investigate the experiences of First Contact and the policies of Protection &amp; Assimilation (Stolen Generations)</p> <p>Teacher uses clips from the Genocide by Another Name (documentary) to ponder big questions around historical perspectives.</p>
<p><b>The significance of the following for the civil rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: 1962 right to vote federally; 1967 Referendum; Reconciliation; Mabo decision; Bringing Them Home Report (the Stolen Generations); the Apology</b> (ACDSEH106)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>outline the background, aims and significance of key developments in Aboriginal &amp; Torres Strait Islander peoples' struggle for rights &amp; freedoms</li> </ul>	<p>In small groups, students create a <b>5-minute</b> presentation on the significance of one activist/ event including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aboriginal Day of Mourning and Protest (1938)</li> <li>Right to Vote (1962) and Equal Pay (1968)</li> <li>Freedom Ride (1965)</li> <li>Wave Hill Walk Off (1966)</li> <li>1967 Referendum</li> <li>Aboriginal Tent Embassy (1972)</li> </ul>

# CROSS CURRICULUM UNIT

<p><b>Methods used by civil rights activists to achieve change, and the role of ONE individual or group in the struggle</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• outline common methods used by activists</li> <li>• investigate and explain the role of ONE individual or group in the struggle</li> </ul>	<p>After pretesting, students complete a timeline on the Mabo Decision, Native Title and the Land Rights Movement using Reconciliation Australia Factsheet</p>
<p><b>The continuing nature of efforts to secure civil rights and freedoms in Australia and throughout the world, such as the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (ACDSEH143)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• evaluate the methods and effectiveness of ONE campaign for civil rights and freedoms in Australia or another country</li> </ul>	<p>Students use media reports on the Uluru Statement from the Heart to outline the origins, goals and the working committee current standing and national referendum</p>
<p><b>Improving human wellbeing (ACHGK081)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• investigate initiatives to improve human wellbeing in Australia &amp; other countries</li> </ul>	<p>Students engage in a small group inquiry into a past or current program to address one of the National Agreement targets (including evidence of success criteria and showing learnings from past failures).</p>

## Examples of some learning activities

### Racism and Indigenous Australians


**Meyne Wyatt's monologue on racism**

'Silence is violence. Complacency is complicity'

Come up with one:

WORD & PHRASE & SENTENCE

that sums up this monologue



Source: [https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1arVcTueKLTy8mTEwx\\_hl19qQYG2Vhsh1IQEUbFeP8tc/edit#slide=id.g1e8a4097c4c\\_0\\_0](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1arVcTueKLTy8mTEwx_hl19qQYG2Vhsh1IQEUbFeP8tc/edit#slide=id.g1e8a4097c4c_0_0)

### Perspectives on Australia's National Anthem

**An Anthem for all?**

As you watch this video, consider the issues impacting Indigenous Australians that rapper, Senator Briggs, identifies.

From his perspective, why does he feel that the anthem is not inclusive of Indigenous people?

This video was made in 2019. Has anything changed since then? Undertake some research on the issues with the anthem he identifies.



Source: [https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1vzub\\_CX6SMAWJwiNqaclR43-nvolPb20ymPR7RmARo/edit#slide=id](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1vzub_CX6SMAWJwiNqaclR43-nvolPb20ymPR7RmARo/edit#slide=id)

## Variations in Wellbeing – What is this Gap?

Use the [Australian Government Close the Gap Report](#) and the links below to add data to the table

Statistics/Indicators	Indigenous	Non-indigenous	Possible reasons & implications
Child mortality	2 x rate of non-indigenous		Poor maternal health (mother's diet, obesity, diabetes)
School attendance			
Literacy/numeracy			
Year 12 attainment			
Employment			
Life expectancy			
<b>Incarceration rate</b>			
<b>Substance abuse</b>			
<b>Domestic violence</b>			

In pairs discuss and record any conclusions you can make from this data about indigenous vs non-indigenous social and economic wellbeing.

## Challenges

Putting together two syllabuses not designed for integration was never going to be a seamless process. It was useful to consolidate areas where content overlapped, and it made sense to move content around so that the topic could be addressed in chronological order to ensure students had some background to the events and issues being addressed. However, given that the History component was more prescriptive and detailed, we did have to find ways to consolidate ideas and take a more conceptual approach in order to get through the content.

There were also some logistics to sort through. Our semesterised approach to the mandatory HSIE courses allowed teachers to keep their current classes and there was plenty of collaboration between the Geography and History teams to ensure teachers were comfortable delivering content outside of their subject area. We also needed to allow time to cover the global component of Human Wellbeing along with some global elements of the Rights and Freedoms topics not addressed here.

Teachers were given some flexibility with the summative assessment task where two options were available:

1. A more traditional style test that included opportunities for source analysis, graphing skills and short answer responses
2. Group inquiry and presentation which included graph and source analysis and a viva voce.

While this flexibility created some complexity around report time, we were able to find both common and subject specific outcomes to report on.

## Successes

An important contributor to the success of the unit was the *Country as Teacher* Incursion Day which was held in Week 6 of the program. This immersive experience was created in partnership with **Culture College** who helped develop and deliver a range of activities designed to engage students in the stories and cultural practices of the local Gadigal and Wangal people. While students had a lot of fun participating in and learning about some of the customary dance, art, spiritual and recreational practices of the traditional owners, it was the storytelling and conversations they had with the presenters that students were eager to discuss when they returned to class.



*"Connecting to Country" workshop on ceremonial dance  
Photos supplied by K. Corcoran*

The feedback from the teachers involved was overwhelmingly positive. For the Geography and History teachers, we gained a greater understanding of each other's course content and skills and could see firsthand the deeper learning and engagement that came about as a result of a more sustained and sequential approach to this topic. The English and RE teachers saw greater depth and sophistication in their class discussions and in student's formative and summative assessments across all four subjects.

## Next time

Given the importance of hearing firsthand the perspectives and knowledge of First Nations People, we are keen to forge more partnerships with the local Gadigal and Wangal communities. This partnership

would also be invaluable in helping to build the knowledge base of teachers as well assisting with further program development and delivery. We would also hope to explore more opportunities to take students to sites that allow more authentic learning on country.

We are keen to get more subjects involved. While we found that integrating Geography and History content provided a valuable opportunity to teach Aboriginal and Torres Islander themes and content in a deep and meaningful manner, we also saw the benefits of teaching relevant concepts simultaneously across subjects.

## Conclusion

Based on student and teacher feedback as well as assessment outcomes, there is no doubt that this more sustained and holistic approach to Aboriginal and Torres Islander themes and content has encouraged greater student engagement and a deeper understanding. From this approach we are hopeful that students will come away more engaged in relevant contemporary issues and with a greater appreciation of the significant role that First Nations knowledge systems play in ensuring a more sustainable, just and reconciled future for Australia.

Note: teachers are welcome to contact the author for further information on the program –

[k.corcoran@ssc.nsw.edu.au](mailto:k.corcoran@ssc.nsw.edu.au)

## RESOURCES FOR SALE

### Downloadable 2020–2022 HSC lecture videos by topic

**These lectures can be used at any time until the NEW HSC is taught in 2025. Use with HSC classes for teaching topics or for revision throughout the year. Teachers new to teaching the HSC course might use the lectures for their own professional learning.**

Three topic showreels can be purchased as a full set OR individually and in any order throughout the year.

1. Ecosystem at Risk (Biophysical Interactions; Vulnerability and Resilience; Management and protection; Evaluating management; Alpine, GBR and GSR Case. Studies; Full topic overviews x 2)
2. Urban Places (Urban Dynamics – Sydney, Campbelltown; Urban places including Megacities and World cities; Urban places topic overview)
3. People and Economic Activity (Overviews and Exam advice (2020 & 2021); Viticulture, Cocoa, Tourism case studies; Tamburlaine Enterprise)

Click on the link below to register. (Available until November 2023)

**[HSC STUDENT LECTURES 2020–2022 DOWNLOADABLE VIDEO PACKAGES](#)**