



Unsung ANZAC heroes 2: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ANZACs



Number two of four lessons

- Unsung ANZAC heroes 1: ANZAC origins
- **Unsung ANZAC heroes 2: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ANZACs**
- Unsung ANZAC heroes 3: analysing data related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ANZACs
- Unsung ANZAC heroes 4: biographical research on ANZACs

CURRICULUM INFORMATION

PHASE OF DEVELOPMENT

Early Childhood	Middle Childhood	Early Adolescence	Late Adolescence
	✓	✓	

MAJOR LEARNING AREAS

The Arts	English	H & PE	LOTE	Mathematics	Science	S & E	T & E
✓	✓					✓ ✓	

VALUES

Pursuit of knowledge & commitment to achievement of potential	Self acceptance & respect of self	Respect & concern for others & their rights	Social & civic responsibility	Environmental responsibility
✓		✓	✓	

TOPIC INFORMATION

PURPOSE

To provide opportunities for students to:

- broaden their knowledge base regarding ANZACs;
- broaden their knowledge and understanding of our shared black & white histories;
- identify the injustices suffered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait ANZACs; and
- develop research skills.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Students:

- identify and appreciate the contributions given by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ANZACs in armed services campaigns that were endorsed by the Australian Federal Government;
- develop an understanding of the injustices experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ANZACs; and
- further develop understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.





KEY BACKGROUND POINTS

The contribution made by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the armed services is not widely known or acknowledged. They were involved as early as 1899-1902 in the second Anglo Boer War and all subsequent armed services campaigns, namely:

Campaign	Date	Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people involved
First World War	1914-1918	350-500
Second World War	1939-1945	approximately 3,000
Malayan Emergency	1948-1960	
Korean War	1950-1953	
Vietnam War	1962-1973	
Persian Gulf War	1990-1991	
East Timor	1999-	
Afghanistan	2001-	
Iraq and Kurdistan	2003-	

Social Context:

- The actual number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ANZACS is unknown because it was not until 1941/42 when there was a physical threat of Japanese invasion of 'home soil' that they (Aboriginal peoples of non-mixed race) were allowed to enlist. Prior to this time many who chose to enlist claimed they were of Indian or Maori descent.
- Between 1860 and 1940 each state in the Commonwealth enacted and enforced laws empowering a "Chief Protector" to take charge of the lives of Aboriginal people until they attained maturity (titles of Government Acts differ from state to state).

Legal issues:

- In 1901 *The Constitution* excluded Aboriginal people by not regarding them as Australian citizens.
- In 1909, the *Defense Act 1909* (Commonwealth) prevented those who were not of 'substantially European descent' from being able to enlist in any of the armed forces.
- It was only in May 1917 that an army order allowed the enlistment of 'half-castes' due to the shortage of volunteers and the carnage on the Western Front. (Note: the term 'half-castes' is a derogatory term, offensive to many Aboriginal people, and it reflects the attitudes and policies of that era.)

Who went to war?

- It is estimated that between 350 and 500 Indigenous men enlisted for World War 1 ...
- ... and about 3,000 for World War II.
- Nine percent of Australian men enlisted. About twenty percent of men at Raukkan, an Aboriginal community in South Australia, went to war.

CULTURAL & PROTOCOL CONSIDERATIONS

- When exploring historical issues terminology that is now considered offensive is encountered and it will be necessary to clarify why this is the current view. Offensive terms include: half-caste, full-blood, native.
- When considering the contribution made by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ANZACS it is important to acknowledge the sacrifice they made at severing their spiritual connection to their Traditional Land to fight for Australia.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are diverse and thus it is important not to make generalizations.
- Recommend contact with local Aboriginal community for specific advice on how to refer to deceased people about whom reference is made in this unit of work. There are protocols for the deceased depending on length of time, status in community ...





RESOURCES

Medium	Author, producer, developer etc	Title	Source
CD-ROM	DUIT Multimedia	<i>Moorditj</i>	http://moorditj.net.au
Website	Australian Government	<i>ANZAC Day</i> <i>Encyclopedia of Indigenous Australian Servicemen</i> <i>Gift to a Nation</i>	http://www.acn.net.au/articles/anzac/ (extract of article enclosed as information sheet) http://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/aborigines (selected articles enclosed as information sheets) http://www.naa.gov.au/whats-on/online/feature-exhibits/gift.aspx
Website	Peter Charlton-Courier Mail	<i>Unsung Heroes</i>	http://www.news.com.au/couriermail/extras/oq/book5indigenous.html
Website	Australian War Memorial	<i>Harry Thorpe</i>	http://www.awm.gov.au/fiftyaustralians/46.asp

Warning:

Please note, you may prefer, if working with primary aged children, to download and edit some web articles to remove references to soldiers' activities with prostitutes and the prevalence of contracting sexually transmitted diseases.

Information sheet 1 included has been edited for this reason. The specific articles provided above are all appropriate to use with primary students. Care and direction may be required when students engage in selecting an ANZAC for bibliographic study in lesson 4.

TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES

TEACHING RESOURCES

- student writing materials
- **Moorditj** CD-ROM
- data projector and screen
- copies of **INFORMATION SHEETS 2** and **3**
- student copies of **LEARNING GUIDE 1: Tokenism Not Equity**

LESSON STEPS

Preparation:

The lessons in this unit of work are intended as a guide only. Please feel free to use them in any way that suits your students' needs.

- **Read** Key Background Points and cultural and Protocol Considerations.
- **Organise IT** (e.g. booking of room and data projector and borrowing *Moorditj* CD-ROM).
- **Preview** visual artwork and text in *Moorditj*, ***Do They Beat The Drums Slowly***, by Ellen José.
- **Photocopy** **LEARNING GUIDE 1: Tokenism Not Equity** for students.
- **Photocopy** **INFORMATION SHEETS 2** and **3**.





Implementation

Whole Class

- **Review** current conceptual understanding of the term ANZAC, that is, to include all diggers who have returned from active service not just those who fought at Gallipoli.
- **View and discuss** *Moorditj* artwork ***Do They Beat the Drums Slowly*** by Ellen José:
 - What are the main features in the piece of art work?(Torres Strait warrior with head-dress, wounded, sun, curved road and crosses)
 - Read the text to gain an understanding of the significance as an ANZAC.
 - Use the ‘eye’ to show detail of barbed-wire crosses.

In small groups

- **Suggest** possible reasons why the star under the foot is symbolic of the token medals given for involvement as ANZACs (Pacific war service medal in shape of a star and underfoot representing being down-trodden).
- **Share** responses with group.
- **Instruct** students to retain Learning Guide and web articles for future lessons.

Individually

- **Distribute INFORMATION SHEETS 2 & 3 and LEARNING GUIDE 1.**
- **Complete LEARNING GUIDE 1: Tokenism Not Equity.**

ASSESSMENT

Observe participation in class activities and completion of LEARNING GUIDE 1: Tokenism not Equity to ascertain whether students:

- identify and appreciate the contributions given by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ANZACS in armed services campaigns that were endorsed by the Australian Federal Government; and
- develop an understanding of the injustices experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ANZACS.

Possible responses to LEARNING GUIDE 1: Tokenism Not Equity

What information is provided in the articles that indicate pre & post World Wars I & II that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ANZACs suffered discrimination?

Discrimination	Impact/result upon the ANZAC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exclusion • 1/3rd pay • paid in tobacco • never formally enlisted or paid • not drink alcohol • not vote • not marry non-Aboriginal • not buy property • were shunned upon return • families oppressed • no access to property initiatives • no access to health support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deny ancestry • illegally treated and underpaid • illegally treated and underpaid • treated as inferior and illegally treated and underpaid • no citizenship • denied basic freedom • insulted and not acknowledged • poverty and poor health • isolation • treated unjustly • physical and spiritual poverty

Other responses will vary.

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LEARNING GUIDE 1: TOKENISM NOT EQUITY

Student's name Date

INSTUCTIONS:

- **Write** your name.
- **Read** the articles "Some Facts" and "Why did they serve?"
- **Complete** the activity by answering the questions below, and expressing your opinion.

What information is provided in the articles that indicate pre & post World Wars 1& II that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ANZACs suffered discrimination?

Discrimination	Impact/result upon the ANZAC

What I think and feel about the way Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of the armed services were treated.

What I think and feel about the way Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ANZACS were treated.





INFORMATION SHEET 2: Facts about Aboriginal and Islander enlistment

(from a list compiled by Bob Hall)

All three services (army, navy and air force) published their own orders which excluded persons 'not substantially of European origin or descent' from voluntary enlistment in the early stages of World War 2. This did not totally stop our men and women trying to join in their thousands.

The three services did not record the ancestry of those who enlisted and it is now impossible to fix an exact figure or list of names of those who have served. Many Aboriginal soldiers, upon being questioned by their mates or by the enlisting officers if they were Aboriginal would often state that they were of Indian or Maori extraction.

The threat of Japanese invasion forced the services to admit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. Most were enlisted in 1941 or in 1942, when the demand for military manpower was at its highest. Most served in the army followed by the air force with the least number in the navy.

About 750 Torres Strait Islanders and a further 60 mainland Murri's (Aboriginals) served in units of *Torres Strait Force*. The units were raised to defend the Torres Strait - to enable the use of the vital strait as a shipping route from the east coast to Darwin.

These men were only paid **1/3 the rate of their non-Indigenous mates**, and this underpayment was illegal. Their underpayment was redressed in 1983.

Fifty tribal Yolgnu men from East Arnhem Land served in the *Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit*, under the command of Squadron Leader Donald Thomson. In pre-war days Thomson had been an anthropologist and had worked with these people. His unit had the task of providing Darwin with early warning of any Japanese attack in the East Arnhem Land area (several thousand square kilometres in size). These warriors were to use their traditional weapons to wage a guerilla war against the Japanese if they landed. The Yolgnu warriors were 'paid' three sticks of tobacco per week. Some of the men had killed Japanese before the war (pearlers) and had been put in gaol as a result.

Thirty-five Tiwi from Melville Island were armed and equipped by the navy to patrol Melville and Bathurst Islands. They served from 1942 till the end of the war, they wore navy uniform but they were never formally enlisted or paid. Two men from this group are thought to have made clandestine (secret) visits to Timor aboard allied submarines.

INFORMATION SHEET 3: Why did they serve?

by Garth O'Connell



That is not an easy question to answer of course, as we today are not in their same situation. As Aboriginals, they were not classified as citizens of Australia, they could not drink alcohol, vote, marry non-Aboriginals or buy property. They would have been like every other adventurous young Australian male, wanting to go out and see the world, get paid really good money, see some action and 'be home before Christmas'.

But these boys stood out in the crowd, they were Aboriginal. They put up with racist slurs and attitudes almost daily in their civilian life – but to their mates in the trenches they were Mick, Ben and Harry. The misconceptions and negative stereotypes that surely many non-Aboriginal diggers had in their minds when they joined would have quickly disappeared when they were living, eating, laughing and dying with these young fellas.

But the most tragic aspect of their service was not in them 'going over the top' and running at machine guns and dying – it came after they returned to their country, Australia.

When they came back home to Australia they were shunned, their sacrifices ignored and their families oppressed even further by their respective State and Federal governments with such cruel initiatives as the "Soldier Settlement Scheme" and official assimilation policies. Returned soldiers were not allowed to have a drink with their comrades at their local pub, their children were being taken away and there was no Government support for the wounded or mentally scarred veterans.



The service that these warriors did for an ungrateful nation helped provide momentum to the growing Aboriginal Rights Movement in the 1930s. They provided hard evidence that we as a people were willing to serve Australia for the better, but white Australia was not willing to help us improve our way of life.

Even though their small number (estimated to be 300-500) seems like a drop in the bucket of the tens of thousands of Australians who served in World War One, their significance to modern Aboriginal history is immense. Today the bodies of those that fell in the battlefields of France and Belgium remain with their mates, thousands of miles away from their ancestral homes.