



Aboriginal Reserves (post 1895) 1: Northam Reserve



Lesson one in a series of three

- **Aboriginal Reserves (post 1895) 1: Northam Reserve**
- Aboriginal Reserves (post 1895) 2: Mogumber Mission (Moore River Settlement)
- Aboriginal Reserves (post 1895) 3: Christian Mission at New Norcia

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
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

DISTRICT

This lesson has been developed by teachers in the following district:
Midlands

TOPIC INFORMATION

PURPOSE

- To provide students with information on the plight of Aboriginal families who were forced to live on reserves.
- To develop understanding of historical issues that affect contemporary Aboriginal people and their families.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Students:

- re-evaluate values they currently hold about aspects of the history of the south-west of Western Australia, by viewing it from an Aboriginal perspective; and
- reflect critically on the historical record of European settlement in Western Australia, comparing the Aboriginal perspective with the European perspective.
- explore conditions (positive and negative) experienced by Aboriginal people on reserves in the Midlands region.



KEY BACKGROUND POINTS

In this series of lessons, three related topics about Reserves, Settlements and Missions in the Midlands area show students the impact of three separate situations on Aboriginal people's lifestyle. Economic pursuits of agriculture, government policy of the day, and Christian missions, all impacted on Aboriginal culture.

Aboriginal Reserves (post 1895): Northam reserve

This topic examines the spread of non-Aboriginal settlement into the wheatbelt area taking land for agricultural use. Clearing land for farming impacted upon the hunter-gatherer lifestyle of Aboriginal people by making it difficult to survive. This forced Aboriginal people to re-locate near towns looking for employment, and to rely on government rations provided at town police stations. Town people did not want Aboriginal people living in town so a reserve system was established. This decreed Aboriginal people must reside in reserves on the out-skirts of towns. The lesson explores the life Aboriginal people experienced on reserves and its impact on Aboriginal culture. (See Learning Guide 1: Town Camps of the Wheatbelt for further information.)

Figure 1: Northam Reserve - New buildings



Aboriginal Reserves (post 1895): Mogumber Mission (Moore River Settlement)

This topic examines government policy of the day which led to the 'Stolen Generations'. Aboriginal people were moved on from various town reserves (e. g. at Moora and Northam) and housed in 'settlements'. The government sent Aboriginal people from all over WA to Mogumber and as they come from many different language groups this created problems.

Aboriginal Reserves (post 1895): Christian Mission at New Norcia

This topic studies the Benedictine Christian Mission, started by Bishop Salvado, which aimed to 'civilise and evangelise' Aboriginal people. The mission also provided education, health and training functions for Aboriginal people.

CULTURAL & PROTOCOL CONSIDERATIONS

- At any events you organise, invite an Elder to provide a Noongar welcome to the area.
- Use guest speakers for local information.
- Some issues can be sensitive to certain individuals – be careful that information is correct.
- Remember that in different Aboriginal language groups words and spelling can differ.
- If you have any doubts about Aboriginal cultural information and its presentation to students, contact the DEO Aboriginal Education team or a suitably experienced person at your school for advice, before proceeding.



RESOURCES

Medium	Author, producer, developer etc	Title	Source
website		<i>Bringing them home</i>	www.bringingthemhome.com.au
book	Garden, Donald S	<i>Northam: An Avon Valley History</i>	Northam Shire Council Hesperian Press ISBN 0 85905 163 3
book	Hallam, Sylvia & Tillbrook, Lois	<i>Aborigines of the South West 1829 - 1840</i>	University of Western Australia ISBN 0 85564 296 3
book	Green, Neville	<i>Broken Spears</i>	Focus Education services ISBN 0 9591828 1 0
book	Haebich, Anna	<i>For Their Own Good</i>	Northam Shire Council Library UWA Press

TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES

TEACHING RESOURCES

- student copies of **Learning Guide 1: Town camps of the wheatbelt**
- student copies of **Learning Guide 2: Aboriginal Reserves – data collection sheet**
- student copies of **Learning Guide 3: Values assessment**
- data projector and screen (or individual computers) for class viewing of website
- collection of resources including the books above where possible – and use libraries
- writing materials

LESSON STEPS

You may choose to spread the following ideas over a series of lessons depending on your students' abilities and timetabling constraints.

Preparation

- **Check** out the website, and choose how you want to share this information with your students.
- **Research** the topic in books suggested and make these available to your students.
- **Read** KEY BACKGROUND POINTS above, and **Learning Guide 1: Town camps of the wheatbelt**.
- For greater understanding read background notes for the lessons on Mogumber and New Norcia.
- **Source** further materials related to reserves, in school or local library.
- **Make** student copies of **Learning Guides**.





Implementation

Whole class

- **Introduce** lesson sharing with students, information in PURPOSES, STUDENT OUTCOMES, and KEY BACKGROUND POINTS.
- **Use** data projector or individual computers to view and discuss *Bringing them home* website.
- **Distribute** student copies of student copies of **Learning Guide 1: Town camps of the wheatbelt.**
- **Read and discuss.**
- **Distribute** student copies of **Learning Guide 2: Aboriginal Reserves – data collection sheet.**
- **Read and discuss** tasks required of students to ensure they understand it.

Working individually or in pairs

- **Ask** students to complete research and writing up presentations.
- **Provide** criteria which students must achieve in doing their research and preparing presentations.

When research task is complete:

- **Organise** students to present their findings to the class – or groups.
- **Distribute** student copies of **Learning Guide 3: Values Assessment.**
- **Ask** students to complete the values sheet to assess their feelings about the issues they have studied.
- **Ask** students to consider their feelings prior to this study and to gauge if they have changed their attitudes.
- **Discuss** responses in groups.
- **Discuss** the fact that some core values held by families or society don't change over a person's lifetime. However, some values change as we develop and acquire more knowledge about issues that surround us.

ASSESSMENT

- **Observe** student participation in discussions.
- **Assess** the way student's approached and completed their research tasks.
- **Assess** research presentations.
- **Consider** student's responses to **Learning Guide 3: Values Assessment.**

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LEARNING GUIDE 1: Town camps of the wheatbelt

Student's name: _____ Date: _____

KEY BACKGROUND POINTS

Town camps of the wheatbelt

Throughout the wheatbelt, farms displaced Aboriginal people as newcomers took the best lands and waterholes. As farmers settled and expanded they took over traditional camping grounds. Clearing the land altered and destroyed food sources for Aboriginal people who relied on hunting and gathering food. Drought conditions compounded their problems. The new settlers who took over waterholes sometimes poisoned them in order to remove Aboriginal people from the area. All this forced them in increasing numbers to camp near towns where they often faced strong exception from residents who manufactured unfounded complaints in order to move the people on. However, local farmers were dependent on Aboriginal labour, so people did not ask for their complete removal, but required them to camp at the same site – an Aboriginal reserve.

Local government authorities did not consider Aboriginal people's needs when deciding on sites for reserves. On their traditional lands Aboriginal people chose sites with ready access to drinking water, and timber for firewood and shelter. Now, the best land had been claimed or purchased by individuals or the government so local authorities and/or police often chose sites outside towns on land that was inferior, useless and not wanted by white settlers so it was used as the rubbish tip for the town. For example, at Kellerberrin the allocated site was the old rubbish tip.

The number of gazetted town reserves increased from six in 1920 to thirteen in 1925. They were at:

- **1920:** Moora, Kellerberrin, Beverley, Narrogin, Bunbury, Guildford
- **1925:** York, Williams, Gnowangerup, Katanning, Albany, Woodanilling, Pinjarra

Placing Aboriginal people on a town reserve denied them connection to land that held great significance to them. This made the people restless and uncomfortable. Family custodians of certain areas were unable to fulfill obligations for their language groups.

Currently, Native Title process seeks to reconnect Aboriginal people to their land. To make a land claim Aboriginal people have to deal with the Native Title Tribunal which operates across Australia.

Northam Reserve – Life in the Avon Valley

Reasons for moving to reserves

From 1911, for reasons already given, Aboriginal families moved out of the bush and into permanent camps in wheat-belt towns. They experienced difficulties earning a living on farms and military power was stronger than Aboriginal – Noongar power (that is, horse and gun compared to being on foot armed with a spear). Non-Aboriginal settlers were destroying Aboriginal people's lifestyle and language through actions such as: dispossessing Aboriginal people from their lands, desecrating their totemic symbols, maltreating women ...

Aboriginal people camped in reserves close to towns to seek work, and because after their lands were taken they needed rations that were distributed by local police stations on a weekly basis, to feed their families. Some parents tried to enrol their children in local schools to avoid having them taken by the government. At Moora, a major town in the Midlands area, the Aboriginal camp quickly grew as it offered an alternative for people previously sent to New Norcia, and men found work in railway yards and on surrounding farms.

Results of moving to reserves – life in the camp

Health

Town camps lacked basic facilities like water and sanitary amenities. As numbers of people rose it became increasingly difficult to maintain levels of sanitation and people's health declined. The rations provided and meagre remains of natural foods contributed to poor health, which led to higher levels of sickness and death for camp people. Close proximity to the town rubbish tip also contributed to their poor health.

Construction of shelters

Conditions on the reserves were often substandard with recycled corrugated iron used as housing. This offered little protection from searing heat in summer and freezing cold in winter. When required to move to reserves Aboriginal people were forced to use rubbish tips as a resource for finding materials they needed to build their shelters. The surrounding lands, where traditionally they had found materials they needed, had been cleared and farmers did not allow Aboriginal people to take from their farms.

Prevailing non-Aboriginal Attitudes of the time

The permanent nature of the reserves with their increasing numbers of people led to discriminatory and racist behaviours from white residents who did not want large camps near town. Fear and distrust developed. Conditions in some camps led government officials to continue the policy related to the 'Stolen Generation'.



LEARNING GUIDE 2: Aboriginal reserves – data collection sheet (page 1 of 2)

Student's name: _____ Date: _____

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Students:

- re-evaluate values they currently hold about aspects of the history of the south-west of Western Australia, by viewing it from an Aboriginal perspective; and
- reflect critically on the historical record of European settlement in Western Australia, comparing the Aboriginal perspective with the European perspective.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

In order to complete the following tasks, research the questions/statements using Learning Guide 1: Town camps of the wheatbelt, reference books or websites.

1. Different groups in society often hold different perspectives about how society operates, and of effects of different cultural beliefs and behaviours on other members of society. Historical records of a society are presented from the point of view of the people keeping records, or writing the history.

Reflect critically on the historical record of the period of European settlement of the south-west of WA.

On this table describe positives and negatives of Aboriginal reserves, for the three different groups shown.

Aboriginal Reserves in Western Australia

	Positives	Negatives
Aboriginal perspectives		
Non-Aboriginal perspective Pioneer farmers		
Non-Aboriginal perspective Government officials		



LEARNING GUIDE 2: Aboriginal reserves – data collection sheet (page 2 of 2)

Student's name: _____ Date: _____

2. Describe the prevailing attitudes of non-Aboriginal people at this time.

3. With your understanding of the historical record from all perspectives, suggest strategies that could promote reconciliation between the various groups in Western Australia.

4. **Choose and research** one of the following topics, or choose your own (check it with your teacher).
Present your findings as a report, or in another form of your choice (check it with your teacher).
Use diagrams, maps and illustrations in your presentation.

Topic: Government Influence

Sample research questions – add your own:

- What was the government policy about Aboriginal reserves?
- What rights and responsibilities did Aboriginal people have during the reserve era?
- What was the role of the Aboriginal Protection Board?

Topic: Impact on People

Sample research questions – add your own:

- How were Aboriginal people affected when they were dispossessed of their land?
- What problems arose when Aboriginal people were forced to live in the reserves?

Topic: Living Conditions

Sample research questions – add your own:

The mission/reserve was considered 'home' by Aboriginal people who lived on it. What options did Aboriginal people living there have to improve their situation?

- Was there running water?
- Was there sanitation?
- Were structures provided by the Government to combat the cold winters?





LEARNING GUIDE 3: Values assessment

Student's name: _____ Date: _____

Tick the box that best reflects your opinion about each statement.

	I strongly disagree	I disagree	I agree	I strongly agree
<p>A Pursuit of knowledge and a commitment to achievement of potential</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical reflection: Students should reflect critically on both cultural heritage and attitudes and values underlying current social trends and institutions. 				
<p>Self acceptance and respect of self</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openness to learning: Students should welcome opportunities for learning from all sources, including formal disciplines, investigations, contemplations and cultural tradition; and from people of divergent views. 				
<p>Respect and concern for others and their rights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect: Students should respect those of different opinions, temperament or backgrounds. • Cooperation/Conflict Resolution: Students should strive to work cooperatively and to resolve conflict peacefully while respecting differences and valuing the other person. 				
<p>Social and civic responsibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconciliation: Strategies of cooperation and reconciliation are preferred to coercion and confrontation, especially where groups or individuals are in conflict. • Social Justice: The right of each person to a fair share of society's economic and cultural resources is recognised. 				
<p>Environmental responsibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Heritage: The cultural heritage of Australia, including Aboriginal sacred and archaeological cultural heritage, should be respected and maintained. 				