

Year 7/8 History Booklet

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Dispossession and Frontier War



Mounted police engaging Indigenous Australians during the Slaughterhouse Creek Massacre of 1838

For the first two years of the colony of New South Wales the relationship between the colonists and the Indigenous people was not marred by the violence that was to come. The next period of interaction between the white settlers and Aboriginal people was one that has been seen in terms of a 'frontier war'. Although many history books have claimed that the settlement of Australia was an orderly, peaceful affair, where Aboriginal people are mentioned only in passing, this is very far from the truth. The next 150 years were characterised by violent massacres and bloodshed.

When the settlers began to move out from the original settlement in Sydney Cove, they came into more contact with the Aboriginal people. They began to take over more and more of their land and food sources, justifying their actions by saying that Aboriginal people were nomads who could move on and would be just as happy somewhere else. They completely ignored the deep spiritual connections the Aboriginal people had with the land, never mind the fact that driving them off it was denying them access to their traditional food and water.

sources. The Indigenous people may have been nomadic, but they travelled around one large area, letting the land rest and replenish before coming back to it again at a later date. The settlers did not understand this type of land management and did not respect it.

Aboriginal people had always lived with the land, now the settlers began to clear the vegetation, meaning that food sources were destroyed. The settlers also began putting up fences and preventing Aboriginal people from entering areas where they could find food. The introduction of grazing animals on to the land also helped to strip the land of vegetation and drove out smaller animals that had been a food source for the Indigenous people. Aboriginal people were being dispossessed of their land. Both the settlers and Aboriginal people felt they were fighting for their survival and so the war that erupted between them was desperate and brutal -there were massacres committed on both sides, but the white settlers had the superior firepower and in later times, as more and more Aboriginal people died from disease, the greater numbers. *See image 1*

Although much of the conflict between the Indigenous people and the settlers consisted of tit-for-tat attacks and ambushes, a number of bigger battles did occur over the first century of settlement. The British like to refer to these incidents as 'dispensing of natives' or 'the murder of peaceful settlers', they never admitted that an actual state of war existed. This version of events was handed down over many years and existed until very recently in many history books.

One of the most famous Indigenous fighters was a man name Pemulwhy, a leader of the Darug people who lived in the Hawkesbury Region. When the British army was sent to the Hawkesbury to stop Indigenous resistance to the settlers there, Pemulwhy led a guerrilla warfare type campaign against them. He led a band of men who used ambushes and 'hit and run' tactics to attack settlers on their farms and the soldiers in the bush. The troops had been given orders to hunt down and kill, not just the fighters, but any Aboriginal people they found -including women and children. By May 1795 the colony's troops and the Darug people were involved in open warfare along the banks of the Hawkesbury River. This state of affairs lasted for over 20 years and only came to an end with the complete destruction of the Darug people. Pemulwhy was killed in 1802, but his son, Tedbury, continued the fight until he was killed in 1810. *See image 2*

As the colonists moved out across the continent, the frontier war moved with them. Everywhere they went the settlers encountered the Indigenous people of that area. Everywhere they went, they dispossessed the Indigenous people of their lands and then had to fight to keep them. As in New South Wales, troops in Western Australia were also guilty of many massacres of the Aboriginal population. One such massacre is the so-called Battle of Pinjarra. In 1834 in Pinjarra, 80km south of Perth, government troops rounded up and murdered a large group of the local Pinjarup people. No one knows how many were killed, but it could have been up to 80 people. They had been murdered, not in response to an attack by them, but to provide a 'lesson' for other Aboriginal people in the area.

In Tasmania the first governors tried to stop violence against the Indigenous people, but that did not happen and war broke out on the east coast. By 1828, Aboriginal people had been ordered out of all the settlements on the Island, and by 1830 the governor ordered a cordon to be erected on the east coast to herd Aboriginal people into one area so they could be destroyed. Most of them escaped the cordon, but by 1832 only 302 Indigenous Tasmanians had survived the massacres and were living on Flinders Island in a church mission.

The Myall Creek Massacre of 1838 differs from all the others massacres in that people were arrested and tried for taking part in it. In all the previous attacks on Aboriginal people, not one white person had suffered the legal consequences for murder, but not many did after it either. More than 30 women, children and elderly men were tied together, shot, stabbed and their bodies were burned by twelve white stockmen on Myall Creek Station in northern New South Wales. Only one small boy from the group was saved by another stockman who refused to take part. The massacre was only one in a spate of these attacks in the area. The men who committed the massacre never expected to be punished; no one else ever had been. This time, however, seven of them were found guilty of the murder of an Indigenous child and were hanged. The hanging did not stop those intent on murdering Indigenous people -it only meant that they made sure not to leave any witnesses behind. *See image 3*

Sometimes the Indigenous resistance did work and the settlers abandoned their farms and moved on, but in the majority of instances the settlers just found new ways of eliminating the threat posed by the Aboriginal people. Instead of going out and fighting them, the settlers began poisoning their water sources, or giving them poisoned food.

Another way the settlers came up with to 'disperse the natives' was by setting up the 'Native Police Forces'. This force was made up of only Indigenous men who were trained by the colonists' troops. The settlers used one group of Aboriginal people to hunt down and kill other groups of Aboriginal people. They used tribal rivalries to their advantage and were able to wash their hands of any bloodshed.

Disease and dispossession were the main causes of Indigenous deaths in the first century after colonisation, but the frontier war and its brutal massacres continued in some areas of Australia until the 1920s. The last major incidence of white settlers attacking and murdering a large group of Indigenous people occurred in Coniston, near Alice Springs in 1928, when 21 Aboriginal people were killed by policemen. The Coniston Massacre caused outrage in the cities and after this, the killing of Aboriginal people was no longer seen to be justified in any circumstance.

By the 1870s all the fertile areas of Australia that had been the home of the Aboriginal peoples for thousands of years had been taken by the settlers. Most of the Aboriginal population had been driven off traditional lands and into government and church reserves where they were expected to die out.

Create a mind map of the main points
contained in this reading.

Source activities

Source 1

The blacks were not very numerous, but very hostile. They murdered a number of white men and destroyed a great many cattle and horses. In May 1840, 21 of them, all armed with guns, beside their native weapons, attacked my station in my absence. They murdered one of my servants and burned my huts and stores, and all my wheat.

Source: Quoted in Richard Broome & Alan Frost, eds, The Colonial Experience: The Port Phillip District 1834–1850, La Trobe University Studies in History, 1999, p 45.

Source 2

A fellow bush wanderer's tribute to the memories of Panter, Harding and Goldwyer earliest explorers after Grey and Gregory of 'this Terra Incognita' attacked at night by treacherous natives were murdered at Boola Boola, near La Grange Bay on 13 November 1864.

Also as an appreciative token of remembrance of Maitland Brown, one of the pioneer pastoralists and premier politicians of this state, intrepid leader of the government search and punitive party. His remains, together with the sad relics of the ill fated three recovered at great risk and danger from the lone wilds repose under a public monument in the East Perth Cemetery.

Lest we forget.

A more recent plaque was added, which reads:

Source 3

We do not know how many aborigines there were in Australia before the White People came, but some authorities think the number might have been about 300 000. Try to find out how many there are now. How do you account for the fact that their numbers have declined so greatly in less than 200 years? Find out more about the invasion of their country.



This monument was erected by C J Brockman; the original inscription dedicates it as:

This plaque was erected by people who found the monument before you offensive. The monument describes events at La Grange from one perspective only: The viewpoint of the White 'settlers'. No mention is made of the right of Aboriginal people to defend their land or of the history of provocation which led to the explorers' deaths. The 'Punitive Party' mentioned here ended in the deaths of somewhere around twenty Aboriginal people. The Whites were well armed and equipped and none of their party was killed or wounded. This plaque is in memory of the Aboriginal people killed at La Grange. It also commemorates all other Aboriginal people who died during the invasion of their country.

Lest we forget Mapa Jarriya-Nyalaku.

Source 5

The frontier in Australian History has of late been written as a story of the killing, massacre and dispossession of Aboriginal people. Historians disagree on the numbers of Aborigines killed in Victoria by whites. Beverley Nance, in her 1981 article, 'The Level of Violence' estimated from the records that about 400 Aborigines were killed by whites. In *Aborigines in Colonial Victoria* (1979), Michael Christie made a broad guess not closely based on the records, and believed that the Aboriginal death-toll at the hands of whites was more like 2000. For various reasons ... the number is likely to be somewhere in between these two figures. This is still a dreadful toll, representing a loss of perhaps ten per cent of the likely pre-contact population through white violence.

Source: Richard Broome and Alan Frost, eds, *The Colonial Experience: The Port Phillip District 1834–1850*, *La Trobe University Studies in History*, 1999, p 42

Since about 2000, there has been considerable debate about the issue of Aboriginal deaths and treatment in the early colonies, the debate becoming known as the **history wars**. In 2002, Keith Windschuttle published the first of three intended volumes, *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History*. The first volume deals with Tasmania. In it, he disputes many of the conclusions reached by previous historians about Aboriginal deaths in Tasmania.

Source 4

It would be fair to say that, for a generation, nothing has created such a stir in the tranquil dovecotes of the Australian humanities. Windschuttle's chargesheet is comprehensive: he argues that historians, anthropologists, cross-cultural studies gurus and their various followers have painted too bleak a picture of the frontier experience. Their consensus has created a new, genocidal version of the Australian past: a history full of massacres and killings.

Source: Nicholas Rothwell, 'Enemies needing each other', in *The Weekend Australian*, 1–2 March 2003, p 10

Thinking historically

1. Reading Sources 1 and 2, what can you conclude was the reason for frontier violence?
2. What reasons does Source 3 suggest for the significant decline in Indigenous Australians?
3. Why do you think Source 3 avoids discussion of frontier wars?
4. Look at the monument and carefully study the text of the two plaques, given in Source 2. Briefly describe what happened to Panter, Harding and Goldwyer as outlined in the first plaque. What does the addition of the second plaque tell us about how our views of Australia's early settlement by Europeans have changed over time?
5. Use Source 5 and the text to explain why there is disagreement among historians on the number of Aborigines killed in frontier wars.
6. Richard Broome and Alan Frost state in Source 5 that Victorian Aborigines suffered 'a loss of perhaps ten per cent' of their precontact population. How does this figure compare to Australia's losses in 20th-century wars such as World War I?
7. Although the history wars have created arguments between historians, why, according to Nicholas Rothwell in Source 4, might this be a good thing?
8. Name two historians in the history wars and explain which side they are on.
9. When is a black armband worn? How does this help explain the term 'black armband view of history'?

Government Policy towards Aboriginal people to 1900: **Dispossession** *Close Exercise*

Information SOURCE: [SKWIRK.com.au] Use the words from the word bank to complete the sentences.

prevent	dispossessed	share	British	settle
deprive	conflicts	sacred	pushed	spiritually
tension	understood	land	resources	nullius
returning	traditional	theirs	territory	expected



ACTIVITY 1: The British colonisation of Australia was a long and violent process whereby the Indigenous peoples were forcibly _____ of their land and territory by the European soldiers, settlers, pastoralists and police.

Many battles and disputes between the Indigenous peoples and the British invaders occurred between 1788 and the 1920s, as the British moved to _____ the land across Australia. Dispossession means to _____ people of the possession or occupancy of _____ and property. As the British settled the land across Australia, they deprived the Indigenous peoples of their land, their hunting grounds and water _____, and they destroyed _____ sites and other spiritually significant places. The British felt they had the right to do this as they had claimed ownership of the land under 'terra _____'. They felt it was necessary for them to forcibly remove the Indigenous peoples from the land and prevent them from _____.

Indigenous groups were _____ linked to the land and there was never any possibility of invading another group's territory. When the _____ settled on the land, many Indigenous groups were not aware that the land was no longer _____. Indigenous peoples still believed that it was their land and that they could live on it and use it as they had always done.

The _____ began when it became clear that the British were staying and would _____ the Indigenous peoples from using their land as they had always done. The tension built up gradually, as neither the Indigenous peoples nor the British properly _____ the ways of life, the law and traditions of the other.

Much of the conflict and confrontation between the Europeans and the Indigenous groups was that the Europeans did not _____ the land and its resources. Sharing was of high importance in _____ Indigenous society, and each individual was _____ to share food and other resources with others.

The British settlers occupied the fertile, flat, open land and _____ the Indigenous peoples into the mountains, swamps or deserts. Some groups of Indigenous peoples that had been dispossessed of their land

were pushed onto land that was not their _____. This created much _____ between different Indigenous groups.

ACTIVITY 2: Place the following sentences in the correct order 1- 4.

- [] The British retaliated by shooting at them, and so the cycle of revenge attacks started.
- [] The cattle and sheep that had been introduced by the British ate many of the native plants, drank a lot of the water and chased away the native animals.
- [] In such cases, the Indigenous peoples resorted to killing sheep and cattle.
- [] Food became scarce for Indigenous peoples and access to water was difficult.

ACTIVITY 3: Choose and circle the most correct words from the selections in the following passage.

Ceremonial and spiritual life was (**welcomed / disrupted / practised**) by the settlers. The British settlers either prevented access to sacred sites or (**destroyed / preserved / photographed**) them, sometimes on purpose, sometimes accidentally. Cave (**photographs / paintings/ glow worms**) were destroyed and other ceremonial objects were (**taken / returned / copied**) for scientific purposes. Large ceremonial gatherings appeared too dangerous so they were often (**dispersed / encouraged/ joined**) by soldiers, settlers or police.

ACTIVITY 4: After reading the following information, draw 5 pictures expressing the 5 key results of dispossession.

Results of dispossession. In the years following colonisation, the Indigenous population declined dramatically under the impact of new diseases, open warfare, dispossession, the lack of food and water and the almost complete breakdown of the traditional way of life and culture.		

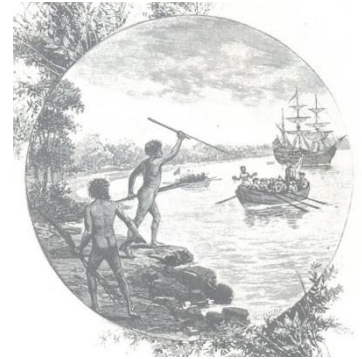
ACTIVITY 5: The Indigenous peoples continued to resist the occupation of their lands by the British, but by 1860, the British settlement covered over 400 million hectares of Indigenous land. Many Indigenous peoples could only stay on their land if they were employed by the settlers as stockmen or domestic servants.

Who won? Aboriginals or British Settlers? Write your opinions about this outcome. Share with the class.

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The Initial Impact

Aboriginal people have occupied Australia for at least 40,000 years. However, very little is known about the history of human occupation during this enormous length of time, even in outline, and practically nothing of the social, political and cultural changes that must have occurred. Recorded Aboriginal history is a history of contact, with Macassan or Indonesian traders or fishermen, with European, especially British, navigators and with British colonists and settlers. At the time of the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788, there was, of course, no single Aboriginal nation. Australia (including Tasmania) contained a large number of groups occupying more or less discrete areas and with considerable diversity in terms of language and culture. Conflicts between settlers and Aborigines, and the devastation caused by introduced diseases and alcohol, reduced the Aboriginal population during the first hundred years of settlement from an estimated 300,000 to 60,000. Most of those who survived had their traditional ways of life destroyed or at least suppressed. In the confined area of Tasmania the effects of white settlement were devastating, bringing Tasmanian Aborigines to the verge of extinction. It has been conservatively estimated that at least 10,000 Aborigines died violently in Queensland between 1824 and 1908.



Early Years of British Settlement.

Governor Phillip's instructions on first settlement in 1788 had been to maintain peaceful and friendly relations with the native inhabitants. Aborigines were defined to be British subjects and entitled to the protection of British law. The reality was to be very different. As the frontiers of settlement expanded more and more Aboriginal land was taken and violence often erupted. The Aborigines, having no recognised title to the land but being regarded as British subjects for the purposes of the law, were likely to be treated violently if they resisted encroachments upon their land. Reece states that:

Racial conflicts arose primarily from the rapid expropriation of the Aborigines' land — a process which had been going on steadily since first settlement. In this the white settlers had been assisted by soldiers and police and there was little reason for anyone to think that killing Aborigines was a crime, especially when it was done to protect sheep and cattle, and settlers' lives.

The economic and political realities were masked by a view of Aborigines as primitive, if not sub-human, a view which revealed fundamental ignorance of Aboriginal cultures. Europeans were, Stanner has said:

... unable to see, let alone credit, the facts that have convinced modern anthropologists that the Aborigines are a deeply religious people. That blindness ... profoundly affected European conduct toward the Aborigines. It reinforced two opposed views — that they were a survival into modern times of a protoid form of humanity incapable of civilization, and that they were

decadents from a once-higher life and culture. It fed the psychological disposition to hate and despise those whom the powerful have injured ... It allowed European moral standards to atrophy by tacitly exempting from canons of right, law, and justice acts of dispossession, neglect, and violence at Aboriginal expense.



Colonial Attitudes Harden.

Thus with the expansion of settlement and continuing clashes on the frontiers, attitudes hardened. Throughout the first half of the century, and beyond 1850, reprisals and punitive expeditions were common, and 'martial law' was sometimes declared, for example in Tasmania (1828-32) and in the Bathurst area on the mainland in 1824. 'A number of massacres occurred, the best documented being the Myall Creek Massacre in 1838 in northern New South Wales (resulting in the conviction and execution of seven of the eleven convicts and assigned servants charged with the murders). Some liberal minded Governors attempted to improve the plight of the Aborigines. For example, Governor Bourke, and to a lesser extent Governor Gipps, sought to inhibit pastoral expansion by refusing the protection of the law to whites either beyond the boundaries of squatter's licences in the case of Bourke, or in certain interdicted areas in the case of Gipps. But given the difficulties of law enforcement in the interior, there was little chance of controlling depredations; indeed many punitive expeditions throughout the century were officially or unofficially sanctioned. Depredations and punitive expeditions continued well into this century, especially in northern regions. Aboriginal responses varied with time, place and circumstance, and included reprisals which sometimes led to trials and convictions for acts which Aborigines themselves regarded as fully justified. But trials were rare, compared with the large number of incidents on both sides.



Protection.

The reduction in the Aboriginal population, and a growing consciousness of the general mistreatment of Aboriginal people, combined with the need for more effective regulation of labour in pastoral areas to bring about changes in policy. The House of Commons Select Committee on Aborigines, which had reported in 1837, had recommended that there should be missionaries for Aboriginal people, protectors for their defence and special codes of law to protect them. Protectors were appointed, mostly by executive order, in New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia at about this time; they were supposed to protect Aborigines from abuses and to provide the remnant populations around towns with some rations, blankets and medicine. With limited formal powers they had even more limited success, and by the mid-nineteenth century the office of protector had for the most part either terminated or been vested *ex officio* in policemen. It was not until much later in the century that more formal and extensive policies of 'protection' were formulated, aimed at isolating and segregating full-blood Aborigines on reserves and at restricting contact (and interbreeding) between them and outsiders, while attempting to assimilate half-castes, and especially their children. The right to marry was limited, as were other civil rights. For full-blood Aborigines there was some *de facto* tolerance or allowance of a continuing traditional way of life, although the missions which were sometimes entrusted with the running of reserves and the care of their populations were often unsympathetic and sometimes overtly hostile to traditional ways. Legislation applying the policy of protection was adopted in Victoria in 1867, Western Australia in 1886, Queensland in 1897, New South Wales in 1909, South Australia and the Northern Territory in

1910-11. Church missions and Government settlements were set up and Aborigines were moved onto them. Special laws prohibited the consumption of alcohol, restricted the movement of Aborigines and regulated their employment. There were systematic efforts through the establishment of 'boarding houses' to take 'part-Aboriginal' children away from their parents and to educate them in European ways. The policy of protection was reinforced and the legislative restrictions and controls made more comprehensive during the first half of the century. Its influence carried over into the period of assimilation, as can be seen from the euphemistic provisions of the Welfare Ordinance 1953 (NT) with its paternalistic arrangements for 'wardship' of incompetent (Aboriginal) persons.



Assimilation.

Continuing difficulties, and criticisms of the treatment of Aboriginal people especially in central and northern Australia, led in 1936 to demands by the States and by voluntary bodies for increased Commonwealth involvement in Aboriginal affairs. At the 1936 Premiers' Conference in Adelaide, it was agreed that while Commonwealth control might not be practical there should be regular meetings between the State and Commonwealth officers responsible for Aboriginal affairs. At the first such meeting, held in Canberra in 1937, the Commonwealth and the States agreed that the objective should be the absorption at least of 'the natives of Aboriginal origin but not of the full blood'. In a sense 'assimilation' was that aspect of the policy of protection concerned with the 'future' of Aborigines (mostly of 'mixed blood') in settled areas. In the

1950s 'assimilation' became a widely accepted goal for all Aboriginal people and was adopted as policy by the Commonwealth and by all State Governments. The policy was defined at the 1961 Native Welfare Conference of Federal and State Ministers in these terms:

The policy of assimilation means that all Aborigines and part-Aborigines are expected to attain the same manner of living as other Australians and to live as members of a single Australian community, enjoying the same rights and privileges, accepting the same customs and influenced by the same beliefs as other Australians.

Steps were taken to achieve this result. Expenditure on health, housing, education and training programs began to be increased in the Northern Territory and in the States. The decline in the Aboriginal population in the north and centre was halted and reversed in the 1950s, and in southern and eastern Australia the Aboriginal population was increasing rapidly. In the 1960s a concerted effort was made to review and repeal restrictive and discriminatory legislation, especially by the Commonwealth Government, and the mechanisms of 'protection' were phased out. Access to social security benefits for Aborigines came in 1960, Aborigines became entitled to vote at federal elections in 1962, and the wardship system in the Northern Territory was dismantled in 1964. State legislation prohibiting access to alcohol for Aborigines was repealed and in most jurisdictions Aborigines became entitled to full award wages. In 1967 the Constitution was amended by referendum so that Aborigines would in future be counted in the Census, and to authorise the Commonwealth Parliament to pass laws specifically for the benefit of Aboriginal people. An Office of Aboriginal Affairs was established by the Commonwealth Government to instigate and oversee programs of assistance for Aborigines.



Integration.

While these developments were taking place, the general notion of assimilation was itself increasingly being questioned. That policy took no account of the value or resilience of Aboriginal culture, nor did it allow that Aborigines might seek to maintain their own languages and traditions. A basic assumption of the policy was that Aborigines would inevitably, and probably willingly, become like white Australians in terms of their 'manner of living', 'customs' and 'beliefs'. The paternalism, and arrogance, of such assumptions was discredited. There was also a greater awareness of Aboriginal problems by non-Aboriginal Australians. The language of 'assimilation', with the underlying assumption that Aboriginal equality could only be achieved by the loss of Aboriginal identity, was abandoned. The term 'integration' was sometimes used by the critics of the assimilation policy to denote a policy that recognised the value of Aboriginal culture and the right of Aboriginals to retain their languages and customs and maintain their own distinctive communities, but there was a deliberate effort on the part of the Commonwealth authorities to avoid one-word descriptions of complex policies, and to focus on developing new approaches to problems rather than on long-term aims. The initial emphasis was on increased funding and improved programs in areas such as

health, education and employment, to try to ensure that formal equality was accompanied by real social and economic advances. But measures were also adopted to increase funding for Aboriginal community development projects, and the first steps were taken towards the granting of land rights. In 1972 a separate federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs was established, and in 1973 the Woodward Commission was appointed to investigate how land rights for Aborigines could be implemented. The Report led eventually to the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (Cth).



Self-Management or Self-Determination.

In recent years the policy of the Commonwealth has been based on what has been described as 'the fundamental right of Aboriginals to retain their racial identity and traditional lifestyle or, where desired, to adopt wholly or partially a European lifestyle', and has encouraged Aboriginal participation or control in local or community government, and in other areas of concern. This approach, variously described as a policy of self-management or self-determination, has been accompanied by government support programs managed by Aboriginal organisations. For example the Aboriginal Development Commission was established in 1980 to help further the economic and social development of Aboriginal people, to promote their development and self-management and to provide a base for Aboriginal economic self-sufficiency. The functions of the Aboriginal Development Commission are to assist Aboriginal people to acquire land, to engage in business enterprises and to obtain finance for housing and other personal needs. Other Aboriginal organisations, both governmental and non-governmental, are proving increasingly important: these include land councils, incorporated community support groups, child care agencies, alcohol rehabilitation services, medical services, hostels, legal services and cultural organisations. Attempts have continued to establish a body which can represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander opinion on all matters of policy, through giving advice to the Commonwealth and in other ways. The

Commonwealth's policy has been formulated by the Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in the following way:

This Government looks to achieve further progress for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through the two principles of consultation and self-determination, that is, with the involvement of the Aboriginal people in the whole process ... All our policies, each of our programs and projects, have been and will continue to be fashioned in discussions with Aboriginal people and their organisations at national and community levels.

There are, clearly enough, differences between the phrases 'self-management', 'consultation', and 'self-determination'. Full self-determination in a particular field implies more than either management by or consultation with the 'self' involved.



All information from

<http://www.alrc.gov.au/publications/3.%20Aboriginal%20Societies%3A%20The%20Experience%20of%20Contact/changing-policies-towards-aboriginal>

Activity: Using online mindmapping software, or in your books, create a mind map summarising the different policies taken towards Aboriginal people.

Pemulwuy leads resistance against Sydney colonists

Two years after the arrival of the First Fleet, Aboriginal warrior Pemulwuy began to resist the incursion of white settlers onto his people's traditional lands. Despite being seriously wounded in 1797, he eluded capture until 1802 when he was shot dead. Pemulwuy's head was cut off and sent to Sir Joseph Banks for his collection.

Decided measures therefore became necessary to prevent the out-settlers from being robbed and plundered, and to restore the natives to a friendly intercourse. With these views (founded on the opinions of the principal officers coinciding with mine), I gave orders for every person doing their utmost to bring Pemulwuy in either dead or alive...

Governor King to Lord Hobart, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 30 October 1802



This engraving by Samuel John Neele of James Grant's image of 'Pimbloy' is believed to be the only known depiction of Pemulwuy. It was published in Grant's *The narrative of a voyage of discovery, performed in His Majesty's vessel the Lady Nelson, of sixty tons burthen, with sliding keels, in the years 1800, 1801 and 1802, to New South Wales, 1803*. State Library of New South Wales Q80/18.

A remarkable man

Despite his reputation – both before and after his death – only a few firm facts are known about Pemulwuy (or Bembilwuyam). He was born sometime around 1750, and was shot dead on or just prior to 2 June 1802. A Bidjigal (Bidjigal) man from the Botany Bay area of Sydney, his country ‘stretched from Botany Bay south of the Cooks River and west along the Georges River to Salt Pan Creek, south of Bankstown.’

He had two distinctive physical features: one eye had a ‘speck’ or blemish; and one foot was clubbed. In Western medicine, the term clubfoot means a birth defect where the foot presents at an unusual angle. However, in Pemulwuy’s case, it was not congenital. Another prominent Indigenous man Colebee explained that the injury was deliberately inflicted by a club, indicating Pemulwuy’s status as a *carradhy* or ‘clever man’ – that is, a man with supernatural powers.

Background to resistance

The Indigenous people of the Sydney area were faced with a profound change when the First Fleet arrived. Nearly 1500 people arrived on the fleet, with limited supplies of food, a cargo of foreign animals, sophisticated firearms, and a firm belief in their own superiority. Governor Phillip initially maintained cordial relations, having been instructed to treat the ‘Indians’ (as they called the traditional owners of the land) well, and to ‘conciliate their affections ...[and] maintain friendly relations’.

However, conflict was inevitable because of fundamentally opposed viewpoints. The Eora were the traditional owners of the lands around Sydney Harbour, and they had a complex system of laws that governed social relations, behaviour and resource use. The European invaders had no appreciation of this, and believed the Eora people to be savages.

An outbreak of smallpox in 1789, introduced by the European invaders, had a significant impact on the local people. The reduction in their population and the internal crisis it provoked temporarily averted open conflict. However, it was only a delay.

Disrupting colonisation

Pemulwuy featured significantly in the ongoing resistance to colonisation. He was involved in the mortal wounding of John McIntyre on 10 December 1790. McIntyre, appointed Phillip’s gamekeeper on 3 March 1788, was one of three convicts armed and sent out to hunt game to add to the colony’s meagre and dwindling supplies of food. The *Australian Dictionary of Biography* notes that McIntyre was ‘feared and hated by the Eora people’, and it surmises that the attack was a retribution for him breaking Indigenous laws and for his violence towards Indigenous people. Phillip, who had until then been tolerant in his views, changed his position and called for a punitive raid. He sent 50 soldiers and two surgeons equipped with head bags. When that party failed to return with corpses, he sent them out again.

It was in response to this, and the growing attacks on his people’s rights, that Pemulwuy led a series of raids from 1792. The first was at Prospect in May 1792. The raids took place on

Pemulwuy's Bidjigal lands, and represent an attempt to retard the establishment of farming settlements. The Bidjigal burnt huts, stole maize crops and attacked travellers. By April 1794, the violence between the Indigenous people and the farmers was frequent and extensive. In the 'Battle of Toongabbie', the reprisal party of Europeans severed the head of a slain warrior and took it back to Sydney as evidence.

The most substantial confrontation was the 'Battle of Parramatta'. Pemulwuy, with about 100 Indigenous warriors marched into Parramatta and threatened to spear anyone who tried to stop them. Soldiers opened fire, at least five Indigenous men were killed, and Pemulwuy was wounded in the head and body by buckshot. But he managed to survive his wounds, and escaped a few days later, enhancing his already impressive reputation.

On 1 May 1801, [Governor King](#) issued a government and general order that Aborigines near Parramatta, Georges River and Prospect could be shot on sight. In November, a proclamation outlawed Pemulwuy and offered a sliding scale of rewards for his death or capture:

To a prisoner for life or 14 years, a conditional emancipation. To a person already conditionally emancipated, a free pardon and a recommendation for a free passage to England. To a settler, the labour of a prisoner for 12 months. To any other descriptions of persons, 20 gallons of spirits and two suits of slops.

Death of a warrior

The rewards worked. Either on or just before 2 June 1802, Pemulwuy was shot dead. His head was cut off and sent to Sir Joseph Banks in England for his collection. The current whereabouts of the head is unknown. A week or so later, a dispatch arrived from Lord Hobart to Governor King lamenting the settlers' treatment of the Aboriginal population: 'Be it clearly understood that on future occasions, any instance of injustice of wanton cruelty towards the natives will be punished with the utmost severity of the law'.

Just who shot Pemulwuy remains a mystery. Following the work of Keith Vincent Smith, it has been generally assumed that Pemulwuy's killer was Henry Hacking. Recent research by Doug Kohlhoff has queried this, suggesting instead that settlers from the Parramatta, Toongabbie and Prospect Hill areas were far more likely to have been the killers.

However, Kohlhoff asks whether, in the end, it really matters who killed Pemulwuy. At one level, it would matter greatly to Pemulwuy's people. On another:

Knowing who fired the fatal shot does not affect Pemulwuy's place in history. Pemulwuy was, as [Governor] King recognised, 'a brave and independent character'. He inspired others, fought hard and died for his land and his people. For that, we can all admire him.

White Invasion

Follow Pat Dodson's direction in here to imagine you are an Aboriginal Australian 'and the white invasion is about to occur'. Write a poem or draw a picture expressing what your life is like and how you view the white invader.

I want you to try two exercises in imagination. The first is this. I want you to imagine you are black. An Aboriginal Australian. The time is the present. And I want you to also imagine that the white invasion is just about to occur.

How would you be living your life? About three days in every week would be devoted to gathering your food. Hunting, collecting — a bit less in places of plenty, a bit more in the hard country. The rest of your time would be spent socialising, or in religious observances of different kinds. As to your knowledge of the land, your country, you would know every tree, every rock, because in the dreamtime the great ancestors came this way. And they are still here. They live. They must be revered, appeased, paid attention to. It is they who cause conception as a woman walks near. When the child is born he calls that part of the country 'Father'. You would husband the land. You would burn the grasses to promote new growth and to make sure that the delicate balance of nature that has been created has been preserved.

There is a rich and complicated legal system which is administered by elders and to which all are bound ... The children are more deeply loved than perhaps any children on earth ... They are tutored in the life of the spirit, in respect of the elders and kinship and the ways of the country.

Into this world comes the white invader. Their first act is to say that the land is terra nullius, that no-one owns the land, that it is not used. They knock down the trees, and blast the places sacred to you. They fence around the best water for their cattle. When you resist they shoot and poison your people. Thus begins the Australian Civil War. It can also be called the two hundred years war because it still continues. They still say that they know more than you about land and what your wants and needs are. They say it is important to fence it, to graze it, to mine it. You have difficulty in understanding how they could make such a preposterous claim to ownership. And only you can call the land your father. If a white man stumbles into the hard country without water he will die. If the land is taken from you or you are taken from the land your spirit will perish just as surely. Your body becomes like a drought without mercy on the land; and your spirit without life blows across it.

Extract from 'Restore Dignity, Restore Land, Restore Life', an address by Pat Dodson to the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, Sydney, 25 August 1986. © Patrick Dodson.

Extract from a speech by Pat Dodson delivered to the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Sydney on 25 August 1986. Pat Dodson is Australia's first Aboriginal Catholic priest, first Aboriginal Royal Commissioner and a leading figure in the reconciliation movement.



SBS Documentary The First Australians
Episode One: They Have Come to Stay

<http://www.sbs.com.au/firstaustralians/>

Access this documentary and answer the following classes.

1. What did the Indigenous people think the Whites were?
2. What evidence is there that the first contact was happy and friendly?
3. Why did they not know if the Whites were male or female?
4. Who led the First Fleet (and served as the governor)?
5. What did his missing tooth mean to the Indigenous Australians?
6. List some of the new animals brought with the First Fleet:
7. According to Bruce Pearce, what was the Brits justification for taking the land?
8. What disaster affected Indigenous Australians from 1789?
9. What is the historical debate about this issue?
10. What happened to Bennelong and why?
11. What does the attack on Phillip reveal about relations between Indigenous and British?

12. What happened after Bennelong returned?

13. Who killed Phillip's gamekeeper and why?

14. What changes occurred after Philip left Australia?

15. How did the First Australians react?

16. What happened to Pemulwuy after his death and why was this offensive?

17. Describe the nature of early contact between the British and Indigenous Australians.

First contact in Australia

Use the internet to find the answers to these questions (if you can)

- 1 Dutch sailors were the first Europeans to record a sighting of Australia. Why did they choose not to settle this new land?

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- 2 The first English explorer to visit Australian shores was William Dampier. What recommendation did he make after his voyage in 1697?

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- 3 Upon inspecting the Botany Bay region, Captain Cook decided that it had potential for farming and agriculture and would be a suitable location to settle. Upon what did Cook base this decision and why might this decision have been flawed?

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- 4 *Terra Nullius* is an important concept in the context of Australian history.

- a Why was *terra nullius* invoked by the British?

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- b Apart from their land, what else did Aboriginal people lose as a result of *terra nullius* being claimed by the British?

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- 5 List five negative impacts that British colonisation of Australia had on Aboriginal people.

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- 6 Use the following source to complete the following questions.

- a Is this a primary or secondary source?

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b Provide a reason for your decision.

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c What assumption does the author make about where Indigenous people decided to live?

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A painting by the convict artist Thomas Watling, titled *A native going to fish with a torch and flambeaux while his wife and children are cooking fish for their supper*, c.1788–95