

# Aboriginal history in South Australia since 1800 role play

Teachers and community groups are welcome to use this role play for the purpose of informing participants about South Australian Aboriginal history. It was developed by Aboriginal Education personnel from the Department of Education and Children's Services. Further information is available from Adele Pring, [pring.adele@saugov.sa.gov.au](mailto:pring.adele@saugov.sa.gov.au).

## Introduction

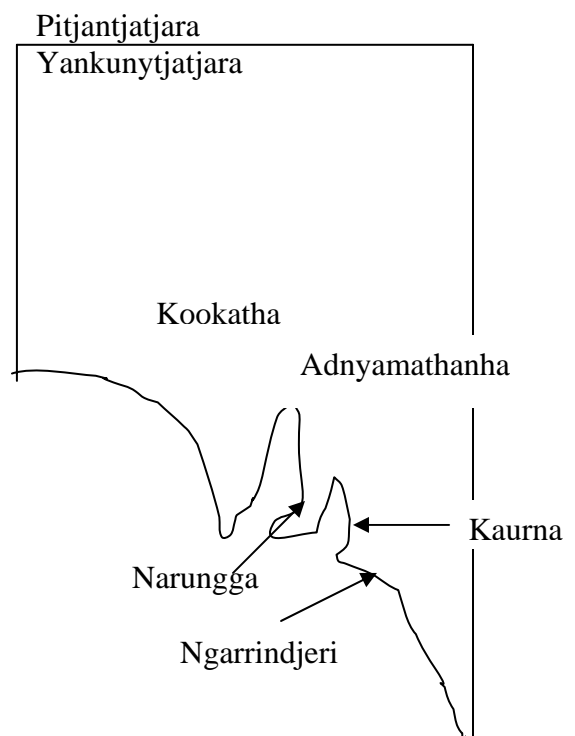
The role play could be completed in one lesson enabling participants to gain understanding and empathy for Aboriginal peoples' history. It has been used successfully with groups of teachers, primary to tertiary students, Aboriginal people, public servants and community groups. Much of the content is new to participants, including Aboriginal people. Versions are also available which focus on the specific histories of Ngarrindjeri, Ngadjuri (mid north), Peramangk (Mount Lofty Ranges) and lower Eyre Peninsula.

It is important to debrief well after the role play (see notes at end) and to explain that the purpose is to educate and help develop empathy, not blame or make people angry. If people are aware of this part of SA history, they are more likely to become active, empathetic citizens in future.

In previous lessons the following activities could help provide background knowledge:

- view and discuss the video *Alinta - the flame* in the Women of the Sun series
- research the quality of life for the average person in Europe, especially England, around 1800
- use an atlas to research geographic features and climate of relevant parts of SA
- research aspects of traditional life in SA using Aboriginal Studies documents, eg language, stories, relationship terms, laws, games, foods, especially those relating to Kaurna, Narungga, Ngarrindjeri, Adnyamathanha, Kookatha and Pitjantjatjara/ Yankunytjatjara

**Map of South Australia showing just six of what was once more than 50 Aboriginal language groups.**



### Before you start,

Participants will be divided into six small groups to represent the South Australian Aboriginal groups: Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara, Kurna, Narungga, Ngarrindjeri, Kookatha and Adnyamathanha. Use six pieces of different coloured A4 paper and the same colour paper in small pieces to pin on participants as well as to represent elders and children of the particular group. Photocopy the scripts and descriptions of environment which are included with this role play to distribute to the appropriate groups.

To begin the role play, divide the floor space between these groups on a geographical basis, as shown on the map. Give each Aboriginal group their coloured piece of paper to write their name on and their individual pieces to pin on themselves. The paper represents their land. Give each group a copy of their script. The group should physically keep in touch with their (paper) land and their (paper) relatives should be spread on the floor near them.

Tell the group to take a few minutes to draw pictures of significant items on their 'paper' land. This might include precious waterholes, sacred sites, foods from your environment and artefacts used in daily life. (After two minutes) They should write names on the small pieces of paper representing extended family, either names of real relatives or just relationship terms, eg grandmother, daughter, uncle. Each group should now take it in turns to tell the others about their particular environment.

Keep one participant aside to represent European explorers, settlers, missionaries and government officials. At various stages in the role play, those who role play the Europeans physically shift those playing Aboriginal people at appropriate times.

When the narrator mentions particular groups and dates (shown in **bold**), a representative of that group reads their relevant statement from their script. The narrator reads the main script and stops regularly to seek comments from each group. Narrators can adapt and/or add extra comments wherever appropriate, depending on their knowledge and the dynamics of the group. Other props could be included depending on resources. It is helpful to draw a map of South Australia on a white or blackboard to illustrate particular places throughout the role play.

Follow up activities are suggested at the end of the narrator's script. Be sure to allow sufficient class time for discussion, even if it means cutting short the role play.

### **Script**

You are going to be learning just a little history of the last 200 years. Every sentence could become a history lesson in itself.

By 1800, Europeans begin settling in New South Wales. There is no contact between Europeans and Aboriginal people in what is now known as South Australia.

Life for Aboriginal people is generally peaceful and fulfilling but with occasional disputes as with all cultures. People live in extended family groups consisting perhaps of a husband and wife, brothers and sisters-in-law, grandparents and grandchildren. The women gather fruits, vegetables and various seeds and hunt small animals. The men hunt larger game and gather some foods as they hunt. A lot of time is spent around the campfire telling stories, making tools, nets, and bowls, clothing and teaching the young children. Dancing and singing are a regular part of life.

Several times a year the extended family shift within their country or land, visiting familiar campsites of previous years. The time of moving camp depends on the availability of seasonal foods or because of deaths. The group meet regularly with relatives belonging to the same or neighbouring language groups for ceremonies. Sacred sites are respected and maintained by elders who have responsibility for them. Aboriginal people are proud and dignified.

Life at this time for the majority of people in England, Ireland and other parts of Europe is generally hard. Many work long hours in factories or workhouses, in muddy fields or in dark, damp coalmines. Illness is common. Only the wealthy live in comfort. (Narrators can ad lib according to their knowledge or that of the students)

1801 to 1803 - Flinders, an English man and Baudin, a French man, explore the SA coast and meet at Encounter Bay, near Victor Harbour. (Instruct an 'explorer' to 'sail' up Spencer Gulf and leave again) **Adnyamathanha group 1801-1803, Narungga 1802.**

Early 1800s Disaster strikes nearly thirty years before white people settle in the colony of South Australia. **Ngarrindjeri group 1805.** (Instruct an explorer to remove paper elders and children from the Ngarrindjeri)

European and American men hunting fur seals set up on Kangaroo Island. **Kaurna group 1805.** (Instruct a 'European sealer' to physically take away one of the 'Kaurna' girls to Kangaroo Island and discuss how she and her people might be feeling). Sealers and whalers visited lower Eyre and probably Yorke Peninsulas at this time too.

1820s A second smallpox epidemic kills Aboriginal people as far north as Mt. Remarkable in the southern Flinders Ranges (Nukana country). Again many of the old people and young children die. **Kaurna group 1820s.** (Instruct an explorer to remove paper elders and children from the Kaurna and Ngarrindjeri)

1820s A whaling station is set up near Victor Harbour, creating curiosity and caution amongst southern Kaurna and Ngarrindjeri.

1830 The explorer Sturt travelled along the River Murray to the Murray Mouth. (Instruct an 'explorer' to row down the river and leave again) **Ngarrindjeri group 1830.**

1834 The Foundation Act is passed in the British Parliament. This Act makes provision for 300 000 square miles to become the territory in which British settlers can begin the colony of South Australia. The territory is described as 'waste and unoccupied'. However, the Letters Patent relating to the Act said that nothing could be done which would (I quote) "affect the rights of any Aboriginal natives of the said Province to the actual occupation or enjoyment in their own persons or in the persons of their descendants of any lands therein now actually occupied or enjoyed by such natives" end quote.

Sympathizers in England know of the ill treatment of Aboriginal people in the other Australian colonies but their attempt to protect Aboriginal rights fail. Although the Letters Patent have the force of law, they are virtually ignored by the settlers and authorities. (Seek comments from one or two groups)

1840 The 500 or less Kaurna people are outnumbered by 17,000 Europeans as well as 200,000 sheep and 15,000 cattle. Most of the land around Adelaide has been taken up for farming.

Traditional plant and animal foods are trampled. Missionaries arrive from Germany to work with Aboriginal people. Relationships between the Kurna people of the Adelaide plains and the Europeans is mostly friendly with curiosity on both sides but many Kurna and Ngarrindjeri die from diseases such as colds, measles and whooping cough because they have no immunity and are now living in unhygienic conditions. **Kurna group late 1830s.** (Instruct a farmer to remove all the Kurna land but one corner) **Narungga group late 1830s**

1839 to 1840 Edward John Eyre explores near and through the Flinders Ranges. He hardly has any contact with Aboriginal people because they hide out of his view but they watch him and his men closely from where they hide. The local people were very cautious and kept their tracks well hidden but used sign language to keep each other informed of the explorers movements (Instruct an 'explorer' to 'ride his horse' through the Flinders Ranges) **Adnyamathanha group 1839-1840.**

1840 Several River Murray Aboriginal people move closer to Adelaide. By 1842 all of Yorke Peninsula has been explored by the newcomers. (Shift some Ngarrindjeri to Kurna land. *Q. How would the Kurna and Ngarrindjeri people be feeling at this stage? Q. Might the Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara group have known what was happening?*)

An Aboriginal woman who'd been living on Kangaroo Island travels to Adelaide where her knowledge of Aboriginal languages and English is valued. (Shift the people on Kangaroo Island to Adelaide)

By 1850 only 10% of the Aboriginal population in the newly settled areas are alive. Not all Europeans are hostile. Many Europeans are respectful to Aboriginal people and seek better conditions for them. Most don't see Aboriginal people as they go about their lives in the towns or on their farms. However, they would not have their farms if the Aboriginal owners had not been previously frightened away or killed by violence or disease.

European squatters make land grabs in the Mid-North around Mt. Remarkable, Gladstone and Laura. Amongst them are some cruel men including JF Hayward, who boasts in his diary of whipping and shooting Aboriginal people. Some land grabbers put poison such as strychnine into the flour they gave Aboriginal people. The Ngadjuri and Nukunu population near Port Augusta were devastated and descendants like the Warrior family are only now finding out their links to the Ngadjuri nation of the mid-north.

By 1850, most Aboriginal land within 400 kilometres of Adelaide has been sold to Europeans by their government and belonged to them under the law of the new colony. (Draw a circle on the map approx. 400km from Adelaide, ie a bit north of Port Augusta) (Instruct 'Europeans' to collect the remainder of the Kurna land, most of the Ngarrindjeri land and some of the Adnyamathanha land. If coloured paper is pinned on the group members it could also be torn. This is a powerful way of showing how much Aboriginal land was lost.) *Ask the groups to talk about how they feel.*

1850s What happened in Victoria at this time, which affected SA? (A participant usually knows) Many European men who were living in South Australia leave their jobs as farm labourers and shearers to join the gold rush in Victoria. In many cases around the state, Aboriginal people fill the gap in the labour force, saving the South Australian economy from collapse. **Ngarrindjeri group 1850s.**

1850s Pastoral leases are established around Port Lincoln, Ceduna, Yorke Peninsula, Mt. Gambier and all along the River Murray. Squatters move into the northern Flinders Ranges. Port Augusta is established as a port. Inabuthina (also known as Pompey) becomes a resistance fighter and leader in the Flinders Ranges until he is shot about ten years later. **Adnyamathanha group 1850s.**

1850 Some of the surviving young adults of Kurna and Ngarrindjeri descent in Adelaide are taken without their extended family to Poonindie north of Port Lincoln where a mission is established. (Instruct a 'European' to physically move the remaining Kurna group to Port Lincoln) Many suffer badly from illnesses, probably including stress at leaving their land and living in what was to them a foreign land. Those who survive and their descendants become excellent farmers, winning prizes for their skills in district competitions.

1850s The Aboriginal Friends Association is formed by caring Europeans to lobby for better conditions for Aboriginal people. Whaling stops because there are not enough whales left to hunt.

By 1855 about half of Narungga country on Yorke Peninsula and up to Port Broughton was under pastoral lease.

1858 The explorer John McDouall Stuart travels through Kookatha country and returns to Adelaide to give optimistic reports of the grazing potential of the land. **Kookatha group 1858.**

1860s There are now more than 60 ration depots throughout SA. The Narungga people of Yorke Peninsula are shifted to a new mission at Point Pearce and most of the Ngarrindjeri people of the Murray Lakes and Coorong move to the new mission at Point Macleay though several remain living along the Coorong in the bush not wanted by the European farmers. (Instruct a 'missionary' to shift the Ngarrindjeri group onto Point Macleay) The missionaries would not allow Aboriginal language or ceremonies but they did protect people from being killed. **Narungga group late 1860s**

Part of the mission at Poonindie is sold off to European settlers who consider they have a better right to the land. The residents are shifted to Point Pearce or Point McLeay. (Instruct the 'government officials' to shift the Poonindie people) *Q. How might these people have felt about their situation? Q. Would they have been welcomed at the mission communities they were shifted to?*

Whenever missionaries started work, their main concern was to Christianise the Aboriginal people and to teach them how to work. Aboriginal people easily learnt the skills; what was hard, was understanding how white people thought and why they acted the way they did. Aboriginal groups already had their own spiritual beliefs relating to creation, the land and all living things. Many Aboriginal people readily accepted Christian stories though many others did not.

1872 Ernest Giles, the explorer, travels through Pitjantjatjara land looking for suitable grazing country or a stock route. **Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara group 1873.**

1884 The rail line is built between Port Augusta and Marree to the north (show on the map). Afghan men arrive with camels to carry goods to outback properties and return with wool and minerals. Several marry Aboriginal women. **Adnyamathanha group 1884.**

1888 The explorer Carruthers and his men with 25 camels travel through Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara land in search of pastoral land. Their effect on the precious and scarce waterholes in the area was disastrous. An old Pitjantjatjara man said he was a small child when white men with camels shot at his family. They had to walk for three days in extreme heat to the next waterhole to get drinking water. (Instruct Carruthers to walk through Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara land)

1890 There are thirty towns now on Yorke Peninsula. **Narungga group 1890.** Most Kookatha land is now leased to white pastoralists. Lasting damage is done to vegetation by excessive grazing and the introduction of rabbits, camels, horses, donkeys, goats, cats, foxes which became feral. (Instruct a 'pastoralist' to rip away half the Kookatha land) **Kookatha group 1890**

1901 The Australian Commonwealth is formed. Aboriginal people are neither included in the census nor given rights to vote, except when they already have state rights which a small number of Ngarrindjeri people had. **Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara group 1901.**

1911 The First Aborigines Act of SA means that Aboriginal people are supposedly 'protected' by being segregated onto reserves away from non-Aboriginal people. They can be kept there indefinitely and arrested for leaving. **Ngarrindjeri group 1911.**

1913 The Koonibba Children's Home is built at Koonibba Mission near Ceduna. Some Kookatha children are placed in the home. Their families visit them on Sundays. Bush tucker however was not to be given to the children and they could not speak in their own language. It seems that the missionaries regarded the Aboriginal language as a tool of the devil. (A Kookatha 'child' could be placed in the Koonibba mission home).

1912 -20 The east-west railway is built through Kookatha land. By this time some Kookatha people travel around the pastoral stations by foot, on camel and camel wagon. Many work for the pastoralists but receive little pay. Families live in bush shelters or tents and survive on bush foods, rabbits as well as rations from the train or ration depots. Ceremonies continue. **Kookatha group 1915.**

1919 Daisy Bates settles in Ooldea providing rations and clothing for the Yankunytjatjara people there. She tried to keep the railway workers away from the Aboriginal women. Missionaries soon follow. (Draw train line on map and shift a Yankunytjatjara person from their country south to Ooldea) **Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara group 1919**

1920s The government offer a bounty for dingo scalps. Dingoes are said to be attacking and killing large numbers of sheep in the north of the state. **Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara group 1920s.**

1923 The *Aborigines (Training for Children) Act* means that Aboriginal children can be removed from their families against their will and sent to institutions until they are adults. This continued for another 40 years. (Instruct the 'European government officials' to remove 'children' from the Ngarrindjeri group and Narungga at Point Pearce and take them to Adelaide). **Ngarrindjeri group 1923.** *Q. How might the parents have felt? Q. What advantages and disadvantages would there have been for the children? Q. Do you know the stories of anyone this has happened to?*

1930 Nepabunna mission is established in the northern Flinders Ranges for Adnyamathanha people. This is 70 years after Point Pearce and Point McLeay, which explains why Adnyamathanha language is still spoken fluently by older people. Three years later RM Williams set up his first leather workshop at Nepabunna, employing Adnyamathanha people to make boots and saddles.

It was a person by the name of Dollar Mick, a local of Nepabunna, that had all the skills to make boots and saddles. Dollar Mick was a flashy person who always rode his horse in a Mexican Saddle. Old Dollar spent the last days of his life at Lyndhurst and died there in the late sixties. **Adnyamathanha 1930**

1930s Umeewarra reserve land is granted near Port Augusta. Miss Brown works with Aboriginal people who come from as far as Ooldea and Oodnadatta for rations, medical treatment, work and children's education. Umeewarra children were not allowed into Pt Augusta unless they were strictly supervised.

1930s Ernabella mission is established in Pitjantjatjara country. Aboriginal children here are taught in their own language at school and do not wear clothes unless they have a European parent. Sometimes they take off their clothes so they won't look different to the others. Ceremonies and language continue with support of the missionaries.

1934 Exemption certificates are introduced which make certain Aboriginal people honorary 'whites'. Those with 'dog tags' as they are called are not allowed to mix with their relatives who were not exempted but they can buy land, have a bank account, vote, drink alcohol and work in normal employment. (This was very rare) Those without are not allowed to leave the reserve they are living on without written permission each time. Some so-called troublemakers had exemptions imposed on them. (Give the exemption certificate to someone and make him or her leave where they're living)

1935 Exempted people and non-Aboriginal people are not allowed onto Aboriginal reserves.

1936 The Police Act states that any non-Aboriginal person found moving about or living with Aboriginal people without satisfactory reason is liable to arrest and three months imprisonment. The Pitjantjatjara children who have 'white' fathers lose contact with them because they are no longer allowed living with their mothers unless legally married. Permission of the Protector of Aborigines, 2000 miles away, is needed for permission to marry

Many of the children having white fathers were forcibly removed to the Colebrook mission at Oodnadatta. (*Take some children across to Oodnadatta*) The missionaries didn't like the influence of Aboriginal community on the children so they were moved down to Quorn (shift the children south to Quorn). There is a drought in Quorn so the children are moved to Eden Hills in Adelaide, some never ever seeing their parents again. (Move the children to Eden Hills, Adelaide)

Aboriginal children who had been brought up in the mission homes in Adelaide were only trained to be stockmen or housemaids. A group including Lowitja O'Donoghue and Faith Coulthard protest at the Adelaide town hall in the mid 50s and gain the right to take up trades, nursing and teaching. While many of the mission children have had successes in their lives it was not without cost. Others were so devastated at being taken from their families and culture that when they reached adulthood, they did not cope and many died from alcohol and other stress related diseases.

A number of Aboriginal people serve in the armed forces during the war. (Send someone off to war). Exempted men who return from war (bring the men back from war) are not allowed to visit their families on reserves without a permit. (Give the permit to a returned soldier and have them read it aloud) They stay longer than permitted. (Give them an expulsion notice and have them read it aloud)

One returned soldier said “While I was in the military uniform, I was granted all the privileges one could think of, even going into a hotel and having a glass of beer Now it’s all over as far as the last war is concerned I am practically nobody”  
(Quote from page 79 the *Black Diggers* by Robert A Hall)

“Although Aborigines and Islanders met the enlistment criteria of being natural born Australians, they were officially barred from enlistment because they were non-Europeans”(Quote from page 16 the *Black Diggers* by Robert A Hall). Many enlisted and were accepted anyway.

1940s Two brothers by the name of Frank and Lorry Driver made money by fighting in the street at Copley to earn some pennies just to buy food. It was usually shearers that urged them on to fight for their own entertainment. (Quote from Buck McKenzie 2003)

1950s Something devastating happens in Kookatha and Yankunytjatjara country and people are forcibly moved north to Ernabella or south to Yalata and Ceduna. Does anyone know what this was? (‘Government’ workers should move some Kookatha and Yankunytjatjara people south to Yalata and Ceduna which is what happened before the atomic bombs were tested) *Q How would you explain the concept of an atomic bomb to people who had limited English or none at all? Q. What would have been the effects on those who were shifted to Yalata? Kookatha 1950s*

1951 The Assimilation Policy states that all Aborigines are expected to eventually 'attain the same manner of living as other Australians and to live as members of a single Australia'. This really means that they are expected to stop all their cultural traditions and give up their values and take up those of non-Aboriginal Australians.

Early 1960s Many town halls where the movies were shown had two sections, one for the whites and the other section for the Aboriginal people. This practice was phased out in the late seventies.

There were reports of a taxi driver selling alcohol at an inflated price to those who were addicted. When the pension or social service payments became available it was very common for some taxi drivers to cash the whole lot in because of alcohol debts owed by some Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people who were caught drinking alcohol were often jailed instantly without a court order. (Quote from Buck McKenzie 2003)

1965 The Aborigines and Historic Relics Preservation Act of SA provide some protection for sacred sites, burial sites, painting and engraving sites.

1966 The Aboriginal Lands Trust Act means titles to Aboriginal reserves in South Australia is now held and managed by Aboriginal people. Such reserves are small in area but significant to Aboriginal people.



1966 Having just become entitled at last to voting rights, old age pensions, widow's pensions and unemployment benefits, Aboriginal people become entitled to equal pay with other Australians.

1967 A National Referendum vote means Aboriginal people will now be counted in the census thus finally gaining equal citizenship with other Australians. *Q. Does this mean Aboriginal people are now treated equally in society? Why do you think so?*

#### 1970s **Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara 1970s**

1974 Nantawarrina station in the Flinders Ranges is bought by the government and leased to the Aboriginal Lands Trust for the Adnyamathanha community. Mt. Serle station soon follows.

#### **Adnyamathanha 1970s**

1981 The Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara land rights are recognised.

#### **Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara 1981**

1982 Aboriginal people are employed as rangers by the government to record Aboriginal sites under the Aboriginal Heritage Act. Many Aboriginal Education Workers are employed in schools and more Aboriginal teachers train and graduate.

1984 The Maralinga Tjarutja lands are returned to the traditional owners, however, radioactivity remains in some areas from the 1950s atomic bomb tests.

1986 Equal Opportunity Act makes discrimination unlawful on the basis of race. *Q. What still needs to be done for Aboriginal people to be treated fairly?*

1986 Dr. Paul Hughes OAM, becomes the first Aboriginal person to head Aboriginal Education in South Australia

1988 Aboriginal Studies curriculum for years R-7 is introduced to South Australian schools. Some schools teach Aboriginal languages.

1990 The song *Tjilbruke* composed by Buck McKenzie is the first Aboriginal song performed by the Adelaide Festival of Music Choir since it was founded in 1890 (100 years)

1991 The Australian government begins the process it calls Reconciliation between Aboriginal and other Australians

1991 The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody announces its findings and recommendations including that Aboriginal Studies should be taught in schools.

1993 Following the 1992 Mabo decision, the Native Title Act recognises native title rights of Indigenous peoples of Australia who have maintained a 'continuing connection' with their land and waters in accordance with their traditions. Native title is extinguished by valid grants of land to others. The 'Land Tenure' map shows most land is unavailable except desert.

1996 The Wik decision states that native title rights can co-exist with pastoral leases. Where there is conflict, Native Title rights are to be subordinate.

1997 The 'Stolen Generation' report from the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission outlines the experience of Aboriginal people who were removed from their families. It calls for a formal apology and compensation to support communities to heal.

1999 Lots of Aboriginal people are making films, writing books, working in tourism, government departments, studying law, natural resource management, anthropology and management.

2000 Hundreds of thousands of Australians publicly show their support for Reconciliation.

### **Kookatha 2000**

End of Script.

### **Debriefing**

The activity may end at this point (although if there is time you could continue). Make clear to the participants that the aim of the activity is to promote understanding and certainly not to try to make anyone feel guilty. It is when people are aware of injustices in the past that they are more able to prevent them from occurring in the future.

Participants should be given a few minutes to discuss in their groups what they have learnt from the activity and each group should have one person recording comments (see possible discussion questions below). They should then be invited to share their learning with the whole group. Those activity explorers, missionaries and government officials should also consider what they learnt and share their feelings with the whole group.

Discussion could include the following questions:

- Is the activity better than watching a video about the same events? Why?
- What did you learn of importance that you didn't know before? Describe.
- Did anything about the activity surprise you? How or why?
- What would you like to find out more about?
- How do you think the activity could be improved for the future?

The Aboriginal History could be following up with relevant activities including the following:

- reading the handout Aboriginal history in SA since 1939 and responding by comparing the two styles of learning, i.e. role play and reading text
- finding out what older people in the community learnt about Aboriginal history when they were at school and what they might have liked to learn more about
- research of one incident in the timeline or a timeline presented in a visual form
- viewing and discussing the video series *Women of the sun*
- implementing a whole of school Aboriginal Studies strategy

## **Narungga environment 1800**

Yorke Peninsula, land of the Narungga, extends as far north as Port Broughton and east to the Hummock Range which runs north from Gulf St Vincent. Narungga are divided into four groups, the *Kurnara* in the north, *Winderera* in the east, *Wari* in the west and *Dilpa* in the south. Fresh water rock holes are covered with slabs of stone or wood to keep the water clean. Paths are maintained through the thick mallee forests.

There are many camp sites around the coast making easy access to fresh fish and shellfish which we gather, spear or catch with nets. Fish include butterfish, salmon, mullet and snapper and shellfish include periwinkles, warreners and abalone for which we dive in deeper water. The men also hunt emu, kangaroo, wombat and lizards.

There are fruits ripe in the warmer months and nutritious tubers and various seeds to gather at particular times during the year. Much time is spent making and mending hunting and gathering implements, teaching the children and occasional ceremonies of singing and dancing.

## **Narungga script**

1802 We saw the floating islands made of wood and were fearful. The ghosts on them must have seen our campfire smoke but we hid out of view.

Late 1830s We've heard about white people living in what they call Adelaide and that people there are dying of strange sicknesses, Aboriginal people and the newcomers. The sicknesses spread to our communities.

Late 1860s It has been ten years since they started mining copper at Moonta and Wallaroo and 8,000 white people live there and at Kadina now. They send us to Point Pearce Mission, so we can be controlled and our land can then be available for their farming. They employ our men and women in return for rations. We do shepherding, clear the land, fence, shear and other odd jobs around the farms.

1890 They build their towns on our favourite campsites, where they was always fresh water and good fishing for us. By now 90% of our country is own freehold by Goonyas, all except a few patches of bush which are no good for grain farming. We collect rations from the ration depots at Kadina, Point Pearce, Yorketown and Edithburgh when there is little else to eat.

## Ngarrindjeri environment

The land of the Ngarrindjeri is one of the richest and most densely populated areas in Australia before European contact. There is abundant fresh water available from the River Murray, the Murray Lakes and from springs and wells along the Coorong.

Foods include a wide range of fresh and salt water fish and shellfish, emu, wombat, kangaroo, ducks and other birds, as well as fruits including munthries (a bit like apple in taste). Mats and baskets are woven from rushes and whale bones sometimes used as frameworks for shelters and then covered with branches, seaweed and mud. Nets are used for fishing and catching ducks. (For more information read *The Ngarrindjeri people: Aboriginal people of the Murray River, Lakes and Coorong*)

## Ngarrindjeri script

1805 A smallpox epidemic spreads along the river communities. This affects our people terribly and many of our older relatives and children die. We don't understand European diseases and think it is a punishment for something we've done wrong. It is a very sad time because our elders are dying with all their knowledge and our babies too before they have a chance to live.

1830 We see *Krinkari* (pronounced krin-kree) in a large canoe paddling along the river to the lakes. Our neighbours are frightened of them so we hide. They wear strange clothing and carry guns like the violent sealers who steal our women. *Krinkari* is our word for ghosts.

1850s It is good with the white men away. We are employed to do their work as labourers and shearers on the farms. Sadly the men come back again to their jobs and we once again have to survive on rations.

1911 We tell the government officials that we want our own land to farm. We've proved that we're good farmers but they don't listen to us. There is not enough mission land to keep the men busy with work. Our women are still mothers and feel important but the men are suffering because they can no longer provide for their families, nor keep up their ceremonies and are feeling very depressed. We hear it's the same at Point Pearce Mission.

1923 We're very angry yet frightened and ashamed at the same time. Government officials can come into our houses at any time and if we have too little food or clothing for our children, they take them from us. We tell our children to head bush whenever they see the officials and not come home until supper time or after dark. It's not fair.

## **Adnyamathanha environment**

The Adnyamathanha environment ranges from rocky hills and mountains such as Wilpena Pound and the Elder Range to dry flat plains with precious waterholes amongst the rocks and creek beds. Animal foods include Emu, bush turkey, kangaroo, euro and the yellow footed rock wallaby and all the birds which are not meat eating such as pigeons, doves, parrots, quail, duck. Tubers and fruits included quandong, native orange, pear and more and acacia seeds are ground for flour. Large nets are used to snaring emus and euros. (For more information read *The Adnyamathanha people: Aboriginal people of the northern Flinders Ranges*)

## **Adnyamathanha script**

1801 Some of our neighbours from down south tell us about a huge canoe, like an island on the water and ghosts (Anngula) who came ashore and walked up a high hill in their country. Our neighbours were very curious and frightened but the ghosts soon left again.

1839-40 Tonight around the campfire we tell how we saw the *Udnyu* (pronounced wood-new) again today while we were out hunting and how they sit on giant possums and use small sticks to make fire. It was interesting looking at their campsite after they had gone. *Udnyu* is our word for white people.

1850s The *Udnyu* people are here on our land to stay now. There are too many of them for us to frighten away. Their guns and whips have killed many of our people and some of us want to fight them with our spears. It is hard to know what is best to do. It might be safer to be friendly and work as shepherds and messengers for the *Udnyu* because we can keep looking after our country and sites that way.

1884 Our northern neighbours, the Dieri from around Lake Eyre can travel on the train now to Parachilna now to collect ochre. It's much safer than travelling by foot where they might get shot by pastoralists.

1930 We like the missionaries because they care about us but they don't understand our law. They discourage our ceremonies and our language. Dick Coulthard used to say "When I hear the Missionary telling the people at church about how they will go to hell if they don't follow Jesus and live like the white man, I laugh to myself, for I know if I remain a Black fellow I won't go to hell for there is none. When a Yura reaches *wikurtana* every one is happy well fed and contented. If one changed to be a Christian he might go to hell, if he remains a black fellow he won't."

1970s Some of us would like to let the land revert to bush but we have to graze sheep to pay the expenses.

## **Kookatha environment**

The Gawler Ranges are rocky hills with waterholes in several places and plains with many large salt lakes, sand dunes and mallee type vegetation surround them. The western part of Kookatha country is on the Nullarbor Plain, which has some soakages where fresh water is sometimes found.

The main Dreaming is about the sleepy lizard. Reptiles form an important part of the diet as do bush turkey, kangaroo and emus and seeds from grasses and acacia trees which are ground to make flour and damper. In drought time, water is found in roots of mallee trees, which are cut and drained into a container. Quandong is one of our fruits.

## **Kookatha script**

1858 John McDouall Stuart, the European explorer came with his packhorses to discover how useful our land would be to his people for grazing sheep and cattle. We watch with curiosity and fear.

1890 Most of our people work for the pastoralists now and they give us rations but we eat bush foods too.

1915 Some people are very frightened at first by the steam train, which they think is a *mamu* (our word for devil spirit). After that we sold artefacts to train travellers for “two bob”.

1950s We see the black mist coming through the trees after the bomb test. We vomit and have diarrhoea. The station people get sick too. None of us know it is because of the bomb.

2000 I didn't know so many people support us. It makes me feel good, even though there's still a long way to go. We don't want a nuclear waste dump in our country.

## **Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara environment**

The Musgrave and Everard Ranges are central to the landscape and plains that surround them. There are several rock holes where water can be found in good seasons but droughts can be devastating. Reptiles are a main food source as well as occasional kangaroo, emus, bush turkey, wallabies and native cat. It is important to learn the tracks of animals. Human hair is used to make *mankuri*, a ring shaped cushion so that women can comfortably carry dishes on their heads.

We dig for honey ants after rain when their abdomens are full with nectar from mulga blossom. *Maku* (or witchetty grubs) are dug for in the roots of acacia bushes. Seeds of grasses and trees are ground to make flour for damper and sometimes we have quandong fruit. Burrowing frogs can be dug up in drought time for emergency water. After rain the country is beautiful with lots of wildflowers. Spears, boomerangs, dishes and digging sticks are made with stone axes and scrapers and the spears are straightened and hardened with use of fire. (For more information read *Pages from an Aboriginal book: history and the land* by Yami Lester, Institute for Aboriginal Development 1984 or *Desert crafts: Anangu Maruku Punu* by Jennifer Isaacs, Doubleday Australia 1992.)

## **Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara script**

1873 Giles, the explorer came through our country with other men. They were extraordinary to see but we were very afraid of them and tried to frighten them away. Their horses and camels polluted our waterholes and nearly drank them dry. We will be talking about them for a long time.

1901 The Commonwealth of Australia was formed but it means nothing to us. We don't even know that foreign language called English. We just get on with our lives, not realizing that our land now belongs to the Queen of England. We still have virtually no contact with *Piranpa* (pronounced peer-an-pa) except for some who come looking for gold. *Piranpa* means white in our language.

1919 Our people have camped at Ooldea during drought years for thousands of years. It is a centre for trading goods from as far away as Broome in Western Australia. This ends when the railway people get greedy for more water for their steam trains by digging too deep and mix the salt water with the fresh water.

1920s *Piranpa* men came to our country on camels and give us clothes and food in exchange for dingo scalps. Some of these men are good and we give them wives but others are cruel and treat us very badly. Some *Piranpa* men started cattle and sheep leases in our country and many light-skinned children were born.

1970s They had no language in common to communicate and just sat and cried together.

1981 It always been our land under our law.

## **Kaurna environment**

Kaurna country includes what is now the metropolitan area of Adelaide, the land south along the coast of Fleurieu Peninsula as far as Cape Jervis and the land north to Crystal Brook. There are several winter creeks, fresh water springs in the sand dunes and swampy areas along the beaches and fresh water soakages, which have now been filled in and built on at places which in the future will be called Adelaide airport, West Beach and West Lakes.

Traditional foods includes possum, kangaroo, emu eggs, quandong, bush turkey, acacia seeds and gum, fish and shellfish, witchetty grubs, ducks and other birds and seeds for flour. Young men wear black cockatoo feathers in their hair when dressed for ceremony. Nets are used to catching ducks and fish. Wooden implements are used for digging and throwing and wooden bowls are used for water and seed collecting. (For more information read *The Kaurna people: Aboriginal people of the Adelaide plains*)

## **Kaurna script**

Early 1800s Some of our young women are kidnapped and kept as wives and slaves by the white men hunting fur seals. One-woman swims from Kangaroo Island with her baby tied to her back. Ngarrindjeri people 'found her body on the beach just above high-water mark, with her baby tied to her back. She had swum Backstairs Passage and then, in a state of utter exhaustion, crawled up the shore and died'<sup>1</sup>.

1820s A dreadful illness has come and many of our old people and children are dying. There are so many deaths, they cannot have proper funerals. Their spirits may come back to haunt us because of this.

Late 1830s Our people are living in a confusing time. The newcomers are putting up fences and frightening our animals away. Some of the newcomers are friendly and give us tobacco, flour and sugar if we do jobs for them but others scare us. They are bad mannered in taking land and hunting kangaroos without giving food and goods in return. When we lawfully take sheep or flour, Europeans accuse us of theft and sometimes shoot or poison our people. We kill only a few Europeans for breaking our laws. A few friendly ones are interested in learning our language; especially the missionaries and some like to attend our *palti* (pronounced Paul-tee). *Palti* is our word for ceremonies in the moonlight when we have singing and dancing.





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## References

<sup>i</sup> Richards, Eric, 1986, p. 285, *The Flinders History of South Australia: Social history*, Wakefield Press, Netley SA, quoting Taplin, 1879, p. 8, *The folklore, manners and languages of South Australian Aborigines*.