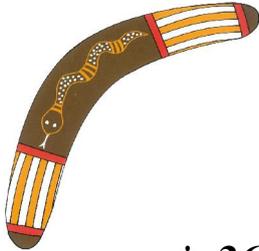


Aboriginal Australia A-Z

a language and cultural resource for all
Australian students



by Steve and Dellene Strong



- * **36 coloured pictures to illustrate 36 topics**
- * **36 black outline pictures for students to colour in**
- * **information and activities on each topic**
- * **13 Dreaming stories on audio (mp3)**
- * **this FREE teacher's information notes to allow you the teacher to assess the resource.**

This resource is basically a cultural overview of Aboriginal life but, by careful selection of the topics, the authors have also covered **all of the 26 single sounds** in the English alphabet so that the pictures can also be used as **flash cards** in junior primary.

For marketing purposes only, not in the classroom, these 36 pictures, Dreaming stories and notes are grouped into **12 units for purchase e.g. hunting; art; spirits.**

Each unit has 3 of the coloured sound pictures, its associated notes and sometimes a Dreaming story. This allows the publisher to keep the price low per unit. It is of course highly desirable that teachers purchase all 12 units so they they can re-mix the 36 topics to suit themselves in their lesson presentations.

It is hoped this simple resource will help Aboriginal as well as non-Aboriginal students to appreciate the rich and varied culture of the first people of Australia.

36 topics included in this resource, indexed to their single sound

**Next to each sound, teachers will find which of the
12 units the publishers have arbitrarily placed the
topic for distribution purposes only**

Aboriginal people - culture

boomerang - hunting

burial poles - ceremonies

canoes - crafts

coolamon - women

corroboree - ceremonies

didgeridoo - crafts

dilly bags - women

Dreaming stories - ceremonies

echidna - land animals

fire - spiritual life

fish - aquatic animals

frog - aquatic animals

galah - birds

hands - art

homes - crafts

honey ants - bush tucker

invasion - culture

jabiru - birds

kangaroo - land animals

lizards - land animals

Mimi spirits - spirits

nulla-nulla - hunting

octopus - culture

pelican - birds

Quinkan spiritis - spirits

Rainbow Snake - spiritual life

spears - hunting

turtles - aquatic animals

Uluru - spiritual life

vegetables - bush tucker

Wandjina - spirits

women - women

X-ray art - art

yams - bush tucker

zig zag - art

Which sounds/topics are included in each unit for purchase?

The 12 Units are listed alphabetically

AQUATIC ANIMALS - includes topics *fish; frog; turtle*

ART - includes topics *hand; Xray; zig zag*

BIRDS - includes topics *galah; jabiru; pelican*

BUSH TUCKER - includes topics *vegies; honey ants; yams*

CEREMONIES - includes topics *burial poles; corroboree; Dreaming stories*

CRAFTS - includes topics *canoes; didgeridoo; homes*

CULTURE - includes topics *Aboriginal people; invasion; octopus*

HUNTING - includes topics *boomerang; nulla nulla; spears*

LAND ANIMALS - includes topics *echidna; kangaroo; lizards*

SPIRITS - includes topics *Mimi spiritis; Quinken spiritis; Wandjira*

SPIRITUAL LIFE - includes topics *fire; Rainbow snake; uluru*

WOMEN - includes topics *women; dilly bags; coolamon*



Teacher's Notes

The information and material presented in this resource is based on opinions, facts and attitudes gathered by two non-Aboriginal NSW teachers, **Steve and Dellen Strong**. See notes on the **authors and dedication at the end of these notes**.

As such it should be noted we are offering our opinions, facts we believe to be relevant and attitudes we have developed after living with and developing friendships with many Aboriginal people.

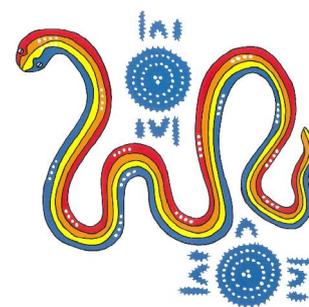
Aim of this resource

Aboriginal people have exceptionally strong links to their land, their history and their kin. This resource attempts to offer some indication as to how these links developed.

Please note the past, as we may refer to it, is not dead - many transitional Aboriginal societies are trying, some with great success, to blend both cultures, selecting the best of both. Others may lean further one way or the other; but we do not believe for a second this is the chronicle of a dying culture - it is alive, vibrant and growing.

The importance of Aboriginal studies

Every child in this country should and must have the opportunity to learn something about a culture which is definitely the most ancient still being practised today. Aboriginal people have the oldest, continuously practised spiritual life on Earth; were the first people to be involved in activities we call farming; were the most sophisticated mariners on Earth (if we accept Australia was colonised by canoe from the north 50,000 years ago - see *canoe* topic) and the original conservationists of this continent. This culture has something to offer everyone. Our aim is to attempt to offer our humble interpretation of aspects of this culture to you, the teacher.



In closing, remember this: you are presenting, in our opinion, the greatest culture which ever existed on this planet - handle with care, respect and reverence - all will enjoy!

Aboriginal Culture

an overview for teachers by Steve Strong

Aboriginal culture is based around the Land, the Law and the spirits. To non-Aboriginal people, these may be separate concepts but in the eyes of Aboriginal people, all are one.

Aboriginal culture is, I believe, the most spiritual society that has ever existed on this earth. Dance, art, songs, ceremonies, Dreaming stories and body decoration are but some of the activities which demonstrate and reinforce Aboriginal beliefs. All of these actions serve the spirit ancestors, the Law and the people and normally occur within the group.

The Land

Aboriginal people have formed a relationship with the land that is often very difficult for non-Aboriginal people to understand. Non-Aboriginals see the land as something they personally own, to use, to exploit, to make money from, and often value it according to the money or power gained from it.

Aboriginal people see themselves as guardians or minders of a landscape that is alive. The spirits are in the land and can emerge from the land and can still determine the affairs of the people. For example, a crow revisiting one person could be a sign of death, as could a blowfly, cloud formations, the call of a bird ... all of these acts occur because the spirits made them happen. They are everlasting and will never die. They were there yesterday, today and tomorrow - time is irrelevant.

To destroy the Land is to destroy the spirits and the people. An Aboriginal person that has no land and no link with their spirit is a soul without direction or purpose. The spirits gave the groups the major responsibility to care for the land. The people and the Land are bound to each other, like a family. The Land is not owned by the people.



The Law

Hunting, fishing, dancing etc. are done together and bond the group together. The Law is strict. An individual who eats alone and does not share, selects a mate based on personal preference only, refuses to obey Elders' directions or acts in a way which places individual preference above the group, will always be punished. They may be shunned, banished, physically chastised or even killed. The individual is always subservient to the group. The group will only survive if each person carries out prescribed roles and co-operates - either voluntarily or under force.

Fishing, whether by spearing, stunning, netting or any other technique, is normally done as a group co-operative action. The food caught is a group possession to be allocated in a set order dependent on relationships and ceremonial status but never to those who catch the most or biggest fish.

Dance binds the group together. It highlights their dependence on their spirit ancestors and on each other when hunting. It also provides an opportunity for men and women to exhibit another skill within the group and provides role models for children's education.

Art is primarily a spiritual activity. To paint important spiritual totems, designs or figures, the artist has to have the correct knowledge and the proper initiation ceremonies have to be performed - that is the Law. In other words the artist is an artist only if the group accepts the artist as being worthy, understanding society's rules and showing an unswerving acceptance of the Law.



Aboriginal people today

Traditional Aboriginal people - adaptations to non-Aboriginal society

It is impossible to find an Aboriginal community today that does not use at least some material aspects of non-Aboriginal society e.g. flour, tea, knives, money, building materials, clothes, string, cooking utensils. The purely traditional economic lifestyle cannot continue due to the destruction of the natural balance of nature in Australia with the introduction of cattle and sheep, fences, diseases, the destruction of the environment and the loss of the land. The last purely traditional Aboriginal people came out of the WA. desert in the 1960s.

However, in general it is my advice that most, if not all, traditional beliefs, values, attitudes and spiritual activities are still widespread amongst rural and many urban Aboriginal people. Perhaps many of these traditional activities never ceased but were just hidden from non-Aboriginal eyes and maintained quietly. Other activities are being revived e.g. initiation ceremonies are now being re-activated, occasionally modified as some aspects and acts are forgotten but the spirit, the intention and the heart of Aboriginality has never died. It is re-emerging daily and becoming stronger and more vibrant.

Transitional Aboriginals

Some Aboriginal people are trying to re-create a partially traditional life in northern and central parts of Australia. These people are called transitional Aboriginals and live in out-stations, practising their beliefs, maintaining their values and teaching their children to rely more on their traditional bush foods and spiritual Law wherever possible. But the children are still receiving a non-Aboriginal education as well as education in their Aboriginal culture.

Urban Aboriginal people

Urban Aboriginal people are living between two cultures - Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. This creates many tensions trying to balance the importance of obtaining an established place in non-Aboriginal society with all its economic, medical and educational benefits whilst still maintaining their spiritual affinity with their Aboriginality.

Contemporary Issues

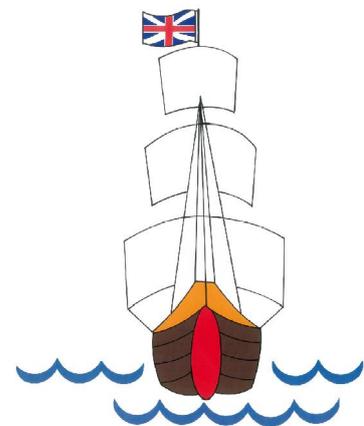
One opinion we do hold, (there are Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people who disagree with this, backed up by equally convincing arguments), is that contemporary issues such as self-determination, land rights, health problems, deaths in custody etc. are too difficult to effectively comprehend for children in most Primary/Infants classes. (There may well be some senior Primary students who can grasp some aspects of contemporary issues.)

Moreover, to understand such contentious issues and dilemmas facing Aboriginal people today, it is essential to first understand the link between the land and its people.

Spirituality, land management skills, conservation techniques, spirits, totems etc.; these are the components which bind the people to the land. How can children assess the validity of a land rights claim till they understand what that claim is based upon and whether these traditional practices are still maintained and if they are not, does this lessen the claim?

Furthermore, if one were to study, for example, health problems today, children must first understand the components of the original diet (e.g. meats, vegetables, medicines, fruits, seeds), gathering and food preparation methods, then look at the impact of refined sugars, alcohol, unbalanced diets, using the original diet as a comparative base. So the list of traditional practices and beliefs could continue.

Please also be aware these so-called contemporary issues involving the stealing of their land, mistreatment of Aboriginals based on race and cultural alienation are not recent issues - they began when William Dampier stood on this continent and have continued since - these problems have an historical base prefaced around the fact that in many respects Aboriginal and European cultures were diametric opposites. We are not suggesting one is better or more Worthy (our opinion here is irrelevant) but they are different. How can children make an evaluation based on cultural terms unless they are aware of these differences and how and why these differences exist.



Aboriginal archaeological sites

Accepted sites and dates - 25,000 years and older

Lake Mungo, NSW - 26,500 years - female in late 20s cremated, bones smashed into small pieces, painted with red ochre and buried

Lake Mungo, NSW - 32,000 years - male buried in grave with red ochre Lake Mungo, NSW - 38,500 years - campsite

Upper Swan River, WA - 38,500 years - tool and quarry site

Obiri Rock Shelter, N.T. - 26,500 years - art site

Malakunanja II, N.T. - 53,000 years - occupation site

Sandy Creek, Qld - 32,000 years - art site

Devils Lair, W.A. - 33,000 years - tools, occupation site



Sites and dates still debated

Lake Eyre, S. A. - 132,000 years - skull cap, dated by a new radioactive method

Pénrith, NSW - 60-70,000 years - quarry and tool site, date not universally accepted

Lake George, NSW - 128,000 years - 4 million year sample of soil showed a change in vegetation to eucalypts, a massive increase in charcoal (indicates bushfire) and continuation of large charcoal deposits from 128,000 years onwards. Claims that this indicated firestick farming by Aboriginals are still challenged.

Cairns, Qld - 100,000 years - 80kms east on edge of reef exactly same results as Lake George - charcoal deposit. This would seem to corroborate Lake George. Other dates (e.g. Lynchs Crater 38,000 years) are younger but some argue they should be uniform dates - claiming the earlier dates do not fit any accepted pattern.

In view of these dates, it is interesting to note how it used to be thought until fairly recently that Aboriginal people had been in Australia only 10,000 or so years!

General Lesson Notes

This resource is set up in a way which encourages the teaching of:

1) Aa - Zz as a language unit for junior primary -

Teachers pick out one topic for each single sound A to Z (**26 coloured pictures**) and use the pictures as a set of **FLASH CARDS**.

For some single sounds there is only one card e.g. a. For others there is a choice e.g. c, d and w.

The additional cards have been added to extend the resource for broader cultural studies as well as language lessons.



2) Units of work -

By grouping topics, with their associated information, questions and activities, you will be able to form the basis of a unit of study. You may wish to, and we would strongly suggest you do, add to this Aboriginal speakers, videos etc. to complement the topic information.

This resource consists of 12 units, each with 3 topics (36 topics in all)

We have grouped the topics in **units of 3 sounds per unit**, for the convenience of purchasing the resource in 12 parts at a cheap price per unit. But you can of course re-mix the topics to bring out broader features of Aboriginal life e.g. we have only 3 topics per unit for purchasing purposes but many of the wordfinds and crosswords draw on more than 3 topics. If you purchase more than one unit you can mix the topics much better e.g. **hunting** has 3 sounds but the topic **fire** which we have put under Aboriginal people is of course a very useful topic to add to a hunting unit as this is its usual cultural use apart from cooking.



3) Individual topics -

Teachers may wish to cover just one topic (sound), using associated lesson activities, craft, art and research topics, adding any resources of their own to this topic.

Examples of Units of work

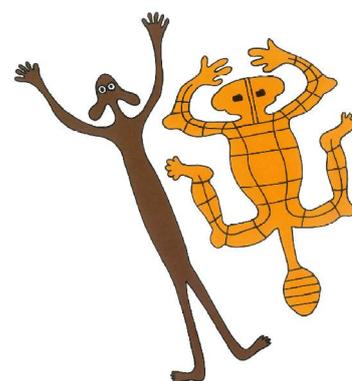
Please remember there are other questions and activities presented in the teacher's lesson notes to each topic/sound. The questions here are suggestions only and are not meant to be comprehensive.

Aboriginal spiritual life and painting

From the complete set of topics, select coloured pictures for:

Aboriginal people, burial poles, hands, Mimi spirits, echidna, Quinkan spirits, Dreaming stories, Rainbow Snake, Wandjina spirits, X-ray art, corroboree, zig zag

1. What do you think the word 'Aboriginal' means?
2. Why do you think Aboriginal people feel their land is so important?
3. Why do Aboriginal people dance?
4. Look at a video on Aboriginal dance or a corroboree. How is it different from other dances? Why are their bodies painted? On what do you think they base their dance movements? Why?
5. Why do Aboriginal people spend so much time on art?
6. What sorts of things do Aboriginal people paint or engrave? Why?
7. Why do you think Aboriginal people paint themselves? Is it for fun or is there another reason? What do the designs mean?
8. What did Aboriginal people use to paint in the past?
9. Where would these materials have come from?
10. What new materials are also used today?
11. Which of these cards are paintings of spirits?
12. Different spirit paintings are found in different parts of Australia. Where would you find a) Wandjina b) Mimis c) Quinkan spirits?
13. Which paintings show inside the body? Look at other paintings of the same style and list the parts of the body shown. Why do you think they painted like this?



14. Aboriginal people did not write words or books in the past - how did they pass on stories, information and skills?
15. From an early age Aboriginal children are told of bad spirits who will harm or eat them e.g. bunyips, Imjams. Why do you think the elders wanted to scare them?
16. List some of the ways Aboriginal people express their spiritual beliefs. Why is this so important to them?
17. How do Aboriginals' spiritual beliefs affect their day to day life? Why?

lifestyle

From the complete set of topics select:

**Aboriginal people, fish, corroboree, spears, nulla nulla,
kangaroo, boomerang, Dreaming stories, women**

1. Think of the different lifestyles Aboriginal people lived before Europeans arrived. How was their lifestyle different from non-Aboriginal lifestyle - both at the time the Europeans arrived and today?
2. If an Aboriginal caught some fish, would he/she eat all the fish themselves or do they have to share? Why?

things Aboriginal people made

From the complete set of topics select:

**homes, canoes, nulla nulla, boomerang, dilly bag,
coolamon, didgeridoo**



1. What materials did Aboriginal people use to make these items?
2. Where would they find these materials?
3. Some homes or shelters are meant to last one day, some are meant to last much longer. Why?
4. For what did Aboriginal people use their canoes or rafts?

5. Look at the picture of the canoe. Why do you think they never went far from the shore?
6. Why did Aboriginal people build shelters?
7. How were these shelters built and who helped make them?
8. Make a plan for an Aboriginal campsite. Think about -
 - a) what materials will be used b) closeness to water c) who will camp where d) food sources e) wind direction f) shade.

Suggestion - this could be set out in Papunya style artwork.

foods and activities involving women and children

From the complete set of topics select:

**vegetables, yams, honey ants, women, coolamon,
dilly bag, fish**

1. List the jobs and duties women performed in traditional Aboriginal society.
2. What are some of the foods Aboriginal women gathered in the bush?
3. Which are the major tools Aboriginal women used?
4. The digging stick was the women's main tool. Why was it so important?
5. How did the women use some of the tools?
6. Some of the foods Aboriginal women gathered were poisonous. How did they get rid of the poison?
7. What is a honey ant? Where does it live and how is it caught?
8. What is a yam? Where would it be found and how is it gathered?
9. What role did children have in traditional Aboriginal society?
10. Did traditional Aboriginal children go to a school like yours? If not, how did they learn? Who taught them?

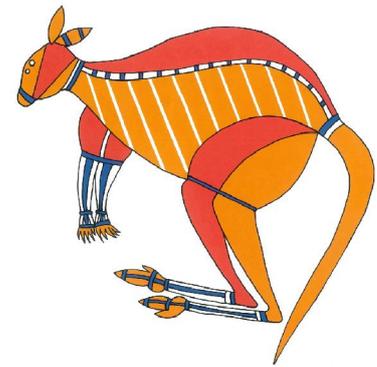


animals and birds

From the complete set of cards select:

**echidna, kangaroo, lizard, Rainbow Snake, turtle, frog, fish,
galah, jabiru, pelican**

1. Put them in order from fastest to slowest.
2. Which live in water?
3. Which live on the ground?
4. Match the animal with the way in which it is hunted or caught:



kangaroo	pick it up
echidna	start a fire to scare animals,
lizard and snake	run them into a trap and spear them
frog	chase it, hit it over the head with a club (nulla nulla)
turtle	hunt in a canoe, spear with a 3-pronged fishing spear
fish	put net into a creek, scare animals towards net

5. Discuss the different methods of hunting each animal or bird. Why would some of them not be hunted by particular groups? Bring out not only the Aboriginal Law that you cannot eat your totem, but also the environmental differences throughout Australia so some areas did not have certain animals available for hunting.

As an example, think about the **kangaroo**.

A kangaroo is mainly nocturnal (that is it moves and eats mostly at night). It can run at up to 60km per hour, smell and hear much better than a person. The men will hunt with spears. They might also use nets, killing boomerangs and pits to assist a particular hunt.

Here are some ideas of questions to pose to students. Answers could be in the form of a group drawing or collage:

Before the hunters leave, what could they do so the kangaroo won't smell them?

Remember kangaroos have excellent hearing. If there are six men, where will they stand in relation to the kangaroos?

- É How will they communicate with each other when they are near the kangaroos?
- É Draw the different types of spears they may use.
- É What time of the day will they hunt?

tools, weapons and utensils

From the set of pictures select:

boomerang, nulla nulla, spears, fire, women, dilly bag, coolamon

1. Which of these items are made by men?
2. List some examples of animals caught by each of these tools or weapons.
3. For what other things, apart from hunting, were these items used?
4. There are many different types of spears - a few are shown on the picture.
 - a) what do they look like?
 - b) why do you think there was more than one type of spear?
 - c) what were they used for?
 - d) how were they made?
 - e) of what were they made?



5. Use of weapons. If possible, with the assistance of an Aboriginal person, practise using weapons. Discuss difficulties in gaining:
 - a) distance
 - b) accuracy
 - c) power
 - d) getting boomerang to return
 - e) parts of body which need to be built up.



6. How do you think Aboriginal people made fire? Try out your ideas (with a teacher).

Dreaming stories

Some non Aboriginal people find Dreaming stories difficult to grasp or accept. The idea of an emu and a crane throwing an egg on firewood, thus creating the sun that powers our solar system - a myth? Perhaps.

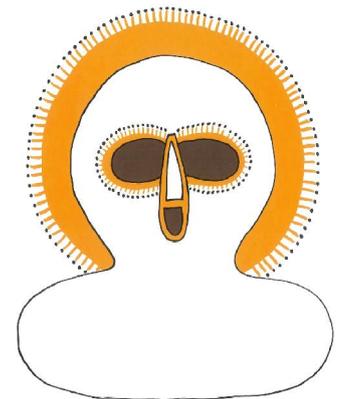
Alternatively, the concept of a human being parting an ocean, screaming at a fortress to bring down its walls or turning loaves into fish - a myth? Perhaps.

Perhaps in both cases a leap in both faith and belief are required ingredients, along with the ability to understand the underlying messages and read between the lines. This along with an open mind is needed when reading these stories.

Dreaming stories have many layers of meaning. To understand the full meaning needs knowledge and information only open to fully initiated men and women. Their expertise complements some stories and provides the key to their true meaning, otherwise completely hidden to other eyes. Therefore we must be careful not to carelessly - or aimlessly dismiss these stories as just stories ... much more exists.

Such stories have many functions:

- * to set out codes of behaviour, for both children and adults
- * explain the role of spirits
- * pass on secret knowledge
- * pass on facts and concrete information for future generations
- * explain roles and duties within the group
- * to give an insight into a society that has lived in harmony with nature for at least 50,000 years and most probably much longer.
- * to provide a sense of identity and purpose to the life of each individual and their relationship to their group and their spirit ancestors.



Originally all Dreaming stories were passed on orally. Today, many have been written down, both in English and in Aboriginal languages. Every group has their own Dreaming stories but many groups share similar ideas although details of the story vary. The ones presented here are adapted by the authors and are suitable for discussion by non-Aboriginals. There are other stories that only initiated men and women are allowed to hear.

See next page on Dreaming stories and scripts included in this resource

The Dreaming Stories on mp3 audio

To accompany this resource there are a series of Dreaming stories on mp3 audio.

They are **13 short stories** on different themes to illustrate the wide diversity of stories available.

We list after the title, the topics that could be discussed with the Dreaming story. Of course the general one on Dreaming stories goes with all stories.

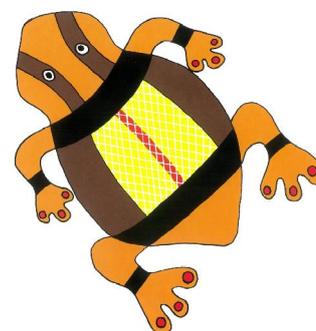
The stories include **4 with scripts** in the accompanying notes **as well as** mp3 audio:

The First Sunrise (fire topic)

Tiddalick the Frog (frog topic)

The Moon and the Rainbow (hunting topic)

The Rainbow Snake (Rainbow Snake topic).



The following are in **mp3 audio only**, no script in the notes:

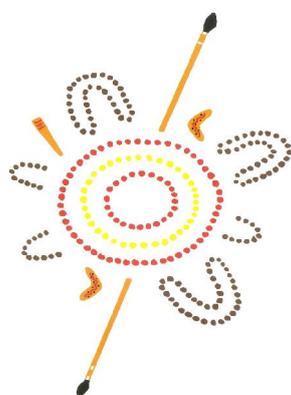
- **Forbidden Blackbean** -when a hunter denies the special knowledge of a woman Elder, he dies after eating the wrong food (vegetables, women)
- **Voice of the Wind** - how the sand rat became a burrower to escape from a willie willieø
- **The echidna and the turtle** - how the echidna got its spikes and the turtle its shell. (turtle topic, but repeated in echidna topic as relates to both)
- **Hunters who quarrelled** - a story from the Northern Territory - why the wallaby likes the open spaces and the wombat looks for shelter. (homes, hunters unit)
- **Stone fish traps** - from Brewarrina in NSW - tells how they learnt to make fish traps from the creator Biame who answered their corroboree. (fish topic, also relates to corroborees)
- **First kangaroo** - how the kangaroo first arrived on a strong wind. (kangaroo topic)
- **Lizard woman** - from the Djavan people in central Australia - how lizards were created from frightened women running from wild dingoes. (women topic but also of course for lizards)
- **How the birds got their colours** - (birds unit)

ÉBoomerang - from the Gumilaroi people of inland NSW - how Yondi lifted the sky with a flat stick which was bent into a boomerang. (boomerang)

About the authors

STEVE STRONG - Steve is a NSW primary and general secondary teacher. He has taught junior and senior Aboriginal students in primary and secondary schools; years 4 and 6 in primary and years 7 to 12 in secondary schools. He has taught year 9 and 10 English, year 8 Music, and Social Science in all years. He has been involved with both the 7-10 and 11-12 Aboriginal Studies Support Document Writing Committees, the 7-10 Geography Syllabus and writing topics for the Retraining Division for the Dept. of Education on Traditional Law and Contact History 1792-1992 and given various in-service courses both in the north west and north coast of NSW.

DELLENE STRONG - Dellene is an Infants teacher who has taught K, 1,2 separately and as a group. She has worked as an Aboriginal Education Resource teacher in Moree, NSW working solely with Aboriginal children between the ages of 5-7. She is also a professional artist selling her paintings in numerous exhibitions. Dellene is the artist for this Kit and also contributed many of the more junior exercises and questions. She has spent many years living in the Moree Aboriginal Community and shares an empathy and compassion towards Aboriginal students which is reflected in her work in Moree and this resource.



Dedication

It is important to understand that nothing whatsoever would have been written, discussed or understood without the help of many close Aboriginal friends. Three people have taught us more than any book or video could hint at. Our heartfelt and eternal thanks go to Tom French, Darryl French and Michael (Buster) Duke. Our knowledge and understanding were learnt from people such as these and many others too numerous to list and these people will live in our hearts eternally. Videos, poems and books - they tell us facts; people - they speak from the heart and show us a living culture.

We are also grateful to many others including Heather Anderson and Bertha Kapeen for sharing knowledge and beliefs that have helped us appreciate the culture, the people, the Dreaming - and so much more.

And, of course, let me thank the students we have taught or should we say those who taught us. Hayley Saunders, Alison Duke, Susan Leslie, Kylie Benge, the French Boys, Boppa Johnston, -Beastø Kelly Gander -Slipø -Son Boyø Troy Smith, Mark and Mary Pitt, Cedelia Duke, Rod Tighe, Karen Barker, Reninya Roberts, Sarah Webb and Natasha Moran. The list is endless. These students proved to us a belief we will hold till the day we die .. there is no greater honour than teaching a class of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students who want to learn about the culture of AUSTRALIANS!!

A special thanks to Pat Page who planted the seed of an alphabet and publication - a lady whose inspiration and encouragement is greatly appreciated.

We only hope that we have offered a fair reflection of a complex, deeply spiritual and incredibly sharing and compassionate culture - if we have not ... we apologise, we tried our hardest and our heart was in the right place.

Steve and Dellene Strong