

Timeline: Indigenous history post colonisation

1788	The disruption of Indigenous life due to deadly viruses carried by sailors and convicts. Diseases such as influenza and smallpox led to the deaths of over half the Indigenous population living in the Sydney area after the arrival of white settlers.
1828-1832	The 'Black War' in Tasmania, involving large massacres of Indigenous people and the extinction of some tribes and languages. The survivors of the massacres surrendered and were relocated.
1835	John Batman (a businessman and farmer) negotiated a treaty with the Wurundjeri elders (a tribe living in the Port Phillip area near Melbourne) to buy their land. Although the treaty was declared void by the Governor of NSW, it is the only documented time that a European settler attempted to negotiate their occupation of the land with its original owners.
1838	Myall Creek Massacre in NSW – a racially motivated incident in which white stockmen and former convicts deliberately slaughtered 30 Indigenous people. Many of the perpetrators were found guilty of murder and hanged.
1930 onwards	The Stolen Generations – the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families. This was sometimes justified by the authorities as a matter of child protection, as they believed that the Indigenous race was destined to become extinct and thus that "half-caste" children needed to "assimilate" and should be forced to become part of a supposedly "superior" white society. A.O. Neville , the Protector of Aborigines in Western Australia who was depicted in the film Rabbit Proof Fence , (a teaching resource for the text, <i>Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence</i> is available on the <i>Reading Australia</i> site) justified the practice in 1930 by writing: "Eliminate the full blood and permit the white admixture and eventually the race will become white."
1962	Indigenous Australians have the option of enrolling to vote in Federal elections.
1983	Voting became compulsory for Indigenous Australians. (It is often wrongly stated that Aboriginal Australians did not become citizens until the 1967 referendum. Clarification about common misconceptions involving this referendum can be found at the Civics and Citizenship Education website .)

1992	The Mabo court decision (a legal case initiated by Torres Strait Islanders) recognised Native Title and Indigenous land rights in Australia for the first time. It rejected the notion of ‘terra nullius’ (land belonging to no one) that had previously allowed white settlers to claim ownership of the land.
1993	Native Title Act , which provided a system for the Indigenous people to make claims for the native title to lands which they had a traditional connection to.

Activities

It is worthwhile getting students to look at the [New Zealand Treaty of Waitangi](#) to compare the differences between the ways that the original inhabitants of the land were treated in both countries. Issues relating to Native Title and land rights in New Zealand were discussed in the 1800s in a manner which recognised the rights of the original inhabitants of NZ to the land they lived on.

Students may explore the link to [Bringing Them Home](#) – the report on the Stolen generations.

For further background:

- A very detailed timeline (including interesting references to ancient Aboriginal history as well as all the various legal/social milestones since white colonisation) can be found at the [Creative Spirits website](#).
- Other timelines are available at:
 - o [the Aboriginal Heritage site](#);
 - o [the Australian Government’s Indigenous culture and history site](#).
- It would be particularly useful for students to access the ‘2000 to today’ part of the timeline, which contains interesting details about events which occurred after *The 7 Stages of Grieving*, such as the government intervention in the Northern Territory in 2007 and Kevin Rudd’s Apology to the Stolen Generations in 2008. As these are the events which students may remember or recall, it will be interesting for them to observe the progress which has been made in terms of Indigenous rights since the publication and performance of the play. It is important to remember that the play was composed after the recognition of Indigenous native title, but before a more widespread and public recognition of the devastating effects on the Stolen Generations.