

RECONCILIATION PLACE

Activity Kit

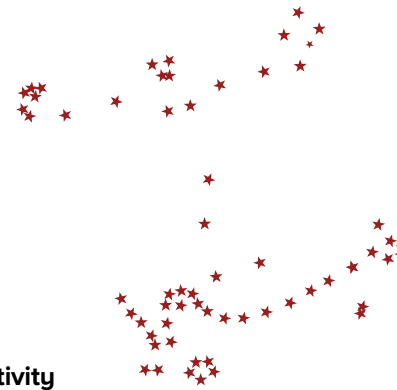
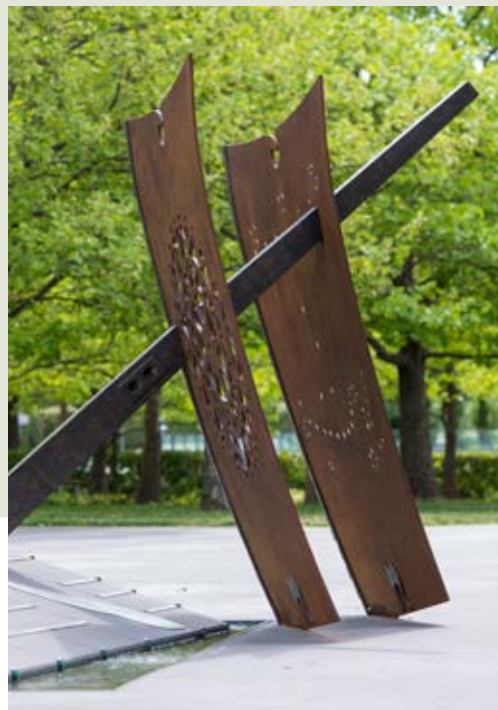
Methalu Thari (Smooth Sailing)

Vic McGrath

Vic McGrath's artwork, Methalu Tharri (Smooth Sailing) takes its inspiration from the sails and mast of a traditional Torres Strait Islands canoe resting on a beach. The pool of water beneath the sails suggests the island territories of the Torres Strait. This artwork reflects our shared experience of the earth's seasons and stars. Vic reminds us that it is only our reading of the stars that differs. His message is an important one in that we are one people living under the same sky.

On the sails, constructed from weathered steel, are designs relating to Torres Strait Islander culture. Represented on the first sail and created from inlaid, hand-carved pearl shells, is a pattern of shining stars. The cluster of stars is a representation of Tagai, a hero who stands in a canoe with a fishing spear in his hand. Tagai's story shares knowledge and guidance about seasonal changes. Torres Strait Islanders gaze up to Tagai at night. Directed by his position in the sky Islanders decide when to head to sea to fish, to hunt dugong, to plant crops, or to expect the seasonal rains.

Central to the detailed pattern of the second sail is a sundial—a simple device that tracks the noon-mark of the sun throughout the year. Both designs on the canoe's sails relate to the seasons and tell of the intimate relationship to the tides, winds and food gathering practices of the Torres Strait.



Student Activity

A) Tagai is represented as a constellation in the night sky. Find a picture of him using Google images. Can you make out his imagery in the stars? What else do you recognise within this star pattern?

B) Research the Torres Strait Islander creation story relating to the hero Tagai. What does this story teach us about Torres Strait Islander peoples and their relationship to the environment? What does the Tagai story teach us about rules and responsibilities?

C) The seasons are very important to all of us. Torres Strait Islander peoples follow the seasons very closely. They guide them when to hunt, fish or plant and harvest crops. List some important activities that you do in each of the seasons across the year. How does the changing environment influence your chosen activities?

RECONCILIATION PLACE

Activity Kit



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Separation 1

The artwork, Separation 1, features glass panels that display words associated with family such as child, baby, children, sister, brother and mother, in regional Indigenous languages. A child is pictured alongside these words on the front display panel. The words continue on the reverse side. Contained within the artwork, and almost hidden from view, is an empty coolamon. The coolamon evokes memories of Mums, Dads, Uncles and Aunties who would have rocked these carefully constructed cradles. Now it is an empty vessel, evoking memories of babies 'taken away' from their families.

Beginning in 1910 many thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were removed from their families, by the authorisation of Australian State governments, to be raised in institutions or fostered or adopted by non-Indigenous families. Whilst some were given up by their parents seeking a better life for their children, many others were forcibly removed and are now referred to as the 'Stolen Generations.' These children experienced overwhelming grief and the loss of childhood, innocence, family relationships, identity, language, culture, country and spirituality.



Student Activity

A) Write the name of the traditional owners for the region that you live in. Can you find a local place name or a word in traditional language?

B) Coolamons are carefully crafted using traditional tools and practices. Why is the coolamon in this artwork displayed empty? How are coolamons made? Find a picture of one. You may like to draw it.

C) As a class, write a letter to an Indigenous Elder in your local community inviting your Elder to come to school and share traditional stories or personal experiences.

RECONCILIATION PLACE

Activity Kit

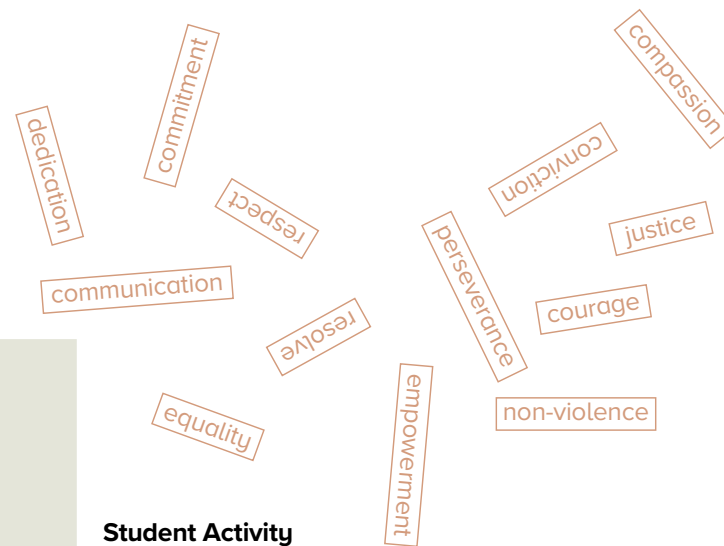
Women

Jenuarrie, Thancoupie, Violet Petyarre

The artwork 'Women' celebrates three remarkable women and their contribution to Reconciliation in Australia. Three sculptural forms represent these women as strong and wise figure heads standing in conversation. Faith Bandler, Evelyn Scott and Jessie Street came from diverse backgrounds but united to ignite change in Australian society. They look towards each other as a cohesive group linked in their values and aspirations. Collectively, they campaigned for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander freedoms as well as women's rights.

They were all important contributors to the 1967 Referendum campaign. On 27th May 1967 Australians voted to change the Constitution so that Indigenous people would be governed by Federal law, like every other citizen, and be counted as part of the Australian population. The referendum campaign was an important milestone where Australians actively voiced their opinions, leading to further freedoms for Indigenous Australians such as voting rights in the 1960's.

Pictured above are inspiring words displaying qualities and values important to all three women, that awakened change across Australia. These words invite us all to participate in the Reconciliation journey and be part of the ongoing conversation.



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A) Select two words from the list (pictured at the base of the artwork). Define each word.

B) How is your word important to the Reconciliation process? Write a short response.

RECONCILIATION PLACE

Activity Kit

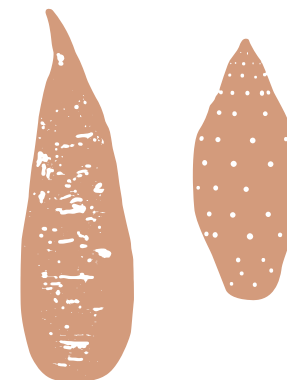
Kw'ith, Man and Woman Yam

Thancoupie

Two large bronze sculptural forms balance gracefully on end; they symbolize bush potatoes, or yams. The long yam and the cheeky yam are the traditional symbols for man and woman. The artist's thumb and finger marks remain impressed on the outer surfaces of the sculpture inviting visitors to touch and explore these artworks, retracing the mark making of the artist herself.

Traditionally, yams were sown, grown and harvested by Indigenous Australians as a staple food. They became more difficult to grow with the hooves of sheep and cattle compacting the soil, and with European land clearing practises. However, they continue to be an important food source in many parts of Australia to this day. The larger robust yams represented here are evocative of the yams still grown in northern Australia.

A simple yet powerful sentence at the base of the artwork suggests a way forward for everyone involved in the process of Reconciliation: **Come Together, Sit Down, Share Yam.**



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Student Activity

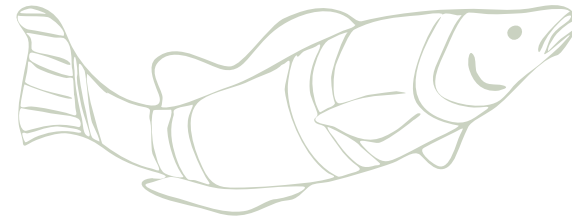
A) The artist invites us to come together through the act of sharing food. How can joining together for a simple meal help in reconciling differences? Select two bush food items including one from your local region. There are some suggested bush foods on the list included on the last page of this resource.

B) Research your bush food's use traditionally in Indigenous life.

C) How is your bush food used today? Find a sweet and or savoury recipe for your food item. (You may like to prepare your recipes at school)

RECONCILIATION PLACE

Activity Kit



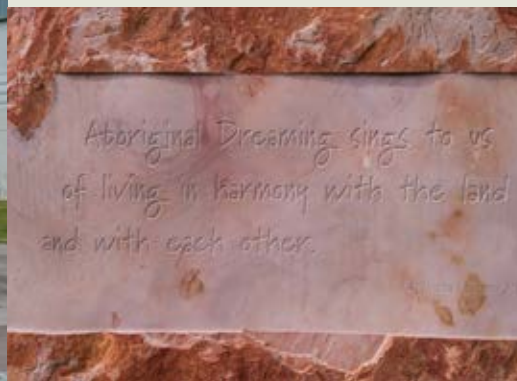
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The Stone Artworks

Aboriginal dreaming sings to us of living in harmony with the land and each other.

The stone artworks along Reconciliation Place celebrate the resilience and individual achievements of Indigenous Australians who have made personal contributions to reconciliation and to our shared Australian story. Each artwork includes inspirational messages, dreaming stories and symbols carved in the stone. The inscribed messages are intended to teach and guide us in the future. We are left with a timeless call to action from these Elders.

Ruby Florence Hammond is represented in one of the five stone artworks. An Indigenous woman from along the Murray River in South Australia, Ruby was a cheerful optimist who never lost sight of her dream 'for all of us to live together and love the land'. Ruby was the first South Australian Indigenous woman to stand for Parliament. She worked tirelessly with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people striving towards understanding and equity for all Australians. Ruby knew how to voice her opinions and importantly to speak up and be heard. She was well-known for singing the song about the sun, the moon and the stars, by her family and many other groups. The song teaches us that we are all born under the same moon, stars and sun. It is a song about where we all come from.



Student Activity

Ruby's words are written in her stone artwork.

A) What do you think Ruby's message to us is? Why is it so important?

B) A freshwater fish is depicted in the artwork, from Ruby's home country – can you guess what fish it is? How does Ruby's statement relate to the future of this fish?

C) What can you do to care for the environment where you live? Now and in the future?



RECONCILIATION PLACE

Activity Kit



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Bush foods

The selected plant species listed are all native to Australia and are traditional foods for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

They have been chosen from a variety of regions and are used for culinary and or medicinal purposes.

Many bush foods have now been introduced to restaurant menus allowing traditional plants to be used in new and exciting ways.

You may like to select food items from this list or may prefer to do your own research.

Yam Daisy - is a grasslands plant that produces edible tuberous roots. You will find it in the NSW alpine region and other parts of Australia.

Lemon Myrtle - is a beautiful Australian shrub naturally occurring in the wetter coastal areas of northern New South Wales and southern Queensland.

Bush tomato - is a small desert plant, with grey to green leaves and mauve flowers. It grows naturally in the central deserts of the Northern Territory and South Australia.

Kakadu plum - is a small deciduous tree growing throughout the sub-tropical woodlands of the Northern Territory and Western Australia. It bears abundant crop of small plum-like fruits.

Native Finger Lime - rainforest fruit containing soft pearls of pulp. The lime fruit gives a unique lime sensation. Finger Lime trees are traditionally found in the sub-tropical rainforests of Northern NSW and Queensland.

Mountain Pepper berry - pepper berry trees prefer a cool climate such as Tasmania. Traditionally, mountain pepper was used for its antiseptic properties and flavour. Both the leaves and fruit were used.

Wattle seed - many varieties of wattle grow throughout arid and desert regions of Australia. Wattle seed has continued as an important food source for Indigenous Australians for thousands of years. The seed is crushed into flour between flat grinding stones and cooked into cakes or damper.

Saltbush - found in large areas of the dry inland of Australia. It is a sprawling grey-blue shrub, up to 3 metres high. Saltbush leaves have a salty herbal flavour and are very versatile.

Quandong - is a small desert tree with rough bark and pale green hanging leaves. It grows mainly in South Australia in areas south of the Flinders Ranges. Quandong is valued equally as a food, and as a medicine.

Macadamia Nut - Nuts grow on a rounded, slow growing tree 12 - 15m tall. Best suited to the warmer climates of coastal south Qld and northern NSW. The delicious nuts should be left to ripen on the tree

Taro - tuberous vegetable grown the on Torres Strait Islands. It is a staple vegetable often added to stews and curries. The leaves are also edible.

Eugenia - delicious small red fruit with shiny green leaves grown on a low bush or small tree. Found on Torres Strait Islands and in Northern Queensland the ripe fruit is deliciously sweet and cherry like.