



Cultural Heritage

Stone implements were a significant part of the Tasmanian Aboriginal toolkit. Places containing evidence of the manufacture and use of stone tools are cultural heritage sites. The following article provides more information on cultural heritage.





CROSS CURRICULUM PRIORITIES

-  Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures
-  Sustainability

CONTENT AREAS

- H** History
- G** Geography
- T** Technologies
- S** Science

GENERAL CAPABILITIES

-  Intercultural Understanding
-  Critical and Creative Thinking
-  Ethical Understanding
-  Personal and Social Capability

KEY CONCEPT

Aboriginal cultural heritage is the tangible and intangible legacy of Tasmania's Aboriginal people. It refers to those places, objects and traditions that have been passed down to us from past generations. It also includes intangible places where there may be no physical evidence of past cultural activities. These include places of spiritual or ceremonial significance or trade and travel routes.

Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania

SUPPORTING CONCEPTS

- › artefacts
- › World Heritage
- › Burra Charter
- › archaeology
- › spirituality
- › custodial responsibility

GUIDING QUESTION

What is the value of Tasmanian Aboriginal cultural heritage?

This printed material is **to be used with Stone Tools – a Living Cultures multimedia curriculum resource** that can be found at www.theorb.tas.gov.au

The Living Cultures Stone Tools resource and this supplementary printed material have been designed to foster culturally responsive practice when learning about Tasmanian Aboriginal Histories and Cultures.

Introduction

Tasmania's Aboriginal cultural heritage provides a spiritual connection for Tasmanian Aboriginal people today and valuable information about one of the oldest living cultures in the world.

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A Spiritual Connection

When you pick up a stone tool you're connecting with the person who made it... that connection is real.

Dayne Langdon, 2017



Dayne Langdon holding the stone tool that he found when he was six years old | Image: Dcnstrct Pty Ltd

The sites where stone tools were subsequently fashioned and the rich legacy of Aboriginal occupation and culture contained in the limestone caves of the [world heritage] area represent just part of the cultural heritage value of the Tasmanian

wilderness. They provide a link to the past for [Aboriginal] Tasmanians who are committed to maintaining their connections with the country from which they arose.

The Conversation

DISCUSSION QUESTION

- › What does this connection tell us about the importance of protecting sites of cultural significance?

World Heritage and the Burra Charter

World Heritage sites are places that are important to and belong to everyone, irrespective of where they are located. They have universal value that transcends the value they hold for a particular nation.

Australia's World Heritage, Australian Government, Department of Energy and the Environment

One of the three cultural heritage criteria states:

Sites: works of man or the combined works of nature and of man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological points of view.

World Heritage Criteria, Australian Government, Department of Energy and the Environment

The Burra Charter is linked closely with World Heritage and provides guidance

for the conservation and management of places of cultural significance [cultural heritage places].

1.2 *Cultural significance* means aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations. Cultural significance is embodied in the place itself, its fabric, setting, use, associations, meanings, records, related places and related objects. Places may have a range of values for different individuals or groups.

The Burra Charter 2013: 4

DISCUSSION QUESTION

- › What can be learnt from cultural heritage sites?

Kuti Kina Cave

In 1981 excavations were undertaken at *Kuti Kina Cave* which was 'rediscovered' in 1977. They uncovered one of the richest artefacts deposits ever found in Tasmania and Australia which indicated Aboriginal occupation in Tasmania of at least 30,000 years. Over 250,000 fragments of bone and 75,000 stone artefacts were recovered from a relatively small area.

The site became part of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage area based on its rich natural and cultural heritage and is of great spiritual significance to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community. *Kuti Kina Cave* was one of a number of sites returned to the Aboriginal community, who retain strong links with the region and accept considerable responsibility for its management.

Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- › What is the significance of *Kuti Kina Cave* to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community?
- › How do the Tasmanian Aboriginal people of today demonstrate their custodial responsibility for country and cultural resources?
- › Why is it important for Aboriginal people to have places where they can connect with their ancestors on land that is protected?



Kuti Kina Cave | Image: Tilman Ruff

Artefact Scatters

Stone artefacts occur throughout Tasmania from coastal zones and elevated, dry areas near water sources through to more remote elevations. Stone (lithic) artefacts are often recorded with other evidence of Aboriginal living areas, such as shell middens, rock shelters and at quarry sites.

Within Tasmania there are thousands of artefact sites, which include single artefacts in the landscape or higher density artefact concentrations (scatters) where a number of activities including food and materials preparation, quarrying and tool making were undertaken in the past. Stone artefacts tend to be more visible in areas of lower vegetation cover, erosion or ground disturbance.

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DISCUSSION QUESTION

- › Where in Tasmania are artefact scatters likely to be found?



Knapping ground on Bruny Island, with a large core piece in the foreground | Image: Dcnstrct Pty Ltd

A Contemporary Legend

Tasmanian Aboriginal people today tell us that there is a powerful spiritual significance to stone tool sites and quarries that links them to the past, present and future that is told through ancient and modern stories and poems. Jim Everett describes *Kuti Kina* as a ‘contemporary legend of the Tasmanian people’ and as ‘the protector of special places that belong to us’.

Bonyhady, Griffiths 2002: 158

The story of *Kuti Kina*, as told by Jim Everett, is about the sacred *Kuti Kina* cave and the spirit people’s art down in the rainforest on the banks of the Franklin River in the south west wilderness of Tasmania. Jim Everett comes from the *Palawah* people and the story *Kuti Kina*, told here with a contemporary view-point, represents a special place of the *Palawah*.

The Dreaming – An Aboriginal Nations
Australia Production

Watch this video in the Living Cultures Stone Tools multimedia resource.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- › How do stories such as these maintain Aboriginal people’s connection to Country, culture and identity?
- › How might these interconnections influence Tasmanian Aboriginal people’s views on the use of environmental resources?

In April 2009 the Tasmanian State Government had begun construction of the Brighton Bypass at a cost of \$191 million. It was to cross the Jordan River. The proposed site for a bridge was *kutalayna*, known to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community as a long-time seasonal meeting place of the *mouheneenner* people. In September 2009 protesters had prevented construction starting. By February 2010 the government commissioned archaeologists to determine the age and significance of the site.

Taylor 2017: 2

The bridge was built.

It was estimated that there was up to 2.5 million tools across the site and that the site had been used around 42,000 years ago, and that it continued to be used until at least 17, 000 years ago.

Breen

At the time it was said that this was the oldest site in Tasmania, and among the oldest in Australia. The age of *kutalayna* is beyond the first southern expansion of *Homo sapiens* elsewhere in the world.

Taylor 2017: 2

Below is a painting by John Glover depicting people dancing in the general area of this site.



Natives at a corrobory, under the wild woods of the Country [Jordan River below Brighton]
John Glover | State Library of New South Wales IR223061

The site has artefacts that we think date back 18,000 years and because our history is not written down, once it has gone we can no longer learn from it. This is the equivalent of building a McDonalds on top of the Great Pyramid in Egypt – these people are a disgrace.

Michael Mansell

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- › How significant, on a world scale, is the value of Tasmania's Aboriginal cultural heritage?
- › Can a price be put on Tasmanian Aboriginal cultural heritage?

Tangible Evidence

Stone artefacts provide Tasmanian Aboriginal people today with an important link to their culture and demonstrate the diversity of the stone toolkit available in the past.

Stone artefacts may represent the only physical evidence of Tasmanian Aboriginal living places in a region.



The Karadi Mens Group making stone tools | Image: Dcnstrct Pty Ltd

Stone artefacts provide tangible evidence of where Aboriginal people lived, how they manufactured tools, obtained resources and food including processing plants and animals or use in ceremony. Traces of wood, plants, or animal blood can survive on stone artefact edges. Edge damage can reveal how artefacts were used for different functions, such as cutting, scraping, hammering or grinding.

Comparative analysis of the source quarry and artefact located considerable distance from the source has the potential to tell us about Aboriginal systems of exchange and social relationships. Modifications to a stone artefact can provide insight into past environments, changes to diet or strategies to manage artefact use.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- › Are cultural heritage sites such as the ones identified here significant only to Aboriginal people?

NOTE

Tasmanian Aboriginal cultural material or sites are defined as 'relics' and therefore protected under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1975* (the Act).

It is an offence to destroy, damage, deface, conceal, remove or otherwise interfere with a relic. It is also an offence not to report the finding of a relic. So if you suspect that an Aboriginal stone artefact has been discovered during your activity, do not interfere with the site. Report the site to Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania.

Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania

www.theorb.tas.gov.au//living-cultures/stonetools/teacher-drawer

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