



Sustainability

In the Living Cultures multimedia resources, we hear from many different Tasmanian Aboriginal people about the importance of sustaining culture and cultural resources, including natural resources. The following article provides further evidence of this.






CROSS CURRICULUM PRIORITIES

-  Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures
-  Sustainability

CONTENT AREAS

- H** History
- T** Technologies
- G** Geography
- H+PE** HPE
- CC** Civics and Citizenship
- EB** Economics and Business

GENERAL CAPABILITIES

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

KEY CONCEPT

Sustainability addresses the ongoing capacity of Earth to maintain all life. Sustainable patterns of living meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Actions to improve sustainability are individual and collective endeavours shared across local and global communities. They necessitate a renewed and balanced approach to the way humans interact with each other and the environment.

Australian Curriculum

SUPPORTING CONCEPTS

- › culture
- › identity
- › heritage
- › ancestry
- › kinship
- › cultural practice
- › oral histories

GUIDING QUESTION

How do Tasmanian Aboriginal people ensure the sustainability of their cultural resources?

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

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

Introduction

Sustainability addresses the ongoing capacity of the Earth to maintain life. We know that Aboriginal people have lived here continuously since the land bridge between mainland Australia and Tasmania appeared approximately 43,000 years ago. Tasmanian Aboriginal people not only survived, but thrived. They had highly sophisticated methods of managing, maintaining and caring for country.

Sustainable Practice

If we take more than half that's like ringbarking him and he'll end up dying. For the future it actually leaves sort of like an identification tag that that tree's been used for culture. So that's really important to be able to pass on to the little ones and the

next generation to show how to do it right for them to have that understanding – working with it and not working against it so we're not hurting the environment.

Craig Everett, 2017



Craig Everett and tree with bark removed 2017 | Image: Dncstrct Pty Ltd

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- › What does Craig mean by an 'identification tag' and why would it be important for the future?
 - › What does Craig mean when he says working with the environment, not against it?
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Held in Trust

Professor Larissa Behrendt is a Eualeyai/Kamillaroi woman, an academic and a writer. She writes about the importance of sustainability for Aboriginal cultures.

The concept of sustainability has always been central to Indigenous cultures. Native Americans believe that you have to consider the impact of your actions on the next seven generations. ... in Australia there is a world

view among Indigenous people that says that you do not inherit land, you hold it in trust for future generations.

Larissa Behrendt

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- › What does Larissa mean when she says 'you hold it [land] in trust'?
- › What does this tell us about Aboriginal people's approach to sustainability?

Harvesting Sustainably



Craig with Cork Reed, 2017 | Image: Dncstrct Pty Ltd

This is the cork reed here. Notice how it's not real thick. So if we take this one here out we'll probably end up damaging the root and it won't grow back properly. Whereas if you can see just over here a little bit further it's a lot thicker and they are the ones that we'll take because they are really healthy. That way we're not going to damage the plant so that way she can come back ... go back to being able to make more.

Normally what we'll do, we'll fold that back like that and then we'll cut that about there so that way it's still got the system on it and that'll just reshoot. Whereas obviously if I pull that whole thing out I'm taking the roots of the plant and everything and that's going to stop that from regenerating and regrowing.

Craig Everett, 2017

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- › What considerations does Craig take into account when harvesting the cork reed?
- › How do these considerations reflect good sustainable practice?

Hunting Sustainably

So we weren't just killing animals for the fun of killing animals, we killed what we were going to eat. We looked after the animals, made sure we're not killing the females and babies for the

purpose. And we use the skins for the inside of our huts as well, lining the floors of our huts with skins, and wearing them.

Dave Gough, 2017



Lean-to shelter East Coast Tasmania, 2017 | Image: Dncstrct Pty Ltd

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- › How do Tasmanian Aboriginal people show respect for the animals?
- › Can you find out how Tasmanian Aboriginal people continue to hunt sustainably?

Cultural Integrity

Vicki *maikutena* Matson-Green is a Tasmanian Aboriginal woman and a *tayenebe* weaver, a member of a small group of 20+ Tasmanian Aboriginal women who regularly get together around the state to teach and learn from each other, as well as experiment in fibre work.

The reconnection with native plant material, thanks to the generosity of other Aboriginal women – both extended family and Community members – facilitates an inextricable connection to native bush and sea fibre use. It is another journey of learning what plants to use, where to find them, when best to gather them and how to treat them so as to manipulate their structures to meet our requirements for weaving. It facilitates a continuation of oral histories as women tell

their family stories. It strengthens physical genetic connections and social relationships interwoven between today's Aboriginal women. The difference is the purpose for which the plants are now used. From a singular reliance for sustenance and survival, this purpose is now one of cultural integrity and artistic expression.

Matson-Green cited in *tayenebe: Tasmanian Aboriginal women's fibre work*, 2017: 62

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- › What is the importance of cultural practice to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community?
 - › How do Aboriginal people connect and make meaning through engaging in cultural practices?
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Cultural Activities

Below we hear from Aunty Verna Nichols about the importance of accessing and using kelp and working with her sister. These sisters are intimately connected, not only through birth, but also through cultural activities such as these.

I was lucky enough to have my sister and we went everywhere together, so between her and I our output was unbelievable. Sometimes our imagination really went haywire and some of our ideas didn't work out, they were atrocious, but we had a go at it.

For Leonie and I, it was trial and error. We would come down, we'd find the place and because we were all beginners we'd take the whole lot of it, and we'd put it in a garbage bag and by the time we got 50 yards up the road, the bag would be broken, our backs would be broken. We finally learnt, we cut off at the spot what we don't need.

Aunty Verna Nichols



Verna Nichols (left) and Leonie Dickson (right)
Image: George Serras, National Museum of Australia

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- › What purposes do Aboriginal people continue to find for using natural materials?
 - › What other benefits are gained from Aboriginal people working together with natural materials?
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Loss

On the following page is an image of the magnificent Giant Kelp forests of Tasmania, which used to grow in Tasmanian waters, along the East Coast and South East Peninsula. These Giant Kelp forests are disappearing along the entire East Coast of Tasmania and other places around the world.



Giant Kelp Forest, South Eastern Tasmania | Image © Vanessa Hunter

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- › How will the disappearance of Tasmania's kelp forests impact Tasmanian Aboriginal cultural practices and the relationships that are interwoven with those activities?
- › What does this tell us about the importance of sustainability to support cultural practices?
- › How do Aboriginal people today demonstrate their custodial responsibility for country and cultural resources?

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

REFERENCES

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Hunter V nd, Kelp forest off Eaglehawk Neck



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