


Cultural Transmission

Tasmanian Aboriginal people continue to teach and pass on cultural knowledge and practices. The following article provides evidence of the ongoing transmission of culture.

CROSS CURRICULUM PRIORITIES

 Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Histories and Cultures

CONTENT AREAS

 Civics and Citizenship

 HPE

 English

 Geography

 Science

GENERAL CAPABILITIES

 Intercultural Understanding

 Critical and Creative Thinking

 Ethical Understanding

 Personal and Social Capability

KEY CONCEPT

Cultural transmission is the process through which cultural elements, in the form of attitudes, values, beliefs [and practices]... are passed on to and taught to individuals and groups.

Encyclopaedia of Child Behaviour and Development

SUPPORTING CONCEPTS

- › culture
- › identity
- › connection to place

GUIDING QUESTION

How does cultural transmission occur over time?

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

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

Introduction

Rodney Dillon and Sharnie Everett discuss the importance of country/place to the process of cultural transmission. Here they are talking about Murrayfield on Bruny Island.

Rodney says:

You know you go to some places and you say, well, our families could have been here and could have been there. But you walk around here and, you know, there's all the old oysters, and this [ochre] quarry. And it's a place where you can say our ancestors were here doing this, you know.

Sharnie responds:

Yeah, right in this very location. Where we are right now there's a guarantee we're doing the same thing, talking and sharing stories and feeling the ochre.

Rodney and Sharnie are describing a sense of connection to Country that they feel at Murrayfield as well as the connection to the ochre that is found there.

Rodney Dillon and his family were among a group of Aboriginal people involved in the negotiations to acquire Murrayfield for the use of Aboriginal people for generations to come.

Murrayfield is a place of great significance as it is a place where Aboriginal people can continue to practice their culture and gather in family groups.

Ochre, stone tools, middens and natural cultural resources in the form of plants, animals and sea creatures are present at Murrayfield.



Rodney Dillon at Murrayfield 2016 | Image: Dcnstrct Pty Ltd

DISCUSSION QUESTION

- › How does having access to a place such as Murrayfield, and the ochre that is found there, support people in the process of cultural transmission?

People in Place

Below are photographs of Truganini and Fanny Cochrane Smith, two historically significant women, who had a connection to the area and conducted their cultural practices in this place. Rodney Dillon and his family are descended from Fanny Cochrane Smith.



Truganini, c1870



Fanny Cochrane Smith | TAHO: SD_ILS:616015

Truganini spent time with Fanny Cochrane Smith's children and grandchildren to teach them cultural ways and to pass on her knowledge.

Rodney, Sharnie and many other Aboriginal people take pride in teaching their culture and strengthening the Aboriginal identity of young Aboriginal people.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- › Rodney speaks about a 'never-ending relationship'. What do you think he might mean by this?
 - › Who or what is involved in this never-ending relationship?
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A Significant Place

In 1829, the Van Diemen's Land Government commissioned George Augustus Robinson to set up an Aboriginal mission on Bruny Island.

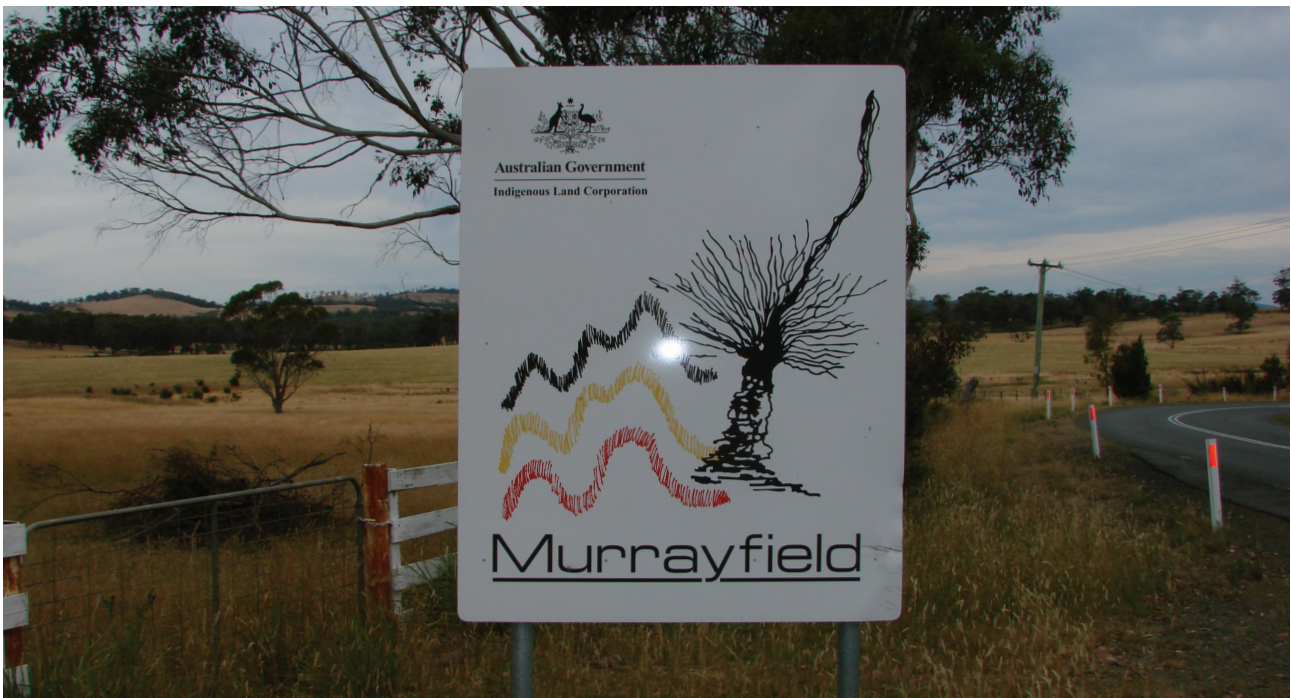
It was hoped that this mission would attract Aboriginal people, encourage them to become settled farmers, and stop them raiding the colonial invaders.

Robinson used convicts to construct a house for himself, a convict dormitory, a dormitory for Aboriginal children, a dormitory for Aboriginal adults and a storehouse. In addition he cleared land for paddocks and a garden and dug a sawpit. The mission was not a success and was abandoned after nine months.

Aboriginal people were attracted to the place at first, encouraged by the tea, sugar and flour that Robinson handed out. However, it soon became a place of death for them as they had no immunity to diseases carried by the Europeans..

The abandoned mission quickly decayed and all evidence of its whereabouts has long since disappeared. There is a fascinating and powerful story to be told about the place.

The site of the mission is now part of Murrayfield, a working sheep station owned and managed by the Indigenous Land Council.



The sign outside Murrayfield on Bruny Island | Image: ABC News, Tony Briscoe

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- › How does the purpose of Murrayfield as it is today contrast with the purpose and intention of the establishment of the Mission in the 1800s?
- › What role do sites such as Murrayfield play in the passing on of knowledge and practice?

REFERENCES

Truganini, c1870 Photographer: H H Baily, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery – # Q6039

[189-?]. Fanny Cochrane Smith facing left, wearing a belt with wallaby pelts. Hobart: Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office, Tasmania



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