

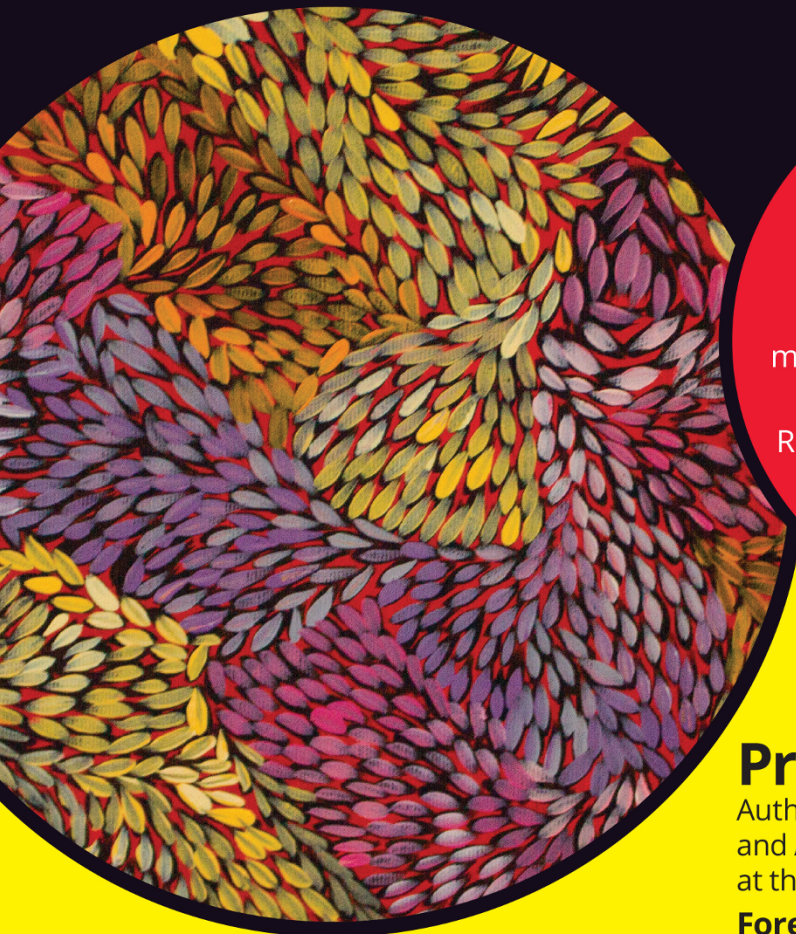
LEARNING MADE EASY



2nd Edition

# Indigenous Australia

for  
**dummies**<sup>®</sup>  
A Wiley Brand



Celebrate 65,000+ years  
of Indigenous knowledge

Grasp the issues facing  
modern Indigenous communities

Recognise important milestones  
in Indigenous rights

**Prof. Larissa Behrendt**

Author, filmmaker, Distinguished Professor  
and Associate Dean (Indigenous Research)  
at the University of Technology, Sydney

**Foreword by Stan Grant**





# Indigenous Australia

2nd Edition

**by Larissa Behrendt**

Foreword by Stan Grant

for  
**dummies**<sup>®</sup>  
A Wiley Brand

# Indigenous Australia For Dummies®, 2nd Edition

Published by  
**John Wiley & Sons Australia, Ltd**  
42 McDougall Street  
Milton, Qld 4064  
www.dummies.com

Copyright © 2021 John Wiley & Sons Australia, Ltd

The moral rights of the author have been asserted.

ISBN: 978-0-730-39027-5



A catalogue record for this book is available from the National Library of Australia

All rights reserved. No part of this book, including interior design, cover design and icons, may be reproduced or transmitted in any form, by any means (electronic, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the prior written permission of the Publisher. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Contracts & Licensing section of John Wiley & Sons Australia, Ltd, 42 McDougall Street, Milton, Qld 4064, or email [auspermissions@wiley.com](mailto:auspermissions@wiley.com).

Cover image: © Daphne Marks/Copyright Agency, 2020

Typeset by SPi

Printed in Singapore by Markono Print Media Pte Ltd

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

LIMIT OF LIABILITY/DISCLAIMER OF WARRANTY: THE PUBLISHER AND THE AUTHOR MAKE NO REPRESENTATIONS OR WARRANTIES WITH RESPECT TO THE ACCURACY OR COMPLETENESS OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS WORK AND SPECIFICALLY DISCLAIM ALL WARRANTIES, INCLUDING WITHOUT LIMITATION, WARRANTIES OF FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. NO WARRANTY MAY BE CREATED OR EXTENDED BY SALES OR PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS. THE ADVICE AND STRATEGIES CONTAINED HEREIN MAY NOT BE SUITABLE FOR EVERY SITUATION. THIS WORK IS SOLD WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE PUBLISHER IS NOT ENGAGED IN RENDERING LEGAL, ACCOUNTING, OR OTHER PROFESSIONAL SERVICES. IF PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE IS REQUIRED, THE SERVICES OF A COMPETENT PROFESSIONAL PERSON SHOULD BE SOUGHT. NEITHER THE PUBLISHER NOR THE AUTHOR SHALL BE LIABLE FOR DAMAGES ARISING HEREFROM. THE FACT THAT AN ORGANISATION OR WEBSITE IS REFERRED TO IN THIS WORK AS A CITATION AND/OR A POTENTIAL SOURCE OF FURTHER INFORMATION DOES NOT MEAN THAT THE AUTHOR OR THE PUBLISHER ENDORSES THE INFORMATION THE ORGANISATION OR WEBSITE MAY PROVIDE OR RECOMMENDATIONS IT MAY MAKE. FURTHER, READERS SHOULD BE AWARE THAT INTERNET WEBSITES LISTED IN THIS WORK MAY HAVE CHANGED OR DISAPPEARED BETWEEN WHEN THIS WORK WAS WRITTEN AND WHEN IT IS READ.

**Trademarks:** Wiley, the Wiley logo, For Dummies, the Dummies Man logo, A Reference for the Rest of Us!, The Dummies Way, Making Everything Easier, dummies.com and related trade dress are trademarks or registered trademarks of John Wiley & Sons, Inc. and/or its affiliates in the United States and other countries, and may not be used without written permission. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. John Wiley & Sons Australia, Ltd is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book.

READERS OF THIS BOOK SHOULD BE AWARE THAT, IN SOME ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITIES, SEEING IMAGES OF DECEASED PERSONS IN PHOTOGRAPHS MAY CAUSE SADNESS OR DISTRESS AND, IN SOME CASES, OFFEND AGAINST STRONGLY HELD CULTURAL PROHIBITIONS. THIS BOOK CONTAINS IMAGES OF PEOPLE WHO ARE DECEASED.

# Contents at a Glance

<b>Foreword</b> .....	xvii
<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>Part 1: An Ancient People: Then and Now</b> .....	5
CHAPTER 1: Understanding Indigenous Australia .....	7
CHAPTER 2: Rich Past, Strong Traditions .....	17
CHAPTER 3: A Land of Cultural Diversity .....	37
CHAPTER 4: Traditional Cultural Values and Practices .....	53
<b>Part 2: Invasion</b> .....	73
CHAPTER 5: First Contacts .....	75
CHAPTER 6: The Brits' First Colony: 1788 .....	85
CHAPTER 7: Pushing the Boundaries of the Colony .....	99
CHAPTER 8: Land, Livestock and Loss .....	123
CHAPTER 9: Taking the Children .....	137
<b>Part 3: Indigenous Activism</b> .....	157
CHAPTER 10: Citizenship Rights .....	159
CHAPTER 11: The 1967 Referendum .....	181
CHAPTER 12: Land Rights .....	195
CHAPTER 13: The Era of Reconciliation .....	217
CHAPTER 14: Practical Reconciliation .....	239
CHAPTER 15: From Apology to Uluru .....	259
<b>Part 4: Contemporary Indigenous Cultures</b> .....	275
CHAPTER 16: More than Rocks and Dots: Indigenous Art .....	277
CHAPTER 17: Singing and Dancing .....	303
CHAPTER 18: Indigenous Literature: We've Always Been Storytellers .....	321
CHAPTER 19: Performance Storytelling: Film, Theatre, Television and Radio .....	335
CHAPTER 20: Indigenous People and Sport .....	365
<b>Part 5: Dealing with Current Issues</b> .....	395
CHAPTER 21: Closing the Gap: Health, Housing, Education and Employment .....	397
CHAPTER 22: Working In the System and Changing the System .....	425

<b>Part 6: The Part of Tens</b> .....	449
CHAPTER 23: Ten Important Indigenous Cultural Sites .....	451
CHAPTER 24: Ten Indigenous Firsts .....	457
CHAPTER 25: Ten Myths about Indigenous People. ....	463
CHAPTER 26: Ten Key Legal Decisions (Plus One to Keep an Eye On) .....	469
<b>Glossary</b> .....	477
<b>Index</b> .....	481

# Table of Contents

<b>FOREWORD</b> .....	xvii
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	1
About This Book .....	1
Foolish Assumptions .....	2
Icons Used in This Book .....	2
Where to Go from Here .....	3
<b>PART 1: AN ANCIENT PEOPLE: THEN AND NOW</b> .....	5
<b>CHAPTER 1: Understanding Indigenous Australia</b> .....	7
Indigenous Cultures: Then and Now .....	8
Ancient traditions .....	8
Diversity, diversity and more diversity .....	9
Contemporary painting, singing and dancing .....	9
Old and new ways of storytelling .....	10
And they can kick a ball! .....	10
There Goes the Neighbourhood .....	10
The takeover begins .....	11
The colony spreads .....	11
Loss of land .....	11
And children taken too .....	12
Fighting Back .....	12
The right to be equal .....	12
Changing the playing field .....	13
‘We want our land back’ .....	13
Reconciliation, practical reconciliation and intervention .....	14
‘Sorry’ — and then what? .....	14
New Problems for an Old Culture .....	14
Breaking the cycle of poverty .....	15
Challenging the rules and regulations .....	15
Setting up Indigenous enterprises .....	16
Doing It for Ourselves .....	16
<b>CHAPTER 2: Rich Past, Strong Traditions</b> .....	17
The First Australians .....	18
65,000 Years of Tradition .....	19
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Populations Today .....	21
Defining who is an Indigenous person .....	21
Counting the Indigenous population in Australia .....	23
Locating where Indigenous people live today .....	25
A Note about the Torres Strait Islands .....	27

Saying G'Day.....	28
'Aboriginal', 'Torres Strait Islander', 'First Nations' or 'Indigenous'? .....	28
'Aboriginal' or 'Aborigine'? .....	29
Us mob: Koori, Goori or Murri; Noongar or Nunga? .....	29
Opening an Event: Welcome to Country .....	30
Welcome or acknowledgement? .....	30
What do I say? .....	31
Whose land am I on? .....	32
Defining the Identity of an Aboriginal Person or a Torres Strait Islander .....	33
Stereotypes of Indigenous people .....	34
But some of us have blond hair and blue eyes! .....	36
<b>CHAPTER 3: A Land of Cultural Diversity .....</b>	<b>37</b>
Exploring the Indigenous Relationship to Land .....	38
Oral title deeds .....	39
Accessing another's country .....	39
Celebrating Cultural Diversity .....	39
Clans and nations .....	40
More than 500 different nations .....	40
Freshwater people and saltwater people .....	41
Kinship and Totemic Systems .....	42
Moieties and skin names .....	42
Totems .....	44
Talking Languages .....	45
Who speaks what now? .....	45
Vulnerability of languages .....	46
Coming Together .....	48
Trade routes .....	48
Songlines .....	49
Maintaining Links to Traditional Country .....	49
Aboriginal land councils .....	50
Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation .....	51
National parks .....	51
<b>CHAPTER 4: Traditional Cultural Values and Practices .....</b>	<b>53</b>
Going Back to the Dreamtime .....	54
How was the world made? .....	55
The southern sky .....	55
An oral tradition of storytelling .....	56
Indigenous Worldviews .....	57
Sharing based on reciprocity .....	57
Respecting the wisdom of Elders .....	58
Separating women's business from men's business .....	58
Respect for the environment .....	59



Living with Nature . . . . .	60
Hunting and gathering . . . . .	61
Bush food . . . . .	61
Bush medicine . . . . .	63
Tools . . . . .	64
Looking to the Skies . . . . .	67
The Dark Emu. . . . .	67
Controlling the Environment . . . . .	67
Fire. . . . .	68
Harvesting. . . . .	68
Fish traps . . . . .	69
Middens . . . . .	69
Shelter . . . . .	69
Contemporary Cultural Values . . . . .	70
Caring for Country. . . . .	71
<b>PART 2: INVASION. . . . .</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5: First Contacts . . . . .</b>	<b>75</b>
Looking for the Unknown Southern Land: Contact before 1770 . . . . .	76
Meet the neighbours: The Macassans . . . . .	76
The Dutch were here. . . . .	78
And then came the English . . . . .	78
Landing in Australia: Cook's Arrival. . . . .	79
Cook's instructions . . . . .	80
Joseph Banks' observations . . . . .	81
The French floating around . . . . .	81
Establishing a British Colony . . . . .	82
Seeing through Indigenous Eyes: Perspectives on the Arrival . . . . .	82
'We thought they were ghosts' . . . . .	83
'Are they human?' . . . . .	83
<b>CHAPTER 6: The Brits' First Colony: 1788 . . . . .</b>	<b>85</b>
Captain Phillip and the First Fleet . . . . .	86
The long trip over . . . . .	86
The Captain's orders . . . . .	87
Establishing a Penal Colony . . . . .	88
First impressions . . . . .	89
A difficult start . . . . .	90
Seeing How the Locals Dealt with the New Arrivals. . . . .	91
Bennelong. . . . .	92
Barangaroo. . . . .	93
Pemulwuy. . . . .	94
Patyegarang and Lieutenant Dawes. . . . .	96

<b>CHAPTER 7: Pushing the Boundaries of the Colony</b> .....	99
Opening Up the Land: White Settlement Spreads .....	100
Spreading Disease Far and Wide. ....	101
Meeting Aboriginal Resistance .....	102
Growing the British Colony .....	105
Over the mountains .....	107
To Van Diemen’s Land .....	108
Into Moreton Bay. ....	110
The Adelaide experiment .....	110
Dealing with Frontier Conflict .....	111
A wealth of misunderstanding .....	111
Official responses .....	112
Refuge at a cost: Missions and reserves .....	116
Ignoring Prior Ownership: No Treaties .....	120
<b>CHAPTER 8: Land, Livestock and Loss</b> .....	123
Clashing Cultures: Conflict over Land. ....	124
Aboriginal people, land grants and squatters. ....	124
Conflict on the frontier .....	126
Aboriginal People and the Developing Pastoral Economy .....	127
Off the sheep’s back .....	128
The rise of the cattle industry .....	128
Aboriginal women and pastoralists .....	132
Asserting Rights and Other Acts of Resistance .....	133
The petitions of William Cooper .....	133
The Pilbara strike. ....	134
The Wave Hill walk-off. ....	135
<b>CHAPTER 9: Taking the Children</b> .....	137
Examining the Ideology of Assimilation .....	138
‘Making them white’ .....	139
‘Focus on the children’: Forget about the oldies .....	140
‘For their own good’. ....	141
Formalising the Removal Policy: Rules and Regulations .....	142
The impact on Indigenous children .....	143
The impact on Indigenous families. ....	144
Acknowledging the Stolen Generations. ....	145
The report of the inquiry into the Stolen Generations .....	145
The official response. ....	147
Unfinished Business: Reparations and Compensation .....	149
Saying sorry .....	150
Seeking legal justice .....	152
The realities of litigation and compensation .....	153

<b>PART 3: INDIGENOUS ACTIVISM</b> .....	157
<b>CHAPTER 10: Citizenship Rights</b> .....	159
Early Claims to Better Treatment .....	160
Flinders Island .....	161
Coranderrk .....	162
Cummeragunja reserve .....	164
British Subjects, but Not Quite .....	164
Denying basic rights .....	165
For their own 'protection' .....	166
The realities of assimilation .....	167
Excluding Indigenous People from the Constitution .....	167
The states establish their powers .....	168
A legal ability to discriminate .....	169
War Heroes: Frontier Wars and Beyond .....	170
The black diggers .....	170
Returned soldiers and racism .....	173
Still Denied Equality .....	174
Dispossession increases .....	174
A piece of paper to say you're white .....	175
Not Taking It Lying Down .....	175
Indigenous people organise .....	176
The 1938 Day of Mourning .....	178
Steps Towards Equality .....	179
<b>CHAPTER 11: The 1967 Referendum</b> .....	181
Growing Awareness of Indigenous Disadvantage .....	182
FCAA and FCAATSI .....	183
The Freedom Ride .....	184
The Referendum Is Announced .....	186
Getting to 'yes': The constitutional campaign .....	187
Australia decides .....	188
Lasting Legacies of the Referendum .....	189
The power to legislate .....	190
But no protection against discrimination .....	190
The myths of the referendum .....	192
The unintended consequences .....	192
Not what was hoped for ... so what next? .....	193
<b>CHAPTER 12: Land Rights</b> .....	195
Establishing the Modern Land Rights Movement .....	196
Linking land rights and social justice .....	196
Setting up the Tent Embassy .....	198
Visiting the Black Panthers .....	200

Comparing Land Rights with Native Title . . . . .	202
Legislating Land Rights . . . . .	203
Recommending the Northern Territory Land Rights Act . . . . .	204
Looking at the New South Wales Land Rights Act . . . . .	207
Failing to Secure a National Land Rights Scheme . . . . .	208
Following the Mabo Case: A Finding for Native Title . . . . .	210
A native title package . . . . .	211
The legacy of the Mabo case . . . . .	213
Examining Public Reactions to Land Claims . . . . .	214
Looking At the Work Still to Be Done: Taking Back the Land . . . . .	215
<b>CHAPTER 13: The Era of Reconciliation . . . . .</b>	<b>217</b>
Starting the Reconciliation Process . . . . .	218
The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation . . . . .	218
Paul Keating’s Redfern Park speech . . . . .	220
Trying to deliver on land and social justice . . . . .	221
Establishing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission . . . . .	223
Defining the aims of ATSIC . . . . .	224
Recognition, rights and reform . . . . .	226
The Unfinished Business of Reconciliation . . . . .	229
A pathway for reconciliation . . . . .	230
‘We call for a treaty’ . . . . .	234
Why a treaty? . . . . .	235
What would a treaty look like? . . . . .	236
First steps? . . . . .	237
<b>CHAPTER 14: Practical Reconciliation . . . . .</b>	<b>239</b>
‘The Pendulum Has Swung Too Far’ . . . . .	240
‘Practical reconciliation’ explained . . . . .	241
Winding back Indigenous rights . . . . .	242
The history wars, or culture wars . . . . .	242
A walk across the bridge . . . . .	243
A Human Rights Scorecard . . . . .	244
The Abolition of ATSIC . . . . .	245
After ATSIC . . . . .	248
A new administration . . . . .	249
The National Indigenous Council . . . . .	250
Shared Responsibility and Mutual Obligation . . . . .	251
Emergency! Emergency! The Northern Territory Intervention . . . . .	253
Key aspects of the Northern Territory Emergency Response . . . . .	254
Objection! . . . . .	254

<b>CHAPTER 15: From Apology to Uluru</b> .....	259
A New Government — A New Era? .....	260
The apology .....	260
The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples .....	261
Controlling Lives: The Intervention Continues .....	264
Evaluating the Northern Territory intervention .....	264
International criticism .....	266
Finding a National Voice .....	267
Another representative body .....	267
Constitutional change .....	268
The Uluru Statement .....	270
International benchmarks .....	272
<b>PART 4: CONTEMPORARY INDIGENOUS CULTURES</b> .....	275
<b>CHAPTER 16: More than Rocks and Dots: Indigenous Art</b> .....	277
Understanding the Role of Art in Indigenous Cultures .....	278
Connecting to the spirit through art .....	278
Using art to inform .....	279
Reading between the dots: Knowing what the symbols mean .....	280
Considering Indigenous Art around Australia .....	282
Recognising rock art .....	282
Looking at bark painting .....	283
Dot, dot, dot . . . art .....	285
Appreciating Indigenous crafts .....	287
Examining Torres Strait Islander Art .....	289
Contemplating Urban Indigenous Art .....	291
Pulling no political punches .....	291
Finding out more about Indigenous photographers .....	294
Moving in the Mainstream: Indigenous Art as a Means to an Economic End .....	296
Revealing Indigenous Art Fraud .....	299
<b>CHAPTER 17: Singing and Dancing</b> .....	303
Traditional Expression through Music and Dance .....	304
The sacred and the profane .....	304
Banging out a rhythm .....	305
Traditional songs .....	306
Cultural dance .....	306
Carrying a Tune: Contemporary Indigenous Music .....	307
Singers in the mainstream .....	307
Both types: Country and western .....	309
Rock and pop .....	310
Just a few of the best .....	312
Hip-hop, rap and metal: Young people have their say .....	313

Jumping into Modern Indigenous Dance . . . . .	315
Indigenous dance companies . . . . .	315
The Bangarra Dance Theatre . . . . .	317
Torres Strait Islander dance . . . . .	318
<b>CHAPTER 18: Indigenous Literature: We've Always Been</b>	
<b>Storytellers</b> . . . . .	321
Moving From Oral to Written Traditions . . . . .	322
Writing about the 'Aborigine' in Australian Literature . . . . .	323
White people writing about black people . . . . .	323
Black people writing about black people . . . . .	326
Establishing Indigenous Literature . . . . .	328
Breaking through with Indigenous novels . . . . .	328
Putting it into verse: Aboriginal poetry . . . . .	330
Publishing Indigenous Stories . . . . .	331
Not Putting Your Foot in It! . . . . .	332
<b>CHAPTER 19: Performance Storytelling: Film, Theatre,</b>	
<b>Television and Radio</b> . . . . .	335
Acting the Part: Indigenous People in Films . . . . .	336
Films about Indigenous people . . . . .	336
Taking Over the Camera . . . . .	341
Indigenous filmmakers . . . . .	342
Noteworthy Indigenous films . . . . .	343
Telling it like it is: Documentaries . . . . .	346
Treading the Black Boards . . . . .	348
The National Black Theatre . . . . .	348
Indigenous theatre companies . . . . .	350
Must-see Indigenous plays . . . . .	350
Appearing on Mainstream Screens . . . . .	353
Notable Indigenous television shows . . . . .	356
Indigenous media organisations . . . . .	359
National Indigenous Television . . . . .	361
Getting onto Mainstream Airwaves . . . . .	363
National Indigenous Radio Service . . . . .	363
Koori radio . . . . .	364
<b>CHAPTER 20: Indigenous People and Sport</b> . . . . .	365
A (Traditional) Sporting Life . . . . .	366
Marngrook . . . . .	366
Coreeda . . . . .	366
Other traditional Indigenous games . . . . .	367
Playing Them at Their Own Games . . . . .	369
Getting in and having a go . . . . .	369
Teaching through sport . . . . .	370

Slipping on the Whites: Cricket .....	371
The first Indigenous cricket team .....	371
Indigenous cricketers today .....	372
Women’s cricket .....	373
Stepping Up in the Boxing Ring .....	374
The boxing tents .....	374
Title fighters .....	374
We Love Our Footy! .....	377
Australian Rules Football .....	377
Rugby league .....	381
Rugby union .....	385
Soccer .....	386
Track and Field .....	388
Championing Other Sports .....	389
All-rounders at basketball .....	389
Excelling at netball .....	390
A few out of the box .....	391

**PART 5: DEALING WITH CURRENT ISSUES** ..... 395

**CHAPTER 21: Closing the Gap: Health, Housing, Education and Employment** ..... 397

Looking Back at Past Government Policies .....	398
Moving from ‘amity’ to ‘practical reconciliation’ .....	399
Closing the gap .....	400
Closing the Gap Reboot .....	401
Examining Health Issues .....	403
Discussing particular medical issues for Indigenous people ...	404
Watching the emergence of Indigenous medical services and professionals .....	405
Looking at Housing Problems .....	409
Learning about Education Issues .....	412
Primary education .....	413
Secondary education .....	414
Tertiary education .....	415
Vocational education and training (VET) .....	418
Education as a step up the ladder .....	418
Working on Employment Problems .....	418
Realising why employment issues exist for Indigenous people .....	419
Running Indigenous businesses .....	421
No new Stolen Generations: Keeping Indigenous Children with their Families .....	422

<b>CHAPTER 22: Working In the System and Changing the System</b> .....	425
Black Lives Matter: Indigenous People and the Criminal Justice System. ....	426
Examining the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. ....	426
Indigenous women and the criminal justice system .....	429
Stopping the cycle: Indigenous young people and incarceration .....	431
Inspecting the relationship between Indigenous people and police .....	431
Recognising customary law and sentencing .....	434
Changing the system from within .....	437
Reading the Australian Constitution: A Framework for Laws and Policies. ....	437
The 1967 referendum .....	438
The 1999 referendum .....	440
Proposing Legal and Constitutional Reform .....	440
Considering changes. ....	440
Responding to the Uluru Statement. ....	442
Scrutinising Self-Determination and Self-Representation. ....	442
Self-determination – more than a principle. ....	443
Self-representation .....	443
Working within the existing process. ....	446
<b>PART 6: THE PART OF TENS</b> .....	449
<b>CHAPTER 23: Ten Important Indigenous Cultural Sites</b> .....	451
Uluru, Northern Territory. ....	452
Kata Juta, Northern Territory .....	452
Nitmiluk, Northern Territory .....	452
Windjana Gorge, Western Australia .....	453
Daintree Rainforest, North Queensland .....	453
Mungo National Park, New South Wales .....	453
Yeddonba, Victoria .....	454
Ngaut Ngaut, South Australia .....	454
Wybalenna, Tasmania .....	454
The Aboriginal Tent Embassy, Canberra .....	455
<b>CHAPTER 24: Ten Indigenous Firsts</b> .....	457
The First Indigenous Australian to Visit Great Britain: 1793 .....	457
The First Indigenous Cricket Team Tour: 1868 .....	458
The First Indigenous ‘Pop Star’: 1963 .....	459
The First Indigenous Person to be Australian of the Year: 1968 ...	459



	The First Indigenous Person to be Elected to the Australian Parliament: 1971 . . . . .	460
	The First Indigenous Lawyer: 1976 . . . . .	460
	The First Indigenous Person to Make a Feature Film: 1992 . . . . .	461
	The First Indigenous Surgeon: 2006 . . . . .	461
	The First Indigenous Senior Council (SC): 2015 . . . . .	462
	The First Indigenous Minister for Indigenous Australians: 2019 . . . . .	462
<b>CHAPTER 25:</b>	<b>Ten Myths about Indigenous People</b> . . . . .	463
	‘Indigenous People Have a Problem with Alcohol’ . . . . .	464
	‘Indigenous People Are a Dying Race’ . . . . .	464
	‘Indigenous People Who Live in Urban Areas Have Lost Their Culture’ . . . . .	464
	‘Indigenous People Were Killed Off in Tasmania’ . . . . .	465
	‘Indigenous People Are Addicted to Welfare’ . . . . .	465
	‘Too Much Money Is Spent on Indigenous People’ . . . . .	465
	‘Real Indigenous People Live in Remote Areas’ . . . . .	466
	‘Indigenous Organisations Mismanage Money and Are Prone to Nepotism’ . . . . .	467
	‘Indigenous Culture Is Violent and Accepts Abuse of Women and Children’ . . . . .	467
	‘Indigenous Self-Determination Has Been Tried but It Has Failed’ . . . . .	468
<b>CHAPTER 26:</b>	<b>Ten Key Legal Decisions (Plus One to Keep an Eye On)</b> . . . . .	469
	R v Jack Congo Murrell: 1836 . . . . .	470
	The Gove Land Rights Case: 1971 . . . . .	470
	Koowarta v Bjelke-Petersen: 1982 . . . . .	471
	The Mabo Case: 1992 . . . . .	471
	The Wik Case: 1996 . . . . .	472
	Kruger v Commonwealth: 1997 . . . . .	472
	The Hindmarsh Island Bridge Case: 1998 . . . . .	473
	Gunner and Cubillo: 2000 . . . . .	473
	The Yorta Yorta Case: 2002 . . . . .	474
	The Trevorrow Case: 2007 . . . . .	474
	The Timber Creek Case: 2019 . . . . .	475
	<b>GLOSSARY</b> . . . . .	477
	<b>INDEX</b> . . . . .	481



# Foreword by Stan Grant

There is a place where Australia disappears. It is a holy place and an ancient place. It is a place where once people lived and laughed and loved; where they traded and danced. It is a place where a boy was born who would grow to be a powerful man; a leader of his people. When he died this man was given a ceremonial burial. His body was smeared in ochre and his arms folded gently across his chest and he was lowered into the ground. Forty thousand years later he would be 'discovered' and given a name. He is Mungo Man and he is our connection to a time before time that today lives in time. He is a connection to what the famed anthropologist William H Stanner once called 'the Everywhen'. We might call it the Dreaming. Mungo Man is the oldest human remains ever found on our continent.

I go there sometimes, to the dried-up shores of Lake Mungo. I have been there with old men who keep old stories. I have slept under the magical sky alongside my cousins and we have carved sacred totems into the ground. It is not my traditional country but my great-grandfather had kinship ties here and he spoke the languages of the Muthi Muthi and the Barkandji as well as his own Wiradjuri. It is a special place; not a place of bones and stones as scientists might see it but a living, breathing place. Away from the roads and the power lines and fences, where there is just openness and timelessness, I know there is something that beats eternal; that is older than any nation. No flag or border or anthem can capture what exists here; it is for us to feel and to know and to respect. It is for us to belong.

How many of us can say we truly belong in our country? Can we say we know our country? Are we alive to the stories and rhythms and the sounds of this place we now call Australia? We live in a land where the true stories have been silenced. We live in a land where old voices speaking old tongues have vanished. What does it do to a place to lose its sound; to lose its people? There is sadness here, deep sadness. But there is life too if we care to listen and feel.

There are places like Lake Mungo everywhere; 'Everyplaces' for the 'Everywhen'. You can find them by our riverbanks, under the stars, in our rocks and fields. Larissa Behrendt invites you to take that journey. She will take you into an Australia we think we know but remain so ignorant of, and we are poorer for that. Who are these First People of our land? How many languages were spoken here? What is their art and politics and music and ceremony? Larissa will open up a new

country for you. And you will find that there is a place here more magical than you could know. But it demands something of you. Are you ready to face our history? Do you know what really happened when the British came? Are you ready to learn about invasion and colonisation and what it does to a people to lose their place in their own country?

Australia is a hard place. It is a place still seeking peace with itself. The journey for justice is a road half travelled. 'Sorry' isn't enough when the First People of this land die younger and suffer more than any other Australians. Reconciliation and recognition and Treaty are the business we have not finished. But, oh how my people sing. And how we play. We are the living story of this land and it is a story just waiting for you.

The bones of our ancestors are buried in this soil, but they rest uneasy. It is for us to bring this land peace. That work starts here with this book. Larissa Behrendt calls it Indigenous Australia For Dummies – yep that's about right; we are still just learning. But read this and be smarter.

Stan Grant  
Television news and political journalist, television presenter,  
filmmaker and bestselling author  
November 2020

# Introduction

---

Understanding the history and culture of Australia is impossible without understanding the country's Indigenous peoples. And understanding Australia's Indigenous peoples is reliant on understanding their history, traditional and contemporary cultural values, worldviews and experiences.

*Indigenous Australia For Dummies* looks at the experiences of Indigenous people, including their political activism and aspirations, and seeks to debunk some of the myths, especially the negative stereotypes, that still exist in Australian society about Indigenous people. Indigenous history and contemporary issues are very political matters in Australia. This book often looks at these matters from an Indigenous perspective, as well as canvassing alternative views.

## About This Book

---

*Indigenous Australia For Dummies* is a general reference book targeting audiences who don't know much about Australia's Indigenous peoples but are keen to know more. It looks at both historical and contemporary issues. The book is designed to give readers a good general knowledge of all the relevant issues and hopefully inspire them to then read more detailed writings on what can be very complex topics. This book can be read straight through or read selectively by topic, because each chapter is self-contained.

Australia's Indigenous peoples are made up of Aboriginal people — who live all around the country — and Torres Strait Islanders, who settled the many small islands to the north of Cape York Peninsula in Queensland.

Terminology is complex when it comes to Indigenous identity in Australia. The term *Indigenous* is used in this book to describe both Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders. The term *Aboriginal* is used when referring to matters that apply only to Aboriginal people; similarly with the use of the term *Torres Strait Islanders*. The fact that some Aboriginal people don't like to be called 'Indigenous' is also important to remember. Increasingly, the preferred term is *First Nations*. Others prefer to be referred to through their nation or clan affiliation.

Because Indigenous languages in Australia were originally oral languages — not written — nation or clan names often have multiple spellings. Regional variations on pronunciation have also led to more than one spelling for other words. Throughout the text, when referring to specific nations or clans, I have adopted the most commonly used spelling.

*Note:* As both the author of this book and an Aboriginal person myself, if it sounds like I'm telling the story as an insider, I am.

On a different note, to help you get the information you need as quickly as possible, this book uses several conventions:

- » **Bold** words make the key terms and phrases in bulleted lists jump out and grab your attention.
- » *Italics* signal that a word is an important defined term.
- » Monofont is used to signal a web address.
- » Sidebars, text separated from the rest of the type in grey boxes, are interesting but generally optional reading. You won't miss anything critical if you skip the sidebars. If you choose to read the sidebars, though, you can benefit from some additional and interesting information.

## Foolish Assumptions

This book assumes the following about you, the reader:

- » That you have a rudimentary understanding of Australian history — such as that Australia was colonised by the British in 1788
- » That you have a basic knowledge of Australian geography — or that at least you're able to look up different places on a map!

## Icons Used in This Book

Throughout this book, the following icons are used to help you identify when you're about to learn something special, quirky or significant.



CULTURAL  
PROTOCOLS

This is important information about Indigenous cultures that allows you to better understand Indigenous people.



MYTH  
BUSTER

Many myths, misunderstandings and stereotypes about Indigenous people have become widespread since European settlement of Australia. This information straightens out a few of those things.



REMEMBER

Information adjacent to this icon helps to give a deeper understanding of the topic being discussed.



TECHNICAL  
STUFF

This is specialised information, often legal in nature, that explains terms or gives the background to a topic.



TIP

This icon denotes a piece of advice about the subject matter being discussed that helps you to learn more.

## Where to Go from Here

You can approach this book any way you like. You can read from start to finish — and perhaps skip some things along the way that you already know or are less interested in. Or you can go straight to the topics you're most interested in and dive right in there. For an overview of the diversity and richness of Indigenous cultures both before and after colonisation, for example, head to Chapters 1 to 4.

Chapters 5 to 9 look at the growth of the British colonies in Australia and the impact on and reactions of Indigenous people. The chapters in Part 3 are all about Indigenous activism, while Chapters 16 to 20 highlight the rich tradition of art, storytelling, dance and music that's as vibrant today as it was before colonisation.

And if it's the current issues you'd like to jump in and tackle, head to Chapters 21 and 22.

You can use the table of contents to find topics quickly. The glossary lets you cut to the chase on any terms you may want to clarify.

*For Dummies* books are meant to be fun to read as well as informative, so go ahead and enjoy!







# **An Ancient People: Then and Now**

### **IN THIS PART . . .**

Understand the extensive history of Indigenous peoples, going back over 65,000 years.

Work out why it's important to understand rich and diverse Indigenous history, cultures and values, both traditional and contemporary.

Find out about Indigenous worldviews, bush tucker and languages.

Get to know protocols when addressing Indigenous people or holding an event on traditional lands.

## IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Exploring traditions and celebrating vibrant Indigenous contemporary cultures
- » Examining the effects of colonisation on Australia's Indigenous peoples
- » Looking at the struggles and successes of the Indigenous political movement
- » Identifying key challenges and possible solutions to ensure a better future

# Chapter 1

# Understanding Indigenous Australia

The Aboriginal people of Australia are said to be the custodians of the world's oldest living culture. Indigenous Australians — Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders — have worldviews that focus on the interconnectedness between people and their environment, and the bonds they have with each other. They are also an important part of the Australian story. Modern Australia can't be understood without also considering the significance of its Indigenous peoples and their cultures in that story.

The colonisation of Australia devastated Indigenous people and cultures — populations were decimated, traditional lands and means of self-sufficiency were taken, and government policies aimed at assimilation legitimised the taking of Indigenous children from their families so they could grow up as 'white' Australians. But, although this was a difficult period, the story of how Indigenous people — and their cultures — survived is inspiring.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of Australia’s history through Indigenous eyes, covering how government practices were able to control the lives of Indigenous people, even up until recent times, and what they did to defend themselves, their rights and their country. This chapter gives you a quick look at the breadth of contemporary Indigenous culture and political action that celebrates their very survival. And it also looks briefly at how Indigenous people are tackling some of the major challenges they face today — lower levels of literacy, higher levels of unemployment, higher levels of poverty and poorer health than other Australians.

Understanding these aspects of Indigenous history and cultures enables you to gain a greater insight into who Indigenous people are and what their cultures are like, what issues they face today and some of the solutions being employed to meet these challenges.

## Indigenous Cultures: Then and Now

More than 500 different Aboriginal nations existed at the time the British colonised Australia — possibly up to one million people in total. They had lived on this land for over 65,000 years, adjusting to dramatic changes in the environment and landscape. The arrival of the British in 1788, however, had a fundamental impact on Indigenous cultures. Over the next century, as colonies spread far and wide, Aboriginal people were separated from their traditional lands, affecting their ability to care for their country, support themselves and their families and practise traditional ceremonies. But Indigenous cultures were resilient and, even in the face of such overwhelming change, they still adapted.

Today, Indigenous people live across Australia in communities in urban, rural and remote areas. Although they were once considered by non-Indigenous Australians to be a dying, inferior race, their increasing populations and continuing cultural practices show that contemporary Indigenous cultures are vibrant and still very much alive. Chapter 2 outlines the initial decline and later growth of the Indigenous population since colonisation, as well as the cultural protocols of how to address Indigenous people in different areas of Australia.

### Ancient traditions

Indigenous cultures across Australia had strong connections to their traditional land. They relied on it to provide them with everything they needed to survive — food, shelter, tools and medicine. And they needed each other as well. Nations were divided into *clans*, which were large extended families, perhaps as small as 30 people in some cases. In such small groups, everyone had to pitch in and people were very reliant on each other.

These circumstances gave rise to cultural values that focused on this interconnectedness. Through complex totemic systems, Indigenous people were reminded of their connection with nature, each other and their ancestors. They also believed in respect and responsibility for country, and respect for the wisdom and authority of Elders. Chapter 4 delves into traditional practices and beliefs, and Chapter 23 describes some of the cultural sites that remain important for Indigenous peoples today.

## Diversity, diversity and more diversity

Although Indigenous cultures around Australia shared many values and had similar worldviews, great diversity was also present, explained to a large extent by the vastly different environments and climates across Australia. Indigenous communities living by the ocean had different ways of life, different technologies and different practices from Indigenous communities living in the middle of Australia in arid desert areas. However, across the country, large gatherings of several clans took place for ceremonial purposes, and trading routes spread across the continent. See Chapter 3 for more on cultural diversity, in both traditional and contemporary contexts.



REMEMBER

Indigenous cultures have remained strong and vibrant across Australia. Even in contemporary forms — using new technology or incorporating aspects of other cultures — they maintain a strong connection to traditional practices. Chapter 25 examines, and debunks, some of the myths that have developed over the years about Indigenous people.

## Contemporary painting, singing and dancing

Art, song and dance were key aspects of traditional cultural practice, mostly engaged in for ceremonial purposes, and they retain a central position in contemporary cultures.

Indigenous art has become a worldwide sensation, with some pieces attracting prices in the tens, even hundreds of thousands of dollars. This industry hasn't, however, translated into wealth for the artists. Chapter 16 looks in detail at some of the successes in the Indigenous art world.

Indigenous songs were one of the most fragile parts of Indigenous cultures, being some of the first things that were lost with colonisation. Today, however, Indigenous people are strongly engaged with music — particularly country and western music! Younger Indigenous people have also embraced hip-hop music and rap as a way of expressing their views and aspirations. Indigenous dance has emerged as a

leading contemporary Indigenous art form, blending traditional dancing with more modern styles. Indigenous dance companies have flourished around Australia. See Chapter 17 for some of the best of Indigenous Australia's musicians and dancers.

## Old and new ways of storytelling

Indigenous cultures have a storytelling tradition, and Indigenous people have embraced new ways of getting their message across. Indigenous playwrights, theatre directors and filmmakers have also employed Indigenous actors to tell Indigenous stories. Indigenous people have also set up their own national radio service and television service, both complementing the many regional radio and television services set up by Indigenous communities. See Chapter 19 for more on the development of these media, as well as the establishment of the National Black Theatre, one of Australia's first political theatres.

Although Indigenous cultures originally had an oral tradition with no written languages, Indigenous storytellers have now turned their hand to the written word. For a long time, Indigenous people had stories written about them by white anthropologists, linguists, historians and writers but, since the 1970s, Indigenous people have had an increasing desire to tell their own stories themselves. Since then, Indigenous writing has crossed over into many genres, including crime novels and women's popular fiction. Chapter 18 covers Indigenous writing and publishing in detail.

## And they can kick a ball!

Australia's Indigenous peoples lived hunter-gatherer lifestyles. This meant they spent a lot of time moving and had a nutritious, balanced diet. It was a way of life that kept people strong and healthy. Perhaps because of this traditional way of life, Indigenous people have excelled as athletes. Across many sports — but especially football and athletics — Indigenous people have made a sizeable contribution to Australia's sporting prowess. Sportspeople are good role models for Indigenous young people and often work in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as mentors, assisting with building confidence and self-esteem, and encouraging young people to be active, fit and healthy. You can find more information on leading Indigenous sportspeople and the work they do in Chapter 20.

# There Goes the Neighbourhood

Understanding contemporary Indigenous cultures and worldviews is largely reliant on understanding how Australia's Indigenous peoples have been treated during the country's comparatively brief European history.