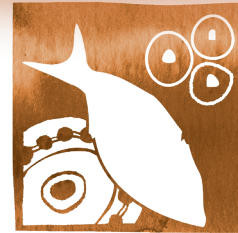


## Chapter 2.

# Aboriginal Heritage



## Background Information:

This significant site was the home of the Cammeraygal people. They were a clan of the Guringai language group. The Cammeraygal lived a sustainable lifestyle in keeping with the Dreaming. This area provided bountiful water resources with easy access to the harbour for bark canoes. Bush resources for food and tools were plentiful. This gave the Aboriginal people plenty of time for Spiritual practice and ceremony.

It is written in history that Cammeraygal were the main clan in the region that held the initiation ceremonies for the men and were feared, but also looked up to. The Cammeraygal were known over a very wide area and early historians wrote and drew of their ritual ceremonies. Early paintings show the Cammeraygal tooth removal ceremony.

For the Cammeraygal people, their way of living with Country and spirit followed the rules of the Dreamtime, and was learned and expressed in the Dreaming. Obligations for family and each other were expressed in Kinship lore and with Totems.

## The Aboriginal Dreamtime

Just as every culture has its creation stories – the Dreamtime is the creation period whereby Creation Spirits (ancestors) shaped the world and created every natural thing in it. The Dreamtime was the beginning of the world. In essence creation stories generally involve the intervention of supernatural events and beings as a means of explaining the origins of the world and the beings in it.

## The Aboriginal Dreaming

The Aboriginal concept of time is cyclic rather than linear. Although the Dreaming activities occurred at the beginning of the world and are now in the past, there is also a sense that they are still present. Each generation of Aboriginal people through ritual, song, and dance is able to enter into a direct relationship with the Dreaming and experience its present day reality. The Dreaming establishes the rules of governing interrelationships between people, land and spiritual beliefs.

## Kinship

Aboriginal Kinship is a multi-level system which often went back 16 generations. Kinship identifies skin groups, totems and language groups. Kinship systems enable Aboriginal people to know how to behave towards every other Aboriginal person in terms of reciprocal obligations. These obligations could relate to food, sharing, shelter, marriage, teaching and more. Importantly these obligations also include spiritual protection and caring for Country and sacred sites.



### Totems

Aboriginal people are given a totem at birth by elders or close family members. An animal, sea creature, bird or plant can be your totem. It is a person's duty to take care of their totem. An Aboriginal person may paint their totem or carve their totem. People generally are not allowed to hunt or eat their totem as this would make them sick. Aboriginal people may not only have a personal totem but a family and clan totem.

The Cammeraygal people who lived in this area left important evidence of their way of life before colonisation. Information about the Aboriginal heritage evidence they left is kept on a central register. The things you may find in this area include:

### Middens

These are mounds of shell built up over hundreds or thousands of years as a result of countless meals. They primarily contain mature species of edible shellfish species. They might also contain bird and animal teeth and bones, campfire charcoal and stone tools.

### Rock Shelters – “giba gunyahs”

These are places where the Cammeraygal people would have taken shelter. This would have been a warm place to eat, sleep, repair or fashion tools and, we can imagine, talk of stories and activities. Artefacts such as stone tools may be found in the rock shelters.

### Rock Art

Stencils are produced by mixing ochre in the mouth with other material into a wet paste and spraying it over the object to be stencilled. Often we find stencilled hands and tools represented in rock shelters. Other forms of artwork include ochre painting as well as charcoal drawings and etchings.

### Grinding Grooves

These are grooves resulting from the production or sharpening and maintenance of an edge ground tool such as a stone axe. These sites are usually located near a water source, like a water hole.

### Engravings

Engravings were made by drilling or pecking a series of holes in the rock which were then connected to form a line. An accepted understanding of these engravings is that they are the product of sacred ceremonies and were periodically re-engraved as part of ongoing ritual and to pass on knowledge and stories.

Today the Cammeraygal engraving at the Coal Loader is protected by a raised viewing platform. Sites like this are under threat every day from development, vandalism and natural erosion and cannot be replaced. Once they are destroyed, they are lost forever.

#### Curriculum Links:



- ✓ Preliminary HSC Course- Aboriginality and the Land
- ✓ Preliminary HSC Course – Heritage and Identity
- ✓ Stage 3 Science and History
- ✓ Stage 4 English and History
- ✓ Stage 5 English, Science and History

See the Curriculum Matrix (Appendix 1) for more detail.



## Chapter 2. Aboriginal Heritage

### Further Information:

Watch the Coal Loader Aboriginal Heritage three minute video found on the North Sydney Council website [www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au](http://www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au) which will give your class an overview of what you will find at the Coal Loader.

#### Aboriginal Heritage Office

The Aboriginal Heritage Office (AHO) is a joint initiative with eight councils in the north of Sydney, including North Sydney Council, established to protect Aboriginal heritage within these areas.

NSW State laws regulate the requirement to protect Aboriginal heritage, defined as any kind of material evidence of Aboriginal occupation. In line with these laws, the AHO monitors, maintains and protects sites such as rock art and engravings, shelters, stone arrangements, shell middens, and many more.

Therefore in order to ensure ongoing protection and sustainable handling of those sites, the AHO raises awareness through special training for council staff and many different education and school programmes. Presentations, walks, talks and also a Keeping Place and Museum, located at the AHO office in Northbridge, are available to the public.

Contact the Aboriginal Heritage Office for further information ph: (02) 9949 9882 or see their website [www.aboriginalheritage.org](http://www.aboriginalheritage.org).

#### Stanton Library Heritage Centre

Another excellent source of information is North Sydney Council's Stanton Library Heritage Centre, which aims to document North Sydney's social and cultural heritage with a particular focus on the natural and built environments. The Centre collects and makes available primary and secondary materials for research. The Historical Services staff at the Centre conduct research, mount regular exhibitions and organise public programmes. Specialist staff are available to assist with information. See [www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au](http://www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au) or call 9936 8400.

#### Australia State of the Environment Report

The Heritage chapter in this report discusses Australian heritage sites, objects, protections and management. The Indigenous chapter explores connection to Country and stewardship of the land and seas of Australia.

See <https://soe.dcceew.gov.au/>





## Chapter 2 – Aboriginal Heritage

### Activity 1 – Cammeraygal Dreaming writing exercise

#### Activity Summary:

This activity requires students to observe the primary source known as ‘the whale engraving’ and connect it with Aboriginal Dreaming, Aboriginal culture and dispossession. Students should read the background information in the chapter to assist understanding.



#### Inquiry questions:

1. What does the First nations’ engraving tell us about the Cammeraygal’s connections to ‘Country’?
2. Why has the story that is connected to the First nations’ engraving been lost?
3. Why is it important to manage historical sites and evidence? How can we help?

#### Syllabus Outcomes:

Students will be able to:

- Identify ways in which people interact with and care for places. GE1-2
- Describe processes and influences that form and transform places and environments. GE4-2
- Identifies and describes significant people, events, places and sites in the local community over time. HT1-2
- Describes and explains how significant individuals, groups and events contributed to changes in the local community over time. HT2-2
- Describes and explains different experiences of people living in Australia over time. HT3-2



#### Materials and Preparation:

- Teachers to use the poster ‘Return to Community, A History of Balls head & its Coal Loader?’ for class discussion. See North Sydney Coal Loader Learning Guide Appendix 2 or as a laminated class set at the Coal Loader.
- Students to bring a clipboard and writing equipment.
- A4 Coal Loader Map.
- Students to read and discuss the background information in chapter 1.
- Watch the 3 minute Coal Loader History video.
- Websites – <https://www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/heritage>  
<https://www.aboriginalheritage.org/>





## Chapter 2 – Aboriginal Heritage

### Activity 1 – Student worksheet

#### Cammeraygal engraving

Name .....

**Location – Class to sit on the raised platform in front of the engraving.**

1. Start with a discussion about how to show respect for the Cammeraygal engraving and around the Inquiry question, that is,
  - Why is it important to preserve and manage historical sites and evidence? How can we help?

#### The Cammeraygal Engraving

This engraving has been called a 'whale' by archaeologists since 1843 and is known locally as 'whale rock'. Other archaeologists point out that it is more likely to be a shark due to the number of fins. Inside the 'whale' is another engraving. Some say it is a person, some say it's a dingo and others call it a koradji (doctor or magic man) singing whales into the harbour. What do you see?

We can imagine that we know what this engraving means but in reality this engraving has its connection to Dreamtime and the Dreaming. At the start of the colony in Sydney, the loss of so many Aboriginal people through disease and conflict with early settlers means that the dreaming story of this engraving was lost.



#### Scientific Excavation

The Cammeraygal engravings were first seen by colonists in the early years of the colony and the first official record of them was made in 1843. As with many Aboriginal sites this site was not seen as valuable and later partly covered with a bitumen road.

The Aboriginal Heritage Office and North Sydney Council wanted to improve the protection of the site and also to try and find the other buried figures that had been recorded. In 2008 a major archaeological dig was carried out. It included the Aboriginal Heritage Office, North Sydney Council and the community of Redfern, and the original sandstone was uncovered. Several engravings were rediscovered as well as two previously unknown figures, that of an echidna and an eel.

Today the engraving is visible to all by means of a viewing platform which protects the carving.



David Watts, Manager of the Aboriginal Heritage Office, working with others at the archaeological dig to uncover the whale engraving.



## Chapter 2 – Aboriginal Heritage

### Activity 1 – Student worksheet

#### Cammeraygal engraving *continued*

Name .....

**Please respect the cultural significance of this site by not walking on the engraving or damaging it in any way.**

#### Activity

1. Start with a discussion with students using the Inquiry questions, that is,
  - What does the First nations' engraving tell us about the Cammeraygal's connections to 'Country'?
  - Why has the story that is connected to the First nations' engraving been lost?
2. a. Sit quietly on the raised walkway and make a sound map. To do this, write a word or draw a symbol to represent the sounds you hear.  
Try drawing/writing where the sounds are coming from for eg, in front of you, behind you.

Sound map

- b. What sounds do you hear that would have been heard 200 years ago?

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- c. Sit quietly on the raised walkway and imagine you are looking at the site before 1788.  
What would you have seen? eg, wallabies, children gathering food, people fishing.

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- d. What natural features of this area make it a good food gathering area?

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## Chapter 2 – Aboriginal Heritage

### Activity 1 – Student worksheet

#### Cammeraygal engraving *continued*

- e. Observe the Cammeraygal carving, and make your own drawing of it. Write or draw your own dreaming story about the carving, in this story emphasise how important whales are to the Cammeraygal people. (If you can't see the engraving very well, look at the photo on the previous page, or ask your teacher to view the photo on the sign at the start of the walkway.)

Name .....

- f. Write or draw what you think the engraving shows about Cammaraygal culture, their way of life and connection to Country. Think about the Cammeraygal's connection to Country, Sea Country and the animals that are a part of this.

- g. Why don't we know very much about the Dreaming story connected to the whale engraving?

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## Chapter 2 – Aboriginal Heritage


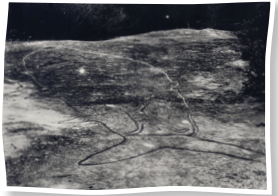

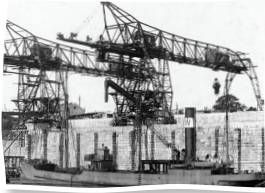

### Activity 1 – Student worksheet

#### Cammeraygal engraving *continued*

3. We can gain an understanding of the respect for Country that people had in each era by looking at the way the engraving was managed and cared for.

Using what you have learned so far and information from the previous page on the Coal Loader and its history, fill out the table below by describing the land use, how was the engraving cared for and what is your evidence? (some have been done for you)

#### Management of the whale engraving, an important historical site

| Time  | Land Use   | Management/Care      | Evidence  |
|---|------------|----------------------|---|
| Prior to 1788<br>                            |            |                      |  |
| Early settlers / colonists<br>             | Recreation | Ignored, little done | In historical photos, the area looks overgrown                                      |
| Industrial era<br>                         |            |                      | Road construction   |
| Council owned<br>Sustainability Centre<br> |            |                      |   |



## Chapter 2 – Aboriginal Heritage

### Activity 2 – Worksheet

### Investigating aboriginal heritage at the Coal Loader

Name .....

#### Activity Summary:

This activity requires students to observe primary sources and bush foods to learn about Aboriginal culture. Students should read the background information in the chapter to assist understanding.



#### Inquiry questions:

1. Where can you learn about Aboriginal culture at the Coal Loader?
2. How can primary sources help us learn about Cammaraygal culture?
3. What can bush foods tell us about Aboriginal culture and their connections to Country?

#### Syllabus Outcomes:

Students will be able to:

- Identify ways in which people interact with and care for places. GE1-2
- Identify and describe significant people, events, places and sites in the local community over time. HT1-2
- Describes and explains how significant individuals, groups and events contributed to changes in the local community over time. HT2-2
- Describes and explains different experiences of people living in Australia over time. HT3-2

#### Materials and Preparation:

- Students to bring a clipboard and writing equipment.
- A4 Coal Loader Map.
- Students to read and discuss the background information in chapter 1.
- Watch the 3 minute Coal Loader History video.
- Websites – <https://www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/heritage>  
<https://www.aboriginalheritage.org/>



## Chapter 2 – Aboriginal Heritage

### Activity 2 – Worksheet

#### Investigating aboriginal heritage at the Coal Loader

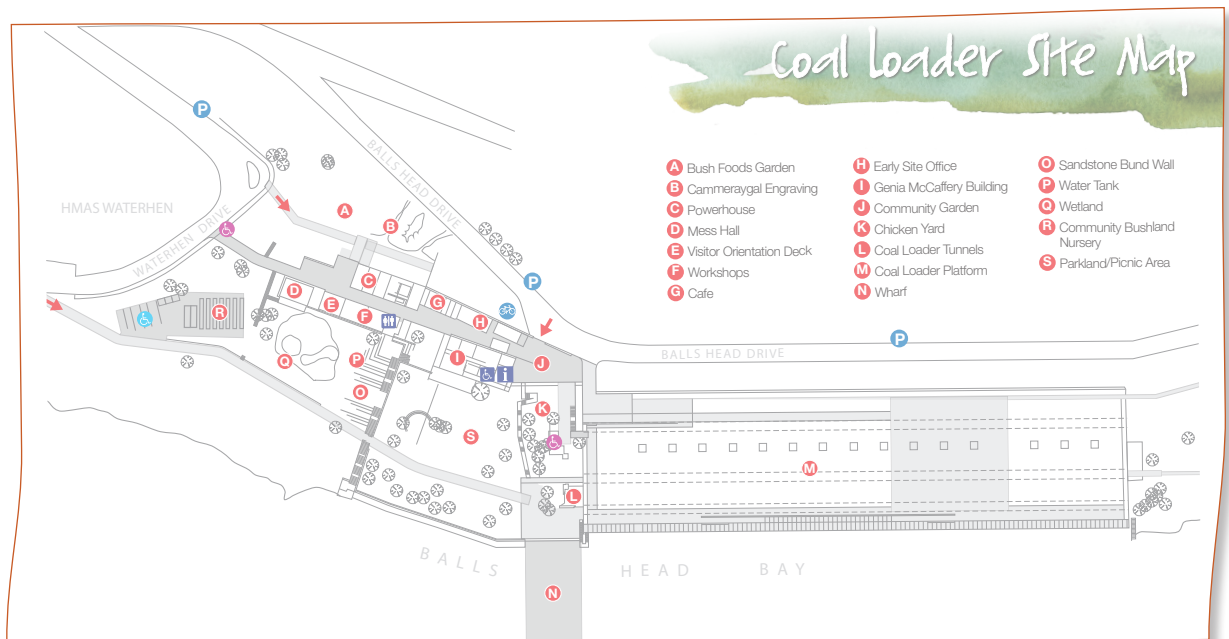
*continued*

Name .....

**Location – Class to sit near the Cammeraygal engraving.**

1. Start with a discussion around the Inquiry question, that is,
  - Where can you learn about Aboriginal culture at the Coal Loader?
  - How can primary sources help us learn about Cammaraygal culture?
2. Where can you learn about Aboriginal Heritage at the Coal Loader?
  - a. Let's take a walk around the Coal Loader site, find the sites and tick them off ✓ on the list, when you see them.

It's best to start at the Cammeraygal engraving (B), walk through the Bush foods garden (A) and then walk into the (i) display room in the Caretakers cottage to view artefacts.
  - b. Hand out the A4 Coal Loader laminated maps so that students can view a larger map, and find out where they are.
  - c. On the Coal Loader map below, circle or underline:
    - Cammeraygal engraving (at B),
    - Display room at Genia McCaffery Building showing artefacts (i)
    - Bush Foods garden (A)







## Chapter 2 – Aboriginal Heritage

### Activity 2 – Worksheet

#### Investigating aboriginal heritage at the Coal Loader

*continued*

**3.** Look for these primary sources.

Find these examples of primary sources in the Coal Loader display room.

Look for the replicas of artefacts.

Tick them off ✓ as you go.

Write down what you think the painting or artefact shows and answer the questions.



a. This drawing/painting shows

\_\_\_\_\_

b. Suggest why the spear has three prongs?

\_\_\_\_\_

☐

c. This artefact (scaled down) shows

\_\_\_\_\_

d. What do you think it is made from?

\_\_\_\_\_

☐

e. This drawing/painting shows

\_\_\_\_\_

f. How many people could fit in it?

\_\_\_\_\_

☐

g. Name two other artefacts in the cabinet

\_\_\_\_\_

h. What do these artefacts tell us about Cammeraygal culture?

\_\_\_\_\_

☐



## Chapter 2 – Aboriginal Heritage

### Activity 2 – Worksheet

#### Investigating aboriginal heritage at the Coal Loader

*continued*

#### 4. Bush Foods investigation

##### Background Information

The Cammeraygal Aboriginal people lived on the North Shore of the harbour for many thousands of years, making use of the bushland and coastal environment around them for food, medicine, shelter and tools and spiritual practices. Bush resources found in this area include Red Gums, Red Bloodwoods, Casuarinas, Lillipillies, Dianella and heath plants such as Grevillias, Wattles, Banksias, Geebung as well as many native grasses.

##### Xanthorrhoea:

These plants are sometimes known as the grass tree and once covered the Sydney landscape, taking hundreds of years to grow to a substantial height. After flowering the long seed pod stem was used as a fishing spear or firestick. Also the starchy trunk pith of the plant could be eaten raw or roasted. The plant also produces a gum that is said to be stronger than superglue and was used for sealing bark canoes, sealing rope that had been made from bark, and attaching spear and axe heads.



##### Melaleuca (Paper Bark)

There are over 210 species of paper bark in Australia. Traditionally paper bark blossoms were sucked for nectar and you could drink collected water caught in the bulges of the bark. Young leaves could be used for headaches and sickness. The 'paper' was used for wrapping objects and the softest part could wrap a baby.



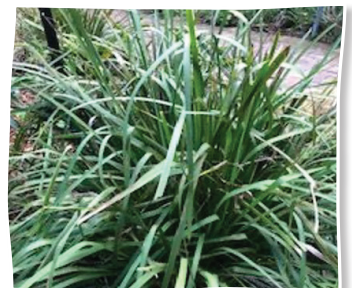
##### Banksia

Banksia blossoms were a good source of nectar and sugar. This could be soaked in water to make a sweet drink called *bool*.



##### Lomandra

The white, starchy bases of the grass stems were chewed, the yellow seeds were pounded and made into a flour and the strappy leaves were used to weave baskets, nets and traps.



**Note** – It is very important to remember that many plants contain toxins and cannot be eaten. Often foods require careful preparation over several days to render poisons harmless. Aboriginal people knew what preparation was needed to make them safe.



## Chapter 2 – Aboriginal Heritage

### Activity 2 – Worksheet

#### Investigating aboriginal heritage at the Coal Loader

*continued*



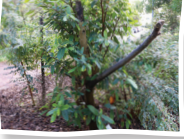




#### Activity:

Get to know the plants that would have been used by the Cammeraygal people to live sustainably.

- a. Use the information on the signs in the Bush Food garden to fill in the table below.

(✓) when you see these plants.

You may have to use the large sign with the list of plants on it.

| Plant name (✓)   | Scientific and/or Indigenous name | Part of plant used | How was it used? |
|--|-----------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Coast Wattle<br>          |                                   |                    |                  |
| Lilli Pilli<br>           |                                   |                    |                  |
| Sandpaper Fig<br>       |                                   |                    |                  |
| Native Lime<br>         |                                   |                    |                  |
| Blue Flax Lily<br>      |                                   |                    |                  |
| Large Leaf Hop Bush<br> |                                   |                    |                  |
| Mat Rush<br>            |                                   |                    |                  |





b. What other bush foods and local resources could have been found locally to create a varied diet?

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c. What can the use of bush foods tell us about Aboriginal culture and their connections to Country?

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## Chapter 2 – Aboriginal Heritage

### Activity 3 – Bush Foods investigation

#### Pre and post excursion – Investigation and research activities

##### Introduction:

Using bush foods in cooking was first made popular in the 1970's when horticulturalists started to assess bush food plants for commercial use and cultivation. Chefs started to notice that many bush foods have strong spice-like flavours and started experimenting. Jams and teas have also become popular.

Some sources of bush food recipes include:

- Mark Olive (an indigenous bush food cooking expert) [www.blackolive.net.au](http://www.blackolive.net.au)
- <https://creativenativefoods.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Wattle-Seed-Damper.pdf>
- Bush to Bowl <https://bushtobowl.com/>
- IndigiGrow <https://indigigrow.com.au/>



1. In your school grounds scope out a reconciliation garden. What plants would you include? What artwork would you include?
2. Write a letter to your environment group seeking support for your garden.
3. Research what other foods were available to the Cammeraygal and what season they were available.
4. What indigenous plants are being used in the cosmetic, therapeutical and pharmaceutical industries?
5. Write out a bush food recipe in the box below for wattle seed damper. Try cooking it at home.

My favourite recipe: