

THE CONCEPT

The archives of Film Australia are a rich source from which we can examine many aspects of Australia's past. Containing nearly one and a half million metres of vision and sound material on film and DVD, this record goes back as far as the early 1900s. The basic idea behind this series is to select film and DVD segments on relevant topics and themes and compile these into a series of programs for use in the nation's schools. As most of the older titles are no longer available to the general public, the series will bring to life part of the Australian heritage.

The series deals with Australia's environments, in the physical, social, cultural, political and economic spheres.

It is called ***Film Australia's Australia***.

Given this extensive historical record of the nation over the past 80 years, the series can best be used to promote an Australian perspective across the curriculum.

The finished program is the result of extensive Australia wide consultations with curriculum personnel and thorough trialling in 40 educational institutions nationally.

THE SERIES

Black Australia is the 13th title in the *Film Australia's Australia* series which is organized under themes:

- The Physical Environment
- The Social Environment
- The Political Environment
- The Cultural Environment
- The Economic Environment

Under **The Physical Environment** two programs will deal with:

- *The Natural Landscape* – (landform, climate, vegetation, natural disasters, cyclones, bushfires, flora and fauna)
- *Using the Land* – (Aboriginal Australia, European settlement, ownership of land, agricultural, industrial and urban development, use of forests and water resources, mining the land, exploitation, land management, problems of inappropriate land management, appreciation of the environment and the need for conservation)

Under **The Social Environment**, three programs will deal with:

- *Women in Change* – (the role of women in Australia since the turn of the century – women during wartime, 'women's work', limited work opportunities, wife and mother, changing opportunities for work, relating to others, child care, stress, dual roles, occupational illness, etc.)

- *Learning about Life* – (socialization, rites of passage, celebrations, the family, childhood training, formal education, peer group influences, informal education, learning throughout life)
- *Living Together* – (community, groups, clubs, religion, multicultural Australia, prejudice, discrimination, the disabled, the aged, the generation gap, social structure, resolution of conflict, etc.)

Under **The Political Environment**, two programs will deal with:

- *Rights and Responsibilities* – (political responsibility, rules and rights, international conflict, international relations, British heritage, allies and alliances)
- *Political Power* – (the working of democracy, major political issues in Australia including land rights, unemployment, immigration, the nuclear debate and the influence of the media)

Under **The Cultural Environment**, two programs will deal with

- *Beliefs, Values and Customs* – (Aboriginal culture, the religions of Australia, the British heritage, a multicultural society, the influences of the mass media and advertising, the Aussie image, sport, language and communication.)
- *Arts in Society* – (the arts in Australia, arts as a living, as recreation, as entertainment, our heritage through its arts, including a broad spectrum of painting, music, dance, theatre, film, opera, community arts, folk arts, literature, sculpture, architecture etc.)

Under **The Economic Environment**, three programs will deal with:

- *Work* – (technological change, women in the workforce, migrants in the workforce, issues in the workplace, unemployment, disabled workers, strikes, retirement, occupational illness etc.)
- *Economic Australia* – (money in our lives, business big and small, employment/unemployment, trade unions, technological change, the role of government in the economy, international trade, entrepreneurship, living standards etc.)
- The 12th program includes elements of all those preceding and has a futures perspective:
Exploring Futures – (past, present, and future, change and continuity, imagining the future, possible, probable and preferred futures, perspectives on time, visionaries, prediction, empowerment, Australia in the long term etc.)

The 13th program also encompasses all the themes.

Black Australia – (identity, self-determination, land rights, politics, religion, spirituality, artistic expression, attitudes of non-Aboriginal Australians to Aboriginal people, racism etc.)

RATIONALE

The vision and sound in each program of *Film Australia's Australia* present Australian viewpoints over the past 80 years. They provide glimpses into the forces that have shaped us and are shaping the way we think and act.

For students to better understand Australian society today, it is essential that we have some knowledge of the processes that have shaped the lives of Australians over time.

The primary purpose of *Film Australia's Australia* is to develop greater understanding of these processes in students.

The emphasis of the film segments that make up each program is people. People in all kinds of situations are seen interacting within a society and culture – in an Australian environment over a period of time.

A fundamental concept in the series is CHANGE. The elements that make up the Australian environment are in a state of constant change. This not only applies to the physical environment, but to the values and attitudes held by members of society.

For example, students will learn that some of the values and attitudes held in the 1950s are unacceptable today.

AIMS

A major aim of the series is to help students develop a perspective on the past and the changes that have taken place over time. With greater awareness of our background, students will be able to develop a greater understanding of the present to enable them to cope with the uncertainties of the future.

Further important aims for the *Film Australia's Australia* series are:

1. To help develop an appreciation of the richness of our multicultural society
2. To help enhance the personal and cultural identities of students. By strengthening self-concept, students should be able to deal more effectively with life and its relationships
3. To help develop awareness and sensitivity to the needs and problems of others
4. To encourage students to think critically and to help them to:
 - analyse and understand their own values and attitudes and those of others
 - solve problems
 - make reasoned decisions which affect their lifestyles and those of others
5. To develop skills in:
 - communication and self-expression
 - investigating, observing and gathering data
 - organizing, interpreting and evaluating data
 - interpersonal and social skills such as working cooperatively in groups and handling situations involving conflict

6. To help understand the role of film/DVD as a means of communication through critical analysis of:

- filming techniques
- values expressed (commentary, director, subjects in the film etc.)
- treatment of subjects
- music
- style of commentary etc.

THE STRUCTURE

Film Australia's Australia is intended to be used as a resource file or bank. It is not meant to be shown from beginning to end. Each film sequence should stand by itself and convey its own message.

Ideally, such a program should not be structured in any way, allowing the teacher to select the relevant segment/s to support learning experiences. However, the trialling showed that in practice:

- most teachers would not go to the trouble of using the DVD for just one small sequence
- given the existing technology, most teachers would be reluctant to try and find relevant sections on the DVD
- despite warnings, many teachers would still show the program from start to finish, leaving the students bored and bewildered as to what it was all about.

To overcome this problem, each program has been arranged in clusters of film sequences according to theme. Each theme has been constructed through selecting segments from Film Australia titles and editing them into one sequence. Each film segment is identified by a subtitle that gives the name of the original film and the year it was made. As well, each segment is numbered so that teachers can easily refer to the relevant questions in the Discussion Starters section in this guide. The initial 'D' indicates the segment is dramatized, using scripted dialogue and actors, rather than showing observed actuality.

This structure will allow the teacher/student to examine an entire theme or simply select a single sequence for study.

The presenter introduces each program, linking the themes.

THE STYLE OF PROGRAM

The style of each program in *Film Australia's Australia* is known as compilation documentary.

By compilation, we mean small segments of film have been selected from existing films or DVDs and combined to make up a new program.

By documentary, we refer to a style of film which aims to present aspects of real life. This usually doesn't involve professional actors but they are sometimes used to act out a 'real life' situation. A documentary invites the audience to think closely about the material presented. It usually has a message and is not produced primarily for entertainment. This does not mean, of course, that it need not entertain!

In selecting film and DVD segments for *Film Australia's Australia*, we aimed to provide students with a message for analysis or interpretation that was at the same time stimulating and entertaining.

In most compilation films, a combination of old film sequences, still photography and live interviews is linked by a commentary which creates continuity and provides the storyline.

In *Film Australia's Australia*, there is no additional commentary. The presenter simply introduces each theme and then lets the segments speak for themselves. Within the themes, relevant sequences are edited together to form a 'block' or 'cluster' of film/DVD, using original sound tracks. While editing creates a smooth transition between segments, there is no continuous storyline.

The program was put together purposefully in this way to allow greater flexibility in a classroom situation. It is designed for teachers and students to select a theme or a segment within a theme for further analysis.

Each film segment illustrates one or more points (or issues) and can stand alone. The themes, containing a number of related film segments, can be shown as a block and illustrate a greater variety of issues.

The episodes from *Film Australia's Australia* should never be shown from beginning to end in one sitting – except for teacher preview. It was not designed to be shown as a feature-length program.

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

The success for each program in the series depends on the type of material that is included.

Having such a large range of footage to choose from, literally thousands of decisions are made in the course of one program. What to use and what to leave out become prime considerations.

The following criteria are used in the selection process:

1. Relevance...to the topic area.
2. Interest for the intended audience. Where possible, segments are chosen that secondary school students would find interesting. To make a relevant, but boring program, would defeat the purpose of the exercise.
3. People orientation...sequences selected should include people wherever possible.
4. Issues concerning women should be reflected in at least half the elements making up the series.

5. Positive Aboriginal perspectives should be included in each program.
6. The experiences and activities of migrants should adequately and appropriately be reflected in each program
7. Balance...in other areas should be maintained. For example, between
 - Rural and urban
 - Socio-economic groups
 - Old and new films
 - Positive
8. Where possible, footage from all Australian states/territories should be included
9. Discussion Starters...material is sought that acts as a springboard or catalyst for student discussion. Each segment is seen as a starting point to explore and develop relevant issues further.
10. Segments of film were selected or re-edited to stand alone, even though the sequence was originally part of a much wider context or framework.

A WORD OF WARNING

1. As explained earlier, this program is not a film in the normal sense. It should not be shown from beginning to end, except for teacher preview. It is a file of film segments arranged according to theme, to be selectively used to suit particular lesson objectives.
2. The program cannot cover everything. A wide selection of footage is used to illustrate each topic and theme, but with duration of only one hour, time is a limiting factor. Some important issues in each topic have not been included.
3. Film Australia was the Commonwealth Government film production facility up until 2008. This function will have some bearing on the type of films and DVDs made. For example, many films are made for Commonwealth Government departments and will reflect official policy. Your students should be aware of this.
4. Negative Bias. Filmmakers tend to make programs about important social issues of the day. These often involve conflict and may appear negative. Most media tends to dwell on the negative side of things, on disasters, personal misfortune and social problems. For verification of this, switch on the television or buy a newspaper tonight. How many programs or articles deal with happy, uncomplicated situations? In selecting the material, a balance between positive and negative was desired, but not always achieved.
5. Be aware of values. Each program is layered with values. There are the values expressed by the subjects in the original materials. The original film director has then placed his/her own value position on top of

this...through camera angles, music, commentary and general treatment. In the selection process and linking film between themes, the value positions of the team of compilers have been added. Students should be made aware of the difference between objective fact or 'truth' and what is shown on the final program. A question worth exploring is 'What is the relation between film presentation and reality?'

6. Context. Film segments in *Film Australia's Australia* are short extracts (sometimes re-edited) taken from much longer films. As such, they are often taken out of context. While this is not a disadvantage when using the segment as a discussion starter (each segment was selected to stand alone), students should be made aware that a wider context exists in the original complete film. (See details on each program on page 27-32 of this guide.)
7. Relationship. Students should be made aware of the editing that has taken place to link the film segments within themes. Relating different sequences in the order they appear is another value position imposed by the program makers to create continuity, contrast, impact and interest.
8. Changes over time. It will soon become apparent to students that the topics, filmmaking techniques, music, style and content of commentary have changed considerably over the years. For example, it was rare for films made before the 1970s to deal with women's issues in a serious manner. Also commentary which would be seen as sexist or discriminatory today was acceptable for many people 40 years ago.
9. Teacher guidance is essential when discussing the film segments with students, particularly at the junior levels. Some students may interpret a different message from the one intended in the selection process. Teachers should assist in the development of constructive activities which promote positive attitudes and understandings of the issues involved.

BLACK AUSTRALIA

WHY BLACK AUSTRALIA?

This program is the 13th in the series *Film Australia's Australia*. Its central theme is 'being Aboriginal in Australia.'

The previous 12 titles in the series all included film segments on Australia's Aboriginal people. So why a separate program?

Aboriginality is a key issue facing ALL Australians. It is also exceedingly complex and potentially divisive.

A history of tokenism, inaccuracy and outright lies have characterized white Australia's learning about Aboriginal issues. Balanced and sensitive Aboriginal studies

courses, developed by Aboriginal people, as well as non-Aboriginal people, are only just infiltrating the curriculum.

The Bicentennial celebrations served to widen the gulf between indigenous peoples and the invaders.

Some people want a form of 'Treaty' between black and white Australia. This process alone will generate heated exchange in the nation's lounge rooms, schools and parliaments.

The need for deeper understanding between black and white Australia is as urgent as ever.

The focus on Aboriginal identity in this program will help stimulate the deeper understanding needed about:

- Aboriginality
- The attitudes of white Australians towards Aboriginal people
- Racism in Australia, both individual and institutional
- The changes needed in attitude and action to achieve justice.

FROM CAVE TO VIDEO

Bill Neidjie, in his book, 'Kakadu Man', tells us that the Aboriginal law will never change but that to reach people who no longer learn from the cave paintings, we need new forms of communication to pass on the law.

"Now white man got learning

He got university school.

He can read.

But me only read a little bit.

White people got computer,

But Aboriginal, me...

I just write in cave.

Law written in cave.

The painting is law.

"Aboriginal law never change.

Old people tell us...

'You gotta keep it'.

It always stay.

Never change.

"But learning to be different.

So now I've got to teach my children with my book.

They forget how to learn the Aboriginal way.

That why I write my book...

To bring my children back.

Bringing the law back."

Using film and print, 'Black Australia' uses different forms of communication to raise awareness of Black issues to wider audiences.

CONTEMPORARY FOCUS

The film sequences used in this program were selected by two Aboriginal filmmakers, Michael Brogan and Darrell Sibosado.

From the beginning, they decided to select footage for inclusion in the final program which was both contemporary and as positive as possible.

Positive situations in film sequences shot in recent years could serve as examples for Aboriginal people to follow. They would also help counter the often negative stereotypes of Aboriginal people held by some white Australians.

A QUESTION OF IDENTITY

What does it mean to be Aboriginal? How do Aboriginal people perceive themselves and how are they perceived by others? How and where do Aboriginal people live in Australia today?

All these questions relate to the central issue of identity.

In making this program, the filmmakers viewed hundreds of hours of film. In the process, issues of identity appeared time and time again. For example, it was clear that many white Australians have attempted to negate the validity of a black Australian's expression of her/his Aboriginality, purely on the basis of skin colour and/or facial features.

The filmmakers were conscious of how it might feel to have your identity denied. This would deepen feelings of dispossession, discrimination and helplessness...experiences often found amongst Aboriginal people in overcrowded fringe settlements in rural and urban areas.

A deliberate selection of film segments was made to show that the issues of Black Australia apply right across society. They are relevant to both urban and hinterland Australia at all socio-economic levels.

The diversity of Black Australia is apparent. The stereotypes don't fit. The program makes it clear that to be Black, you don't need to live in the bush, have Black parents, throw boomerangs, or have a certain dark shade of skin or particular facial features.

The personal and political struggle by Black people also emerges from the program. The history of Black Australia shows how Aborigines have been brutally taken from their families and forcibly moved from their homelands. Usually rejected by white society, they have been pressured into fringe settlements in cities and towns—into an enforced existence totally alien to a proud, rich, ancestral culture.

For many, it's their survival that's at stake—survival in the face of a gloomy cloud of prejudice, discrimination and disadvantage, lack of education, poverty, poor housing, alcoholism, medical handicaps, deaths in custody. The list goes on. This struggle for survival has been and is an on-going experience for generations of black Australians. Black people cannot forget this struggle, or push it aside, while still living with racism.

Many non-Aboriginal people try to ignore Australia's shameful inheritance or say it's ancient history. For generations Aboriginal people were excluded from Australian society. In addition, Aboriginal issues are marginalized. This means that a 'minority' or 'disadvantaged' group can be set aside to be dealt with by specialists. The masses are then relieved of this burden but continue to contribute to racism on a daily basis. Meanwhile the institutional racism of Australian society is aggravated by media mainstreaming.

CHOOSING A FRAMEWORK

When confronted with the complexity and diversity of issues concerning "Black Australia", the filmmakers were faced with a dilemma. How to weave these issues into a coherent tapestry? Aboriginal people see things in a holistic manner – all related and interconnected. How could the program do this?

The solution adopted was to use the unifying symbols found in what is now known as the Aboriginal Flag.

The three colours in the flag symbolize the Aboriginal way of perceiving:

Red—Land and Politics

Black—Identity and Self Determination

Yellow—Art and Spirituality

These themes are not all separate. They are interlinked and all mean identity, just as in the Aboriginal Dreaming. In the Dreamtime, everything is related and part of a larger picture. And nothing can change the whole picture – the whole story – no matter how hard we try.

RAISING AWARENESS

This program is designed to trigger questions, stimulate action and encourage receptivity to this diverse and complex subject.

Drastic shifts in consciousness are still required at all levels – personal, local, national, global – before real changes can occur.

Education can have an enduring effect in changing attitudes. Indigenous Studies needs to be given far more prominence in the curriculum. It should not be just considered an extra area of study, but integrated perspectives to be developed across the curriculum.

Aboriginal field workers have also suggested that as Australian students are now expected to learn a second language, why shouldn't it be one of the languages of Black Australia?

THE THEMES

THEME ONE

Land and Politics (Red)

Dealing mainly with the issue of Land Rights, the film sequences in this theme present different claims throughout Australia and explanations by Aboriginal people as to why the fight continues. It addresses the issue of sovereignty and Aboriginal-controlled land management. It also reveals the importance of land to the identity and cultural survival of Aboriginal Australia.

To be Aboriginal means to have an intimate relationship with the land. Dispossessed of the land, Aboriginal life is stripped of its deeper meaning. That is why Land Rights has become the major issue for Black Australia today.

Aboriginal relationships with the land are enormously difficult for non-Aboriginal people to comprehend. They involve the interconnection of a complex web of personal, political, spiritual and physical factors. The basic difference is that Aboriginal people see themselves belonging to the land rather than owning an economic resource.

The summary below is provided to assist understanding of issues involved.

1. The Dreaming – Religion and the Land

A fundamental feature of all Aboriginal religion is the "Dreaming" or 'Dreamtime'. Because there were 500+ languages, various Aboriginal terms expressed 'Dreaming': 'Bugari', 'Wongar', 'Attjiranga' etc. Although it is described by several names, each with different meanings, they are all interconnected. The most distinct of these connected meanings are as follows:

- (a) The origins and creation of the entire world by 'uncreated' and eternal ancestral beings.
- (b) Embodiment of the spiritual power of the ancestral beings in the land, at certain sites and in flora and fauna, making the power available for people today and for the places, flora or fauna.
- (c) The general way of life (or law), moral and social precepts, ceremonial practices etc. based upon these ancestral foundations.
- (d) The individual way of life determined by virtue of clan membership or spiritual conception relating a person to particular sites.

2. Aboriginal Law

Being part of the Dreaming, Aboriginal Law is a deeply embedded religious experience which attunes each clan member to the whole land spirit. This is a whole of life learning process summed up by ritualistic initiations into 'Becoming' and

'Being' the ancestral being who is represented in life by a rock, site or species of flora or fauna.

Many of these experiences are considered sacred, so there is a level of secretiveness in which knowledge is restricted to certain groups. The Law is interpreted, acknowledged and passed on to those who have access to the sites and their stories.

The Dreaming is therefore the most real, concrete and fundamental aspect of Aboriginal life and law. It has no connection to the Western concept of dreaming and illusion.

3. Expression of Aboriginal Law – Religious Experience, Art, Rites

Aboriginal Law: Every action in everyday life as part of a framework created in the past by the Dreamtime ancestral beings.

This creation is being re-created continually through ceremonies to ensure that relationships between individuals, groups and the land are in harmony with ancestral determination. Looking after 'Land Our Mother'.

Ceremonies can be held to mark a life crisis, rites of passage or concerns such as fertility, growth, health or repair of the social order through settlement of disputes. Ceremonies and the practice of religion are both a condition of life on earth, fulfilling the Dreamtime 'contact', ensuring the links between the present and the ancestral past are maintained, so there is a future.

All ceremonies were required to be held in original tribal settings. Thus, land must be respected, as it represents an intimate relationship with Dreamtime ancestry.

4. Identity and Boundaries

With 500+ Aboriginal languages in Australia, it follows that there is a large degree of cultural and territorial identity associated with these languages.

Unlike Europeans, the indigenous people of Australia did not mark boundaries with fences. It therefore takes a great deal of effort for white Australians to understand how Black boundaries were determined and then to seriously look at the full implications of Land Rights.

Research instigated by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies has managed to identify some of the dramatic differences found between various tribes in respect of social structure, the use of space and the passing on of knowledge and rituals.

So when looking at Land Rights, the unique local significance of sensitive land sites needs to be identified and the decision-making power should be in the hands of Black Australians.

5. Politics, the Law and their Implications

All over the world, indigenous peoples have suffered heavily at the hands of (mainly European) colonial powers – invasion, massacre and disease, oppression and genocide. The legacy of colonization in Australia and elsewhere is the 'Fourth World' ...indigenous minorities living in Third World conditions in affluent post-colonial societies.

All the inhumanity of Aboriginal colonial and post-colonial history and most current Aboriginal disadvantage, stem directly from 1770 when Captain Cook claimed the whole of eastern Australia as Terra Nullius... 'land belonging to no-one'.

Cook was explicitly ordered not to take possession of any territory except 'with the consent of the inhabitants'. His first landing at Botany Bay was opposed and near Cooktown his camp was attacked and nearly burnt. After these experiences, Cook did not land on the coast again and side-stepped the letter of his instructions:

"At Possession Island – uninhabited – off the tip of Cape York, he planted the Union Jack and claimed the east coast of Australia in the name of the King. This action could be compared with claiming England from the Channel Islands or Europe from England. It is the basis of the fiction that Australia was legally and peacefully occupied."

"...The fact that the doctrine of terra nullius was the legal justification for the occupation of Australia meant that legally Aboriginals did not exist. This made it easier to ignore their rights. Later white Australians were able to pretend that Aboriginals did not exist at all."

"...Under English Law all the Aboriginal land of eastern Australia was now Crown land. This meant that there was never any recognition that the land of Australia belonged to Aboriginal peoples. War could not be declared on aboriginals and no treaties could be made with them. Any Aboriginal resistance to the rape of their land was rebellion and such actions were always seen as 'outrages'.

Retaliation was not only condoned, but encouraged."

(Padbury, N. *Survival: A History of Aboriginal Life in NSW*, NSW Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, 1986, p 44/5).

The 'settlement' of Australia was technically illegal, even by the (European) international law of the time, as Australia was clearly not uninhabited. John Batman's treaty with the Aboriginal people of Melbourne – the only attempt to secure a legal and moral right to the land – was disallowed on the grounds that the land belonged to the Crown, but really because 'such an admission would undermine the security of title of every landholder in the colony.'

If white 'settlement' is illegal, it must be acknowledged that the expropriation of all land has occurred, before appropriate choices can be made for compensation. Many phrases are thrown around in the political arena in relation to 'healing our history' – aimed at signing a treaty or agreement between black and white Australians.

Field workers from the National Aboriginal and Islander Legal Services Secretariat (NAILLS) argue against the use of the term, 'reconciliation'. They suggest the use of the terms 'reparation' and 'repatriation' instead.

What do these terms mean?

Reconciliation – rendering no longer opposed: bringing to acquiescence: winning over to friendliness.

According to NAILLS field workers, this term does not focus on underlying issues – the importance of Black relationships with their land and with each other. Instead, they say, it creates a sense of diversion and is based on white understandings of supremacy.

Reparation – the making of amends for wrong or injury done; restoration to good condition; repairs; money, material or labour compensation paid by a defeated nation.

This term acknowledges that some compensation is owed to the Aboriginal people and that efforts are needed to restore the injured culture of this land, and the people.

Repatriation – returning to one's native land.

Considering these differing viewpoints, we are entering a period of Treaty debate. There will be a need for openness on both sides.

We should learn from the Canadian Indians of Saskatchewan who have been involved in an enormous struggle to achieve tangible recognition of their rights for over a century.

They negotiated for decades and signed treaties giving them solid legal and political foundations. But in daily life, in their dealings with the everyday world, they have yet to achieve appropriate recognition.

They won the battle, but have yet to win the war.

How will the Australian Aboriginal people fare in the negotiations to come? Many problems will be aired in the process, but will black Australians achieve their deserved legal status as custodians and original owners of this land?

The following sequences have been used to illustrate this powerful Land and Politics theme.

Uluru – An Anangu Story traces the events which led up to the transfer of the ownership of Ayers Rock to the Aboriginal people – a temporary success in the struggle for Land Rights. (Six months later the Commonwealth dumped National Land Rights).

At the handover ceremony an Aboriginal spokesperson said:

“For the first time since the arrival of white people here, we who know about this place will have control of how it is run. We welcome you to our land...we are not greedy...but we simply ask you to respect our sacred places and to allow us to continue to look after the Tjukurrpa”.

On Sacred Ground draws on another conflict between Aborigines and white Australia. Against the wishes of the Aboriginal owners of Noonkanbah station in the Kimberleys, the WA government used force to drill for oil.

“No oil was found at Noonkanbah but we are left with a feeling of violation...”

“That's why we care so much about Land Rights and a treaty with the people of Australia. We need the security and peace of our own land to establish our economic independence. We want to bring up our children with hope for a dignified future.”

In *Kakadu*, Bill Neidjie pleads for the preservation of Kakadu National park for future generations. The conflict of values between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people is emphasized yet again:

Narrator: "In the belly of Kakadu is one quarter of the earth's known uranium...millions of dollars' worth of nuclear fuel."

Bill: "Million dollars no good for us. We need this earth to live. This ground and this earth like brother and mother..."

The final sequence in this theme is *88.9 Radio Redfern* with scenes shot in January 1988 of the Bicentennial 'celebrations' with comments from a special Aboriginal radio station broadcasting from Sydney at the time. It raises the issues of European invasion, physical and cultural genocide and the denial and regaining of identity.

THEME TWO

Identity and Self Determination (Black)

This compilation shows the fight for identity and self-determination by presenting many different views and experiences of Aboriginal people. It also reveals many concepts and understandings of the past that have formed the attitudes of today, from the early days of "Missions and Reserves", the Return to the Land Movement and life in the white mainstream.

Since the coming of Europeans to these shores, the Aboriginal people have had a constant struggle to preserve their cultural identity.

White settlement of Australia was not only responsible for the deaths of thousands of black Australians, but it also – officially until 1972 – imposed a new white meaning for 'identity' on the entire continent. For generations Australia was identified as 'white'. This meant that Aboriginal people had no identity.

A sophisticated Aboriginal sense of identity with the land had developed over the preceding 40,000 years. It was too subtle for the insensitive incoming Europeans to comprehend. They constantly abused and broke the Aboriginal Law, sending ripples of cultural shock and spiritual destruction around Black Australia. This is still felt to this day.

Racial discrimination in Australia has never disappeared - it has merely changed its focus and expression. More subtle forms of oppression replace the blatant violence and genocide of yesterday. High rates of unemployment, illness, lack of education, alcoholism, criminal charges and deaths in custody, all reflect forms of discrimination and institutional racism.

They all point to a confusion of identity for black Australians today.

Originally, a sense of self was determined by the Aboriginal Dreaming, Law and Spiritual conception. This provided each individual with a strong sense of identity within this rich, indigenous culture.

Today, when an Aboriginal person or group attempts to gain self-determination, European political, legal and social systems and influences can hinder the process.

Now, there is not just a single set of values on which to base an identity. There are two contradictory sets of values – Aboriginal and European. There is a basic imbalance of power and resources. The result can be confusion in terms of identity and self-determination.

The first film sequence selected for this theme *Sister, if You Only Knew*, deals with hardships some Aboriginal women experienced living in White Australia. These experiences reduced any sense of identity for many women:

"Many of us had doubts about being drawn into a white lifestyle but there wasn't much choice in a way. Sometimes we went to the city in despair. Sometimes we went to the city to follow our kin. Eventually we began to go there in the hope that that's where our future lay."

In *Ticket to Ride* we meet Marcia Langton, with an Honours Degree from Queensland University. Lecturing to students today, Marcia argues for pride in Aboriginal history, acknowledgement of the Dreaming, sticking together and striving for excellence in the modern world. She believes in beating the white man at his own game.

"A lot of people have had a very hard time and we've all had a hard time, that's for sure. And we're all diminished by the experience of racism in some way. It's taken me six years to get an honours degree and it's not much of a price to pay.

"In the end, (we can) outsmart them all. White man's education gives us one thing and one thing ONLY – it gives us a ticket, a ticket to ride."

Peppimenarti is a successful cattle station, owned and run by Aborigines. The segment continues the theme of resolving the inevitable culture conflict experienced by Aboriginal people in the mainstream white society.

"We've been taught by Europeans to have these things (tea, sugar, flour, beer etc.). We can't get out of it now, but we still want to do our own things...ceremony, corroboree and still follow on our track like old people used to do before."

The film shows how the workers today leave the station to attend an important religious ceremony. This was judged as 'irresponsible' and inconvenient by the white masters of yesterday, who didn't understand sacred things. They called it "going walkabout".

"The truck has become a tool of Aboriginal law and religion."

The final segment, *Alice* enters the thoughts of a young Aboriginal woman who dances with the Aboriginal and Islander Dance Company and sings with a hard edge Aboriginal political rock group called 'Mixed Relations.'

In the sound track, Alice raises identity issues that concerned her as a young girl – racist taunts at school and a resulting low self-esteem. She is now coming to grips with her own identity and is proud of her Aboriginality.

Alice now holds her head high and doesn't worry about what people say. She wants to educate the world about her people.

THEME THREE

Art and Spirituality (Yellow)

This compilation of films shows the maintenance and consistency of traditional techniques and designs from the early cave paintings before white settlement, through to the more innovative styles of contemporary Aboriginal artists.

Although many mediums are utilised, one factor remains common to all. That is the reference to and the significance of the land, the home and body of the Ancestral Creators and of Aboriginal Dreaming and Identity.

The Dreamtime/Creation myths, legends and stories of sun, moon, stars, animals, birds, rivers, lakes, shores and ancestral heroes were prolifically represented in all creative forms of Aboriginal art, including:

- Music
- Songs
- Visual arts
- Dance
- Drama

Traditional creative arts still play a major role in the passing down of stories, related to the Dreaming: the Aboriginal Law.

Much of this artwork was and is traditionally created as an integral part of rites and ceremonies, (i.e. body painting) and therefore is of a transient nature.

In response to the European invasion and suppression of Aboriginality, Aboriginal artwork has extended past this traditional role. As well as representing land and stories, it is becoming a vivid and dynamic representation of the contemporary Aboriginal dilemma: country-lessness, dispossession and the urgent need for re-occupation and re-control of their land.

Today, both traditional and contemporary art materials and forms are used by urban and rural Aboriginal artists.

Reference to religion-based, traditional concepts of 'country' and Dreaming in artwork has inevitably become rich in political significance as well as the spiritual meaning, because all Aboriginal art is about land.

The political importance of what the artists are exploring and expressing – "Identity Being an Integral Relationship to the Land" – cannot be ignored.

Four colourful film segments were selected to illustrate this theme.

The Land of the Lightning Brothers shows samples of the vast body of rock art in Australia – the art of an ancient ritual life. The commentary links this art with aspects of Aboriginal life and religion. "In the 20th century, to understand their religious beliefs and their artistic traditions is to understand one of the oldest continually surviving cultures in the world."

Dreamings - The Art of Aboriginal Australia takes the viewer on a journey of understanding through Aboriginal paintings – on bark and on people preparing for a ceremony. The film segment gives us some knowledge about the meanings behind the colourful, abstracted designs.

"The Dreaming is not just the past. It's here and now and into the future. It's our creation when the great Ancestral Being travelled over the land and gave us our sacred sites, stories and ceremonies. The designs on our paintings are sacred. They have meaning..."

In *Narritjin at Djarrakpi* we are privileged to eavesdrop on the master Aboriginal artist, Narritjin who is explaining some of the paintings to his son.

"Paintings not only represent a history of the Ancestral Beings who created the landscape but also a map of the landscape itself. Each painting is in fact a title deed to a particular area of clan land."

The final film sequence, *Boomalli – Five Koorie Artists* shows the results of merging traditional Aboriginal art with modern European styles and techniques. No one is better than the other. They are just different.

"Even though I don't paint in traditional form, I am still an Aboriginal artist and paint about issues that concern Aboriginal culture and people. (At the same time) European art does have a relevance for me...(it) gives access to other cultures and techniques and styles to paint."

The program concludes, appropriately, with a statement by an artist on their identity – a common thread weaving in and out of every film sequence:

"My identity is my skin colour.

My identity is in my land.

My identity comes out of me onto the canvas.

I'm always thinking about past, present and future.

That is my identity."

SUGGESTED USES IN THE CLASSROOM

Film Australia's Australia has been designed for use in schools at secondary level, but some segments would also be applicable to upper primary years. The series is intended as a resource to help develop an Australian Studies perspective across curricula.

Black Australia could be used across the curriculum but has particular relevance to:

- Aboriginal Studies
- Society and Culture
- Social Studies
- Social Education
- Study of Society
- Australian Studies
- Legal Studies
- History
- General Studies
- Environmental Studies
- Media Studies

CHALLENGES INVOLVED IN ABORIGINAL STUDIES

European schooling involves quite a limited range of teaching styles compared to the diverse ways Aborigines have traditionally passed on their knowledge – their Law – their Dreamtime.

With no written language, tribal laws and beliefs were maintained through:

Storytelling

Dance

Drama

Rites

Painting

Walkabout

Music

Singing

Rituals

These art forms were not separated into isolated subject areas. Instead each was carefully chosen to express an aspect of the Dreamtime. Each has a special meaning. Very often these art forms were and are used in combination.

So how do we incorporate Aboriginal Studies sensitively and holistically into compartmentalised European curricula? The organization and structure of curriculum, as well as the teaching process must be reviewed.

Ways should be found to incorporate an Aboriginal perspective across the entire curriculum.

To understand Aboriginal ways of learning, we must acknowledge the Aboriginal experience as the heart of the process of development by consulting Aboriginal people and organizations. The local Aboriginal community is an especially valuable resource.

Also, alternative Aboriginal Schools will be important resources as examples of experiential learning. Aboriginal students learn in an environment free from culture shock between home and school in these settings. Aboriginal teachers have the freedom to re-ignite a sense of identity in the students.

SUMMARY: THE PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

This summary provides a listing of themes, film segments and the major concepts and issues that relate to them. This is not complete, as the resource can be used over a wide subject range. Teachers may wish to add their own.

THEME ONE

Land and Politics

Film/DVD Segments	Major Concepts/Issues
<i>Uluru – An Anangu Story; On Sacred Ground; Kakadu Man; 88.9 Radio Redfern</i>	Land Rights; Identity; Dreaming; Aboriginality; Values; Cultural Difference; Change; Government; Power; Law; Sacred Sites; Dreaming Places; Traditional Owners; Spirituality; Politics; Greed; Oppression; Mining; Economic Independence; Heritage; Future; Conflict; Treaty; Racism

THEME TWO

Identity and Self-Determination

Film/DVD Segments	Major Concepts/Issues
<i>Sister, If You Only Knew; A Ticket to Ride; Peppimenarti; Alice</i>	Identity; Land; Dreaming; Spirituality; Cultural Heritage; Cultural Genocide; Oppression; Dispossession; Authority; Empowerment; Change; Aboriginality; Values; Land Rights; Reparation; Racism

THEME THREE

Art and Spirituality

Film/DVD Segments	Major Concepts/Issues
<i>The Land of the Lightning Brothers; Dreamings - The Art of Aboriginal Australia; Narritjin at Djarrakpi Part One; Boomalli – Five Koorie Artists</i>	Art; Spirituality; Land; Dreaming; Aboriginality; Music; Dance; Storytelling; Myths/legends; Tradition; Change; Creativity; Values; Cultural Conflicts; European values; Transmission of Culture; Identity

Other more recent titles available for research include:

[*Black Chicks Talking*](#); [*Blood Brothers*](#); [*Bobtales*](#); [*Ceremony – The Djungguwan of Northeast Arnhem Land*](#); [*Dhakiyarr vs the King*](#); [*Exile and the Kingdom*](#); [*From Sand to Celluloid*](#); [*Into the Mainstream*](#); [*Mabo – Life of an Island Man*](#); [*Mr Patterns*](#); [*Radiance*](#); [*Shifting Sands*](#); [*Who Killed Malcolm Smith?*](#) [*Wrong Side of the Road*](#).

DISCUSSION STARTERS

Suggested Questions/Activities Related to each Film Segment

THEME ONE Land and Politics

Focus Question: How do Aboriginal People relate to the Land?

Film Segments Suggested Discussion Starters/Activities

1. Uluru - An Anangu Story (1986)

1a. "So why have white people come to steal this land. How is it that they've barged right past us while we've been here since ancient times. Ever since they've come we've been begging for our land back again." (Commentary)

What is your view on the above statement?

How do you feel about sentiments expressed?

1b. "Why hand it back to a bunch that had it for 40,000 years and never made a profit?" How do you feel about this statement?

1c. Why did the Northern Territory government of the time oppose the handover?

1d. The Aboriginal and European names for the "Rock" are different. Explain what each signifies. How do Aboriginal and European perceptions of Uluru differ?

1e. Who really owns "The Rock"? Explain your answer.

2. On Sacred Ground (1980)

2a. Name the three parties involved in conflict in this sequence. Explain the position of each. With which side do you agree? Why?

2b. In what ways does the situation shown in this sequence point to the differences in "relationship to the land" between Aboriginal people and Europeans? Support your answer by referring to quotes from the film.

2c. "We know that white intrusion has always tended to destroy our language, music, art and religion. Our culture is just as important to us as economic development. With it we are rediscovering our strength." (Commentary)

How has 'white intrusion' destroyed Aboriginal language, music etc.?

What is more important in the mainstream society – culture or economic development? Explain your answer.

What is the relationship between 'culture' and 'strength' for Aboriginal people?

3. Kakadu Man (1989)

3a. Describe in your own words what this film sequence says to you about Aboriginal feelings and links with the land?

When complete, pair off with a class member and share your thoughts.

It also refers to non-aboriginal attitudes and values to the land. What are these? How do they differ from the values held by the Aboriginal people?

3b. "In the belly of Kakadu is one quarter of the earth's known uranium – millions of dollars' worth of nuclear fuel." (Commentary)

Research the controversy surrounding mining uranium in Kakadu National Park. Given the authority, what course would you take – ban mining – restrict mining to certain areas – or allow unrestricted mining?

Explain the answer.

[NB You may want to research a more recent mining project, eg the proposed gas processing facility at James Price Point in the Kimberley, WA.]

3c. Bill talks of hanging on:

"You responsible now.

You gotta go with us.

Might be you can hang on.

Hang onto this story.

Hang onto this earth.

You got children...grandson.

Might be your grandson get this story....

Keep going.

Hang on like I done!"

Explain it in your own words what Bill Neidjie is saying above.

4. **88.9 Radio Redfern** (1988)

4a. Explain why the Bicentennial Celebrations 'rubbed salt into the wound' for Aboriginal people. The Bicentennial was not a celebration for Aboriginal people. Why was 1988 referred to as "a year of mourning"?

4b. "Within nine months of the white settlers – the white invaders – coming to this country, two thirds of the Aboriginal population, right where you're sitting (Darling Harbour in Sydney) were dead." (Commentary)

How did these Aboriginal people die?

What attitudes towards the indigenous people were held by the first white settlers?

Why?

Define 'genocide'. Research an example from Australian history.

How do you feel about this situation?

4c. "The only way you can be Koori in a lot of people's eyes is if you're real dark with curly hair and fit their stereotype image." (Commentary)

Who is an Aboriginal person?

What is the stereotype image?

Many Aboriginal people do not fit the stereotype image. Why?

4d. How can negative and/or racist experiences actually reinforce a sense of identity? Give an example from the program.

THEME TWO: Identity and Self Determination

Focus Question: "Why is a sense of identity important in a person's life?"

Film Segments Suggested Discussion Starters/Activities

5. Sister If You Only Knew (1975)

5a. "We had to bludge and beg and you know, if you bludge and beg long enough, you lose pride. You either lose pride or you create a hate in your guts you never get rid of." (Commentary)

Describe the hardships the Aboriginal woman in this sequence had to endure. How do you think you would feel and cope with the same situation?

How would a lifestyle of constant 'bludging and begging' affect a person's self-esteem?

5b. "I would hope we are able to take our position in the community and become lawyers, doctors, dentists etc...opportunities we've never had before." (Commentary)

Why is it that Aboriginal people generally have had far fewer opportunities than non-Aboriginal people in Australia? Is the situation improving? Give evidence for your answer.

5c. "Many of us had doubts about being drawn into a white lifestyle...there wasn't much choice in a way."

Why do you think these doubts arose?

Why was there little choice?

Why did many Aboriginal people go to 'the city in despair'?

5d. "I used to have a big chip on my shoulder in Adelaide. Living on an Aboriginal reserve you get that way." (Commentary)

What is meant by a 'big chip' on the shoulder? What were the conditions like on most Aboriginal reserves? How would it affect a person's view of life – and identity?

6. A Ticket to Ride (1983)

6a. "One lecturer, for instance, when I handed in my end of year essay for Anthropology said I couldn't possibly have written it because I was an Aborigine and Aborigines aren't intelligent in this sort of way." (Commentary)

How do you react to the above statement? Why?

Why do you think the lecturer had this point of view?

Why did Marcia let the comment go? What effect did it have on her?

6b. Why does Marcia want Aborigines to "tell their own history"?

In what ways might this history be different from that told from a European viewpoint?

What does she mean by the "notion of the dreamtime should not be trivialized"?

Why is this important?

6c. "There is a tendency on the part of many Aboriginal people to cut down their fellows who start to be good at something." (Commentary)

Why do you think this tendency exists? Where does it come from?

What does she say about the 'view of our potentiality'? What can be done about this?

6d. Marcia talks about a lot of Aboriginal people 'having a hard time'. Do Aboriginal people have a harder time in life than non-Aboriginal people? Why? Give examples.

6e. "...we're all diminished by the experience of racism". (Commentary)

What does Marcia mean by this statement?

6f. "White man's education gives us one thing and one thing only – a ticket – a ticket to ride". (Commentary)

What does Marcia mean by this statement? Do you agree or disagree? Give reasons for your answer.

What are some of the differences between 'white man's education and 'black man's' education?

7. Peppimentari (1983)

7a. "We've been taught by Europeans to have those (tea, sugar, flour, beer etc.) but we still want to do our own things – ceremony, corroboree – and still follow on our track like old people used to do before." (Commentary)

What does this tell you about Aboriginal values? In what ways are 'European' values and Aboriginal values different? How are they similar?

What advantages occur when Aboriginal and non- Aboriginal live side by side?

What problems occur? Why?

What is your view on the ideal way for the two cultures to co-exist?

7b. Explain what is meant by the term 'walkabout'? Why have many Europeans regarded it as 'irresponsible'? What is the Aboriginal view?

Explain what is meant by: "the truck has become a tool of Aboriginal law and religion", in the context of the film.

8. Alice (1990)

8a. After viewing this film segment, explain why Alice felt ashamed of her Aboriginality as a young child.

How would you feel in the same situation? What would you do about it?

8b. What is racism? Give examples from the film and real life. Why do some people behave in racist ways? How does this behaviour affect the victim?

8c. Alice no longer felt ashamed when she took pride in her Aboriginal identity. How was this expressed? Give examples from the film.

8d. Alice wants to 'educate the world about our people'. How are dance and music an effective means of doing this?

THEME THREE: Art and Spirituality

Focus Question: "What is the importance of Art and Spirituality in Aboriginal culture?"

Film Segments Suggested Discussion Starters/Activities

10. The Land of the Lightning Brothers (1987)

9a. "Art of an ancient ritual life". (Commentary)

Describe in your own words what the above statement means.

9b. Make a list of all the styles of Aboriginal art shown in this sequence. Describe the subject matter in each.

What does it tell you about traditional Aboriginal life?

9c. "To understand these religious beliefs and their artistic traditions is to understand one of the oldest continually surviving cultures in the world". (Commentary)

Describe some of the connections between art and religion in Aboriginal society. In what ways can Aboriginal art tell us about their culture?

The rock paintings shown here are estimated to be about 20,000 years old. How did people live in Europe at that time?

10. Dreamings - The Art of Aboriginal Australia (1988)

10a. This film sequence gives some detail about the Dreaming. Listen carefully to the commentary and describe what it is in your own words.

How does the film show the Dreaming represented in art?

Research more information from the library. Why is the Dreaming a fundamental element of Aboriginal life?

10b. "The designs on our paintings are sacred – they have meaning". (Commentary)

Explain some of the meanings expressed by the symbols in the paintings shown in the film. Why can they be called 'aerial maps'? What follows from this?

10c. On what occasions are the bodies of Aboriginal women and men painted?

Why is this done? What do the designs signify?

11. Narritjin at Djarrakpi Part One (1981)

11a. How is knowledge – learning about culture and law through art – being transmitted to the younger generation in this sequence?

How effective do you think this method of learning would be?

How do most people learn about art in mainstream Australian society today?

Explain the differences between these methods. Which do you think is more effective? Why?

11b. "Paintings not only represent a history of the ancestral beings who created the landscape but also a map of the landscape itself. Each painting is in fact a title deed to a particular area of clan land". (Commentary)

Explain why Aboriginal art has a strong spiritual and political dimension.

Could non-Aboriginal people ever really understand the deeper significance of aboriginal art? Explain your answer.

11c. Aboriginal art is in high demand by art collectors all over the world and is commanding ever higher prices. Why do you think this is?

Should it be sold like this and allowed to leave the country?

Give reasons for your answer.

12. Boomalli – Five Koorie Artists (1988)

12a. "Aboriginal art (or Aboriginal culture) has given me the link to my heritage and in a way has given me my identity. I am part of the Aboriginal culture – even though I don't paint in traditional form. I am still an Aboriginal artist and I paint about issues that concern Aboriginal culture and people." (Commentary)

How does the link with Aboriginal art and heritage affect this artist's feeling of identity?

What are the issues of 'concern for Aboriginal culture and people?'

12b. What are the differences in style and content between Aboriginal and European art?

In what ways do they complement and conflict with each other? Explain your answer.

12c. "They (at art school) were taught that you couldn't ever get anything from Aboriginal culture. (Commentary)

Why did people think this way? Do some people still hold these views? Why? What is your view on this issue?

Has the situation changed? Why?

What can other Australians gain from Aboriginal culture?

LIST OF PRODUCTIONS USED IN THE PROGRAM

ULURU – AN ANANGU STORY

Director: David Roberts

Producer: Don Murray

1986, 54 mins

Made in conjunction with the Anangu people, *Uluru – An Anangu Story* is a wide-reaching film. Local people report on the traditional history of the area, the arrival of the white man on camels is re-enacted, tourists proliferate, discussions on the future are held. The film ends with the historic day when the Governor-General of Australia, Sir Ninian Stephen, officially hands over the title deeds of the Uluru National Park to the Uluru-Katjatjuta Land Trust, which immediately leases it back to the Commonwealth Government as a national park. Although it is a triumphant occasion, as shown in this extract, the film makes it clear that the local people had to agree to lease Uluru back before the government would agree to grant them the

title to it. [*Uluru – An Anangu Story* was withdrawn from sale at the request of the traditional owners in 2005.]]

ON SACRED GROUND

Director: Oliver Howes

Producer: Robin Hughes

1980, 58 mins

On Sacred Ground is a film about Aboriginal history in the Kimberley WA, Aboriginal links with the land and about Aboriginal land rights. It contains many sequences of historic importance, including one in which the young black presenter challenges the Durack legend, and an oral history of the relationships between blacks and whites in the Kimberley. The final sequence is of the Noonkanbah land rights confrontation which emerged while filming for the production in the area.

KAKADU MAN

Director: Michael Balson

Producers: Tristram Miall, Bruce Moir

1989, 52 mins

At the top end of Australia is the jewel of the country's national parks and the home of the Gagadju people. It is called Kakadu.

More than 100,000 visitors are drawn to this magical place every year. Some come to look at its beauty but others come to hunt its animals and dig up its minerals. Bill Niedjie is a traditional custodian of this land, a role passed down to him through countless generations. In 1979 he gave the land to the people of Australia.

The message of this important documentary is of vital concern to people everywhere.

It is the message of the great Mother spirit: "The earth she sick from mad mankind. Read the land, listen to it. Only then will you be free."

88.9 RADIO REDFERN

Directors: Sharon Bell, Geoff Burton

Producer: Sharon Bell

1988, 56 mins

In 1988 when the "Gubbas" (white Australians) celebrated 200 years of settlement, the "Koories" (Aboriginal Australians) observed a year of protest and mourning.

88.9 Radio Redfern is a portrait of Sydney's Aboriginal radio station in 1988. Set against a background of contemporary Australian music this film combines the intensity of Aboriginal protest activity with the warmth and humour that are the essence of Radio Redfern broadcasts.

A unique, compassionate and positive portrait of Aboriginal people *88.9 Radio Redfern* presents us with a set of images which are difficult to dismiss and impossible to forget.

SISTER IF YOU ONLY KNEW

Director: Janet Isaac

Producer: Suzanne Baker

1975, 51 mins

This film was sponsored by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs for International Women's Year. It vividly explores the lives of four Aboriginal women living in Adelaide, the pressures on them, their past experiences and their family lives. It shows the part they play in South Australian efforts towards equal opportunities for urban Aboriginals before the law, in housing and in employment.

A TICKET TO RIDE

Director: Keith Gow

Producer: Elisabeth Knight

1983, 30 mins

Made for the Department of Industrial Relations, *A Ticket to Ride* shows the lives of four Aboriginal people who have achieved positions of influence in the Australian community. After an introduction, the life of each is shown separately. They are Ernie Bridge, West Australian MLA; Pat O'Shane, Secretary to the NSW Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs; Wesley Lanhupuy, Northern Territory MLA; and Marcia Langton, first class honours graduate in anthropology at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. This is the longest of seven films about Aborigines at work, designed to encourage Aboriginal job seekers and illustrate employment opportunities.

PEPPIMENARTI

Director: Ron Iddon

Producers: Ron Iddon, John Shaw

1983, 50 mins

In 1976, the people of the area began returning from settlements and missions to tribal lands at Peppimenarti, a vast area of flood plains and rivers and forest between the Daly River and Port Keats in the far north of the Northern Territory. They began to convert this enormous tract of land into a cattle station. They built yards and roads; they built houses and set up a store and a school. They had a rich ceremonial life. In 1983 Peppimenarti was both a cattle station and a permanent town of several hundred people.

BREAKTHROUGH: ALICE

Director: Michael Riley

Producer: Ron Saunders

1989, 13 mins

Alice is a young Aboriginal woman who knows through bitter experience the ugliness of racism. Racism—one of the most demeaning and destructive of human passions—has dogged her through childhood into maturity. Her dreams of success in

dance and music are almost fulfilled, but painful memories of racial slights linger on with recurring jibes of intolerance against her race an ever-present threat to her equanimity, her self-confidence.

Racial prejudice is a factor in every human society, usually aimed at minority groups by a dominant majority.

The film takes the viewer into Alice's mind, eavesdropping on her innermost thoughts. It's an intimate portrayal in which we gain some insights into the effects of prejudice against the Aboriginal people.

THE LAND OF THE LIGHTNING BROTHERS

Director: David Roberts

Producer: Janet Bell

1987, 26 mins

In the sandstone country south-west of Katherine in the Northern Territory, lies a spectacular concentration of Aboriginal rock art.

The Lightning Brothers, with wide dark eyes and dramatically striped bodies are ancestral beings who in the Dreamtime helped shape the traditional land of the Wardaman Aboriginal people and who are associated with the coming rain in this part of the country.

The film *The Land of The Lightning Brothers* records this magnificent collection of rock art and shows how the Wardaman people see it as part of their living culture. They perform traditional songs and ceremonies associated with the Dreamtime places where the art occurs.

The Wardaman songs and stories are complemented in the film soundtrack by the extraordinary music of the Australian group Gondwanaland, with the didgeridoo played by Charlie McMahon.

In examining the Lightning Brothers' paintings and engravings, the film provides a tantalizing introduction to Australia's Aboriginal rock art.

The Land of the Lightning Brothers was produced by Film Australia for a co-production partnership of the Australian Heritage Commission, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Northern Territory Government. These instrumentalities are involved in different ways in the protection of Aboriginal rock art.

DREAMINGS – THE ART OF ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIA

Director: Michael Riley

Producer: Janet Bell

1988 30 mins

Dreamings - The Art of Aboriginal Australia is a journey to the sacred heartlands and lush mangroves of Australia to see traditional Aboriginal artists at work. Many of the works they produce in this film were included in a two year touring exhibition that visited galleries in the USA and Australia between 1988–1990.

We are taken into the air to see some of the landforms and waterways which are incorporated in the painter Michael Nelson Jakamarra's imagery. He talks of his family's association with the land. The imagery which results is part of a belief system stretching back 40,000 years with spiritual connections to the land, the clan, to animals and plants.

The women of the Great Western Desert take us to a sacred waterhole where they dance and sing about Sugar Leaf Dreaming. Symbols incorporated in women's painting often relate to bush tucker themes – yams, honey ants and witchetty grubs. This program explores the meaning behind works of immense beauty, ranging from acrylic dot paintings of the Central desert to cross hatched bark paintings and burial poles from Northern Australia.

Only now is the world beginning to recognize the true significance of these artists and their work. This film reveals a culture which is among the most ancient known and explores the timeless value of the oldest continuous art tradition in the world.

NARRITJIN AT DJARRAKPI – PART ONE

Director, Producer: Ian Dunlop

1981, 50 mins

One of five films in the Narritjin Maymuru series, part of the long-term *Yirrkala Film Project* with the Yolngu, the Aboriginal people of north-east Arnhem Land.

Narritjin died in 1981. He was a highly respected elder within Yolngu society, leader of the Mangalili clan in his area and one of Australia's best known traditional Aboriginal artists. He and his family spent most of their lives at Yirrkala Mission; but in 1974 they moved about 200 kilometres south to their own clan land at Djarrakpi. As his sons learned painting from him, they learned about their clan land and its ancestral history: bark paintings are restatements of this.

BOOMALLI - FIVE KOORIE ARTISTS

Director: Michael Riley

Producer: Paul Humfress

1988, 28 mins

Boomalli – Five Koorie Artists is an artists' co-operative; a collection of photographers, painters, sculptors, designers and film-makers who are urban Aboriginal or Koorie artists. This visually rich and inspiring film is about their work. Their achievements speak for themselves.

The work presented by the co-operative ranges from clothing designer Bronwyn Bancroft, who has been invited to exhibit in Paris, the first Australian fashion designer to do so, to the unique sand sculpture of Fiona Foley. Renowned film-maker and photographer Tracey Moffat discusses her film about Aboriginal girls and the painters Raymond Meeks and Jeffrey Samuals discuss the thematic approach in their work and how they incorporate aspects of traditional Aboriginal painting in their style.

Boomalli is unlike any previous film made about Aboriginal artists – it concentrates on the contemporary, rather than the traditional works and way of life. It also looks at the issue of Aboriginal identity and how the artists express this in their work. As one of the artists comments, 'Through my paintings I have found pieces of myself'.

Boomalli – Five Koorie Artists is directed by Michael Riley, himself an Aboriginal artist. The film illustrates, with vigour and beauty, the spiritual and political elements embodied in the works of these unique artists.

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THE FOLLOWING RESOURCE LISTINGS MAY BE HELPFUL:

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Black Australia, 1 & 2 – An Annotated Bibliography and Teachers' Guide to Resources on Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders – M. Hill and A. Barlow, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1978 & 1985

Resource listings may also be obtained from your state or Catholic education authority.

Above all, Aboriginal perspectives mean the viewpoints and cultural knowledge and experience of Aboriginal people. The best and most direct learning therefore will come from Aboriginal people themselves.

Many individuals and organisations are available to visit schools in your state. For details contact the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (or equivalent) in your state.

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