Main Topic: Social and Political

Sub Topic: Civil Rights

Aboriginal Australians have been fighting for Civil Rights ever since the colonisation of Australia began. From Little Things Big Things Grow, the song by Kev Carmody and Paul Kelly is a good place to start to launch into a study of the quest for Civil Rights. Most Australians are familiar with the song and all Australians should know about this important story in Australian history. It tells of the determination of the Gurindji people led by Vincent Lingiari in their quest for their basic right to their country, a long fight culminating in an important Reconciliation event. This can lead to enquiry into other struggles for civil rights.

You will find a recording of the song, the lyrics and some teaching ideas in the CD kit Stories of the Heart, Sounds of the Rock and also in the Upper Primary Teachers Book of the Scholastic Reconciliation Kit.

- Research the following subjects and present findings to the class:
  - Vincent Lingiari and the 1966-1972 Gurindji Land Claim at Wave Hill
  - Pilbara Pastoralist Strike
  - Yirrkala Bark Petition
  - Freedom Rides
  - 1967 Referendum
  - 1972 Tent Embassy
  - 1987 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths In Custody
  - 1988 Australia Day Protest
  - Mabo
  - Wik
  - Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody
  - 1995 National Inquiry into Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children
  - Michael Long’s Long Walk to Freedom
  - Dampier/Burrup Peninsula
  - James Price Pt Gas Hub proposal

Sport is an arena where many Aboriginal people have excelled and therefore been “accepted” by the wider Australian society. However many sportspeople have had to fight political battles on the track and field to maintain their basic rights.

- Investigate the following events and their impact upon Aboriginal civil rights. Use pictures of these events as a stimulus for students to write and discuss what they think is happening in the pictures, identifying how it makes them feel.
  - First Australian Cricket team to visit England was an all Aboriginal team which won many games during their tour. [www.abc.net.au/am/stories/s345863.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/am/stories/s345863.htm)
  - Olympic Games 1968 – African American sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos gave the salute for ‘Black Power’, a raised fist held in the air. Australian Peter Norman was also on the podium with the two American sprinters.
  - Olympic Games Sydney 2000 - Cathy Freeman ran a victory lap with both the Australian and Aboriginal flags after winning the 400 metres.
How did this image and its following media coverage differ from that of Cathy Freeman’s win at the Commonwealth Games two years earlier?

- St Kilda v Collingwood 1993 - Nicky Winmar lifted his football guernsey and pointed proudly to his black skin when the opposition supporters were taunting him with racist comments.

- Debate: Did the above events help or hinder Aboriginal Australians in their fight for equal rights?

Many Australians believe that civil rights were first denied to Aboriginal people with the lie of Terra Nullius and the absence of a treaty. They believe that constitutional change is essential to ensure that the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are fully protected.


- What can we learn from the song, Treaty by Yothu Yindi? Watch the clip on YouTube. Read the lyrics and have students write what they understand the song is about in their own words. [http://www.treatyrepublic.net/content/treaty-and-health-larissa-behrend](http://www.treatyrepublic.net/content/treaty-and-health-larissa-behrend)

- Discussion topic: How would a ‘treaty now’ help in the fight for civil rights?

**Resources**


- Kelly,P & Carmody,K. *From little things big things grow*. One Day Hill. Camberwell, VIC. 2008


- *Deadly Feet: Aboriginal sporting heroes* (DVD) VEA/ABC. Bendigo, VIC. 2006. 27min.

- Tatz,C. *Black Diamonds: the Aboriginal and Islander sports hall of fame*. Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW. 1996
