Main Topic: Technology
Sub Topic: Inventions

- View an episode of the ABC program *The Inventors*. Discuss what an invention is and what an inventor does.


- Ask students to identify the person pictured on each of the Australian $ notes and list anything they know about them.
  - Is there any information on the notes to indicate what they may have done to warrant them being there? Remember to look for information in graphics as well as words.

- Find out about David Unaipon on the $50 note.
  - Read about him and his inventions in the *MacMillan Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia* or in other books and websites about Australian inventors.
  - Read about other Aboriginal Australians who have made their mark in some way and create a new Australian $500 featuring that person and including information in graphics.

- Research and list Australian inventors and inventions.

- Some of the following may have already been mentioned by students. If not, create a chart identifying Aboriginal inventions.
  - Boomerang, gidji, fish trap, sewing bone (making clothes), woomera, glue (tool making), didgeridoo, fire stick farming, wildji, soap (soap bush), string (natural fibres), football, mud (insect repellent), paper bark (wrapping food like alfoil), are all examples of Aboriginal inventions.
  - Explain that as Aboriginal cultures are oral cultures, the design and construction of these inventions were not recorded or written down and have instead been passed down from generation to generation through imitation and other means such as dance, storytelling and art.

- Questacon’s website has a page on Aboriginal technology which includes information about inventor David Unaipon and his use of boomerang flight to anticipate the helicopter. [http://www.questacon.edu.au/html/aboriginal_technology.html](http://www.questacon.edu.au/html/aboriginal_technology.html)

- Find out about the incredible range of goods that were traded and the many means by which people Aboriginal peoples travelled prior to colonisation, in John Nicholson’s book *Songlines and Stone Axes*. You will find ideas and activities in the teachers notes: [http://www.alienandunwin.com/_uploads/BookPdf/TeachersNotes/9781741750027.pdf](http://www.alienandunwin.com/_uploads/BookPdf/TeachersNotes/9781741750027.pdf)

- Identify the inventions which are used by the Aboriginal people in your local area. Use a T chart to list those inventions which are used in your area and those which are not used. List and discuss possible reasons why they are not
used, eg.
  ○ If there is no water there could be no reason to invent a fish trap.
  ○ If there are no animals suitable for pulling a cart then there would be no wheels. If there are no wheeled carts there is no reason to have a large road system.

- *Exploring woodlands with Noongars: teaching activities for primary and secondary schools* has valuable information as well as activities and worksheets for experiential learning, including *101 Uses for a Grasstree; Shelters and Structures*.

- Discuss the medical inventions that Aboriginal peoples have made over the years. For example the use of honey. How did Aboriginal peoples know that honey was good for them? Students could view or read an Aboriginal story or dance related to the bee.

- Remember, as often as possible, to invite Aboriginal Guest Presenters into the class or school to assist with sharing information and activities.

**Resources**

- $50 note
- Low, T. *Bush medicine: a pharmacopeia of natural remedies*