MAIN TOPIC: Social and Political

Sub Topic: War and Conflict

Many Australians are unaware of the involvement of Aboriginal people in the armed forces. The study of this aspect of Australian history, especially around ANZAC Day, provides a perfect opportunity for integrating an Aboriginal perspective.

The DET Aboriginal Perspectives Across the Curriculum (APAC) website has a good series of lessons related to a study of wars and particularly ANZAC Day called Unsung ANZAC heroes. apac163-166 http://det.wa.edu.au/education/abled/apac/lessons/lessons_area_se.html

- There are some good DVDs which present information about the involvement of Aboriginal people in the wars and their rights compared to other Australians before, during and after.
  - *The forgotten*
  - *No bugles, no drums*
  - *Harry’s war*

Some questions to discuss and report on after viewing are:

  - Were Aboriginal people encouraged to enlist in the corps?
  - What happened when the Aboriginal servicemen and women returned to Australia?
  - Did they receive equal opportunities such as the Returned Soldiers Resettlement Scheme, Defence Force housing or the Defence Force pension.
  - Were the Aboriginal servicemen and women treated differently to other servicemen and women?
  - How did the Aboriginal people feel about going to war to fight for their country?

- In episode 10 of the ABC Children’s Television series *My Place, Bertie tells* Sid, an Aboriginal soldier, about his plan to buy his brother Eddie a present on his return from the war and they devise a plan to raise the money to purchase the gift. The video clip can be watched or downloaded at:

- The *Indigenous Australians at War* website has a wealth of information for students to use for research. They can find out about fighter pilot Leonard Waters and his kittyhawk Black Magic, read the poem *Coloured Digger*, find a prayer to use at an ANZAC service and much more.

- The Australian War memorial website has information about Reginald Saunders, the first Aboriginal commissioned officer. This could be used as a text for comprehension or information about a report.

- Students could write a letter to their local Returned Servicemen’s League (RSL) expressing their feelings and acknowledgement of the sacrifices made by Aboriginal service men and women.
• Invite a returned Aboriginal service man or woman to come and speak with your class about their experiences and contribution to the armed forces and what it means to them.
  - Preparation: students prepare interview questions
  - Follow-up: students’ reports / stories / pictures are published in the school newsletter or displayed in the school so that the information reaches a wider audience.
  - Homework: students tell their parents what they learned from visitor

• The WA government ANZAC website: [www.anzac.dpc.wa.gov.au](http://www.anzac.dpc.wa.gov.au) has information about the memorial to Aboriginal Servicemen & women of the Victoria Park district.
  - Students in the area could visit the site and discuss why the district of Victoria Park considered it important to honour Aboriginal people in this way. Students could contact the local council and ask someone to accompany them to the site or visit them at school to discuss.
  - Students could identify other memorials to Aboriginal soldiers in their own community or in other parts of WA.

• Investigate who marches on ANZAC Day. Is the Aboriginal flag flown? Discuss or debate whether the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags should or should not be flown.

• Find pictures or photos and other relevant material of the contribution made by Aboriginal people to Australia’s Defence Forces (ADF). Create a ‘memorial’ photo montage to display in your school library or office.

• Research Aboriginal service men and women who provided a foundation to the Aboriginal Rights Movement in the 1930’s?

  **Resources:**

• *Their Spirit our History.* Government of Western Australia, Dept. of Veterans Affairs

• Stasiuk, G. *The forgotten* (DVD). Black Russian/AIATSIS

• *Harry’s War* (Video) Golden Seahorse, 1999. 28min.

• *No bugles, no drums* (Video). Seven Emus Productions, 1990. 46min.

• *Too dark for the light horse: Aboriginal and Torres Strait people in the defence forces.* (Kit) Australian War Memorial, 2000.

• *Ken Colbung* on Message Stick. 2004, ABC TV

• *The Coolbaroo Club.* (Video) Perth, 1995. 55min.


• Hall, Robert A. *The Black Diggers: Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in*

- My place. ABC TV, 2010.