

Caring for Country: Guide to Waterway & Biodiversity Education for School Communities

(Early Years – Primary – Secondary – Tertiary & Educator PD)



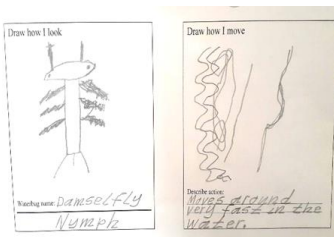
Connecting to Country from the ground up. Our specialist non-Indigenous staff are qualified and experienced to work with your inquiry in Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) to recognise Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country, indigenous biodiversity, and local waterways. We offer professional development for educators. We forefront Australia's complex, ancient Indigenous cultural history, guided by Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc. (VAEAI) and the Department of Education's *Marrung Strategy* to reconsider Eurocentric understandings. We recognise Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) rights and data sovereignty. We can meet in single or a series of sessions, in class settings or in nearby 'outdoor classrooms'.

[N.B. WaterWatch, water testing & litter cleanups is at: <https://www.mcmc.org.au/environmental-education/waterwatch>]



Place: Catchment Map (All occasions)

In the field or in the classroom our giant map of the Merri Creek catchment helps situate and position ourselves with place-based messages about the nature of a catchment. It is a broad-ranging and instructive tool to discuss local places and habitat relationships in numerous contexts.



Big Picture: Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country's Waterways and Catchments (Pre-school – Tertiary)

Draw local creek life and learn about lifecycles and related habitat for waterbugs, local frogs, birds, Short-finned eel, and platypus. Consider cultural connections to Merri Creek such as Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung seasons and language. How are waterways made and affected by urbanisation? What is a catchment and a tributary?



Learning Grounds (All: Early Years, Primary and Secondary schools)

Caring for Country is reinforced in school grounds with local plants. Everyone can join in to consider when, where, how, & which species to create an indigenous garden using master planning, design concepts, maintenance and grants. Make an outdoor classroom that connects to Country based on 20 years of Learning Grounds in schools.



Early Years Stepping Out: A Little Nature Play (Early Years)

We explore nearby places, their insects, bark, and nests. We note seasonal changes. We aim to leave no footprint as we wander and listen to children, respecting nature & Wurundjeri Country.

<https://www.mcmc.org.au/information-publications/digital-resources?view=article&id=985:stepping-out-leadership-beyond-the-kindergarten-setting-webinar&catid=20:past-events>



Early Years Incursions (Early Years)

In-house interactions acknowledge Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country and seasonal change in age-appropriate ways. We focus on plants, habitat and creek life such as platypus, Short-finned eels, rakali, birdlife, and waterbugs with stories and age-appropriate information and activities.



Local context: Climate & Ecological Change (Primary – Secondary)

Climate change impacts the ecosystems of creek ecology and amenity through more frequent and intense droughts, floods and bushfires. How does urbanisation of creek corridors, wetland development, and habitat considerations affect indigenous biodiversity? Consider the extra value of these conversations on guided excursions to local places.



Habitat Relationships & Stony Country: (All)

Consider the volcanic past and present around us and its role in landscape formation. How is fire and burning on basalt Country beneficial? What are the Victorian Volcanic Plains? Explore local stony places and related ecology as places for coexistence and cultural connections: *Stony Stories: Life for people, plants and animals*.



Local Plant Life: Introduced, Native or Indigenous Species? (All)

Consider the concept of Caring for Country, local ecological relationships, such as between Dianella and Blue-banded bees. What is the impact of introduced plants? What is a weed? Learn to identify a plant using elementary botanic drawing with live plant samples in the field or in the classroom. Additional relevant resources include:

See *Trimming Poa* <https://www.mcmc.org.au/trimming-poa-labillardierei-common-tussock-grass-on-wurundjeri-country-ecological-educational-and-cultural-perspectives>

See *Gum Tree Learning: Inspiring primary educators to teach with Australian eucalypts* (<https://www.mcmc.org.au/environmental-education/environmental-education-news/gumtreelearning>).



Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country: Local Bush Foods (All)

Explore and become familiar with some local indigenous 'bush' foods and some of their edible qualities including pre-contact understandings, post-contact impacts, seasonality, and local availability. Consider collecting, safe cooking and preparation for tea, meat, salad, vegetables, berries, and more.



Connection to Country (Primary – Secondary)

Special times of the year offer opportunities to connect to First Nations Australians. We support your connection to Country and delivery of Indigenous content with NAIDOC Week themes in local ways on Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country. Learn about the community's role to restore indigenous habitat through environmental restoration.



Explore Freshwater Eels with an Indigenous Cultural Context (All)

Consider the traditions of aquaculture, and how local Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people continue to make eel traps today and celebrate *iuk* (Short-finned eels) stories. We connect with Indigenous cultural recovery and *iuk* lifecycles as we make *iuk* bodies with grass and wool. We support decolonising inquiry with permission for this activity from Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation.



Stormwater and Freshwater in Urban Places

(Primary – Secondary)

Urban waterways are impacted by development. Consider how different types of pollution (from grass clippings to oil) affect water quality and aquatic life in this interactive session. Examine and compare turbidity from creek samples to think about various methods of inquiry, including measurements and numerical data using nephelometric turbidity tubes.



Birds on Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country: *Kingfishers on Kids* (Primary)

Think about birds: their bodies and lifestyles. Consider Sacred Kingfishers who visit Merri Creek in *Buath Garru* (November) after a long island-hopping journey from Indonesia. You can make your own paper clip-on Kingfisher <https://www.mcmc.org.au/merri-birds-webinar>



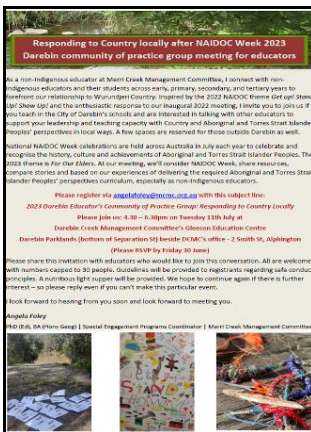
Indigenous Biodiversity SkinArt: Noticing Details and Context (Discuss to suit various situations)

Shapes, textures, lifecycles, form, movement, and reproductive habits are readily discussed during a SkinArt Activity where we paint on you to focus on indigenous biodiversity including platypus, birds and habitat, and more.



Other Published Material: *Creekulum Evaluation and Parking the School: Learning about Country from the Ground Up*

Here's a two page article about MCMC's work with Merri-bek (aka Moreland) Primary School's *Creekulum 2019 Program* (<https://www.mcmc.org.au/information-publications/older-news/mcmc-education-article-in-parks-industry-journal>) describing how public parks are great places for outdoor learning. We use Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics (STEAM), innovatively grounded with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung cultural perspectives, enjoying outdoor classrooms and leaving no footprint. The *Creekulum Evaluation* report is here <https://www.mcmc.org.au/information-publications/digital-resources#environmental-education> and described here <https://www.mcmc.org.au/environmental-education/environmental-education-news/turning-curriculum-into-creekulum>.



Community of Practice Gatherings for Educators: Responding to Country Locally

(For all levels of educator professional development)
We connect with many educators and their students to forefront our relationship to Wurundjeri Country. Inspired by the 2022 NAIDOC theme *Get up! Stand Up! Show Up!* we support your leadership and teaching capacity with Country and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' perspectives in local ways. We consider opportunities to link with key places and times such as NAIDOC Week, share resources, compare stories based on our experiences of delivering the required Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' perspectives curriculum, especially as non-Indigenous educators.

Most interactions are free due to various funding sources. Sessions not covered by funding may be charged pending availability. We look forward to connecting with you:

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*Developing & delivering waterway & biodiversity education & community engagement programs
Acknowledging the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung People as Traditional Custodians in the unceded Country of the Merri Merri*