

The past in the present

Key Learning Area	Unit or lesson title and main focus questions	Most appropriate level and suggested number of lessons
History	The Past in the Present What aspects of the past can you see in the North West today? What do they tell us? What remains of the past are important to the local community? What are the features of and activities in places in North West Sydney? How can we care for places? How can spaces within a place be used for different purposes?	Stage 1
Geography		2 lessons

Teacher briefing

In this lesson students explore places in their local environment through images of memorials, museum exhibits, older houses and other structures that remind us of the past. The focus of the lesson is the Bidjigal Reserve as a significant place in the local community, what it reveals about the past, and how people interact with and care for the place today. Ideally, students would visit the reserve before or after this lesson.

Requirements for this lesson

- Interactive whiteboard and internet connection
- Printed or digital images of memorials, museum exhibits, older houses and other historic structures in the North West Sydney area
- Printed or digital images of native and introduced animals in the local area, available online at www.australianmuseum.net.au
- Printed or digital images of features of the Bidjigal Reserve, available online at <http://www.bidjigal.org.au/gallery.html>
- Printed or digital images of Aboriginal hand stencils and stencils of objects, such as the axe stencil Plate 9, p.22 of the Sydney Metro Northwest Archaeological Salvage Program Report
- Paper plates, 2–3 metre length of fabric, tempera paint and spray bottle for stencil activity
- Printed or digital copies of Activity Sheets 1, 2 and 3.

Assessment

- Any of the individual, pair or group activities in this lesson could be used for formative assessment and feedback on students' demonstration of target outcomes
- A summative assessment activity could be based on the Bidjigal Reserve Trust logo
- Students identify and explain the images that make up the logo.

Key terms and vocabulary

Continuity and change, place.

Syllabus links

History K-10

Stage 1 - The present in the past

(HT1-2) identifies and describes significant people, events, places and sites in the local community

(HT1-4) demonstrates skills of historical inquiry and communication.

Geography K-10

Stage 1 - Features of places

(GE1-1) describes features of places and connections people have with places

(GE1-2) identifies ways in which people interact with and care for places GE1-2.

Web links



Bidjigal Reserve

<http://www.bidjigal.org.au/>

Bidjigal Reserve Gallery

<http://www.bidjigal.org.au/gallery.html>

Bidjiwong Community Nursery

<http://www.thehills.nsw.gov.au/Services/Environmental-Management/Protecting-Our-Environment/Bidjiwong-Community-Nursery>

Bidjigal Reserve Plan of Management

<http://www.bidjigal.org.au/plan.html>

My Wildlife Journal

https://www.thehills.nsw.gov.au/files/sharedassets/public/ecm-website-documents/page-documents/services/environmental-management/my_wildlife_journal_-_exploring_the_bushland_of_the_hills_shire.pdf

Sydney Metro Northwest Archaeological Salvage Program Western Sections Early Works, Indigenous Heritage Services, prepared for Transport NSW, October 2015

Background information

Bidjigal Reserve

Bidjigal Reserve is a bushland Crown Reserve of 186 hectares that reaches into the suburbs of Castle Hill, Baulkham Hills, Northmead, North Rocks, Carlingford and West Pennant Hills. It forms a major part of the catchment of Darling Mills Creek, which flows into the Parramatta River. Bidjigal Reserve was created in an agreement between the NSW Government, Baulkham Hills Shire Council and descendants of the Darug people as part of a Native Title claim. In 2004 Bidjigal Reserve was dedicated to preserve Aboriginal cultural heritage, local flora and fauna and for public recreation. Bidjigal and adjacent reserves together provide a sanctuary for wildlife and a place where people can enjoy picnicking, walking and other recreation activities in a beautiful bushland setting.

The reserve is named for the Bidjigal people who lived in the area before Europeans arrived. The Bidjigal were part of the larger Darug nation whose country stretched across the Sydney Basin. The area would have been a good place for the Bidjigal people to live. There was plenty of fresh water, fish and yabbies in the creeks and a variety of plants and animals for food. There was timber and stone for tools and rock shelters for protection. Some of the rock shelters were decorated with charcoal drawings and hand stencils, but much of this art has disappeared. Stone artefacts and shellfish middens in the reserve have been dated to more than 10,000 years ago, making it one of the oldest known occupation sites in the Sydney region.

People no longer live in the reserve but it is an important place for the protection of a wide range of native plants and animals, including threatened species such as the powerful owl, the tiny eastern bent wing bat, the grey-headed flying fox and a number of threatened plants. Many native animals live in the reserve, including eastern water dragons (bidjiwong), echidnas, bandicoots, swamp wallabies, sugar gliders, brush tail and ring tail possums and koalas. In the past, platypus used to live in the creeks. Introduced animals such as cats, foxes and rabbits have harmed many native animals, by attacking them or competing with them for food. However they are being controlled and the number of native animals is slowly increasing.

Bidjiwong Community Nursery, managed by The Hills Shire Council, is a place where volunteers can learn about the native plants of the area and how to grow them. The nursery produces native plants for its revegetation projects in local parks and reserves. Most of the work in the nursery is carried out by volunteers.

Bidjigal Reserve is managed by a trust of six people, including Darug descendants and local residents. The trustees have a plan of management for looking after the reserve. They employ rangers and have a large number of dedicated local volunteers who do important jobs such as helping maintain the walking tracks, pulling out weeds and planting native plants, guiding visitors and many other activities.

Lesson 1 Resource



Figure 2: Loading fruit at Carlingford Railway Station for transportation to market, c. 1923. This station was initially known as Pennant Hills Railway Station. Its name was changed to Carlingford Railway Station in 1901. Wikimedia Commons: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carlingford,_New_South_Wales

Lesson steps

Step 1 – Class picture study

- Display the photograph of Carlingford Railway Station.
- Ask students to look closely at the photograph, then suggest how we know it is from the past. Prompts include the type of train, the appearance of the station, the activities occurring around the station, type of vehicle being used to deliver and load the fruit, and the landscape in which the station is located
- Display photographs of monuments, museum exhibits and old houses from the local area and explain that these places make us remember the past and think about what it would have been like to live then. Useful photographs for this task are available on The Hills Shire Council website – replace all with: <https://www.thehills.nsw.gov.au/Library/Library-e-Resources/Hills-Voices-Online>
- Group picture study. Students work in groups to select and observe one image and discuss how they think life might have been different then, compared to today. Groups report back to the class
- Who cares for heritage places? Ask students who they think looks after the monuments, museums and old houses and why people would take care of them. Explain the concept of heritage and how important it is for us to know about the past. Explain that some people are paid to look after heritage places but some people volunteer to help. They are all interested in preserving aspects of our past

- Looking for Aboriginal heritage. Explain that before work could begin on the Sydney Metro Northwest, archaeologists, working with local Aboriginal people, looked for Aboriginal artefacts (objects) in the area where the line will be built. They found thousands of stone tools and flakes. Among the tools were sharp points that would have been attached to spears, scrapers, and axe heads that would have had a handle attached. These finds help us understand where Aboriginal people lived in North West Sydney, how long they lived here and how they made their tools.
- Show student photographs of the Aboriginal stone tools below. Ask students what they think happens to Aboriginal objects that are found in excavations. Members of the local Aboriginal community usually make the decision about where artefacts will go. Many of these will go to a museum. Display images of Bidjigal Reserve. Good images are available in the Gallery of the Bidjigal Reserve website at <http://www.bidjigal.org.au/gallery.html> although a Google image search will yield many more.
- Explain to students that this was how the local area looked when Aboriginal people lived here, before the British came. Have students describe the natural features that they see, such as creek, waterfall, cave or rock shelter.
- Explain that the people who lived here were called the Bidjigal people and they were part of a much larger group called the Darug. Many places in the local area have names that come from the Darug language, such as Parramatta and Toongabbie.
- Explain what a reserve is and the particular purposes of Bidjigal Reserve: to preserve Aboriginal cultural heritage and native plants and animals, and to provide for public recreation. See 'Background notes for Teachers' for details.



Figure 3: Ground edge axe found at a hill top site within the Sydney Metro Northwest area and an example of Sydney Region Aboriginal rock art with a mythical figure holding an axe (L-R). *Sydney Metro Northwest Archaeological Salvage Program*, Plate 9, page 22.



Figure 4: Three views of an axe/hatchet made of hornfels. This axe was constructed from a water-worn pebble of hornfels and probably used as both an axe and hammer. Axe grinding grooves have been identified at Caddies Creek, near where the axe was discovered. *Sydney Metro Northwest Archaeological Salvage Program*, Plate 47, page 16.

Step 2 – Native and introduced animals

- Display images of native animals such as koala, kookaburra, owl, bidjigal (eastern dragon), possum, swamp wallaby, echidna. The Australian Museum has excellent online images of animals of the Sydney region at www.australianmuseum.net.au
- Have students identify each animal. Explain the difference between 'native' (or indigenous) and 'introduced' or 'feral' animals
- Students match labels to the native animals. Ask students if they have seen any of these animals around their place? If they have, ask where, if they have not, ask them why not?
- Explain that these animals were once common in the local area, before people came to clear the bush and build farms and houses
- Display images of cats, dogs, rabbits and foxes. Explain that these animals are introduced and they have harmed many native animals by attacking them or competing with them for food or habitat. However, in Bidjigal Reserve, the native animals can live in safety. That is why it is so important to keep cats and dogs in the yard and not let them go into the bush.

Step 3 – Hand stencils

- Display images of Aboriginal hand stencils, a Google image search will yield plenty of examples. Explain that Aboriginal people sometimes decorated the rock shelters with this kind of art. Explain how these were done, by spraying a mixture of ochre and water onto the back of the hand placed against the stone
- Follow the instructions on Activity Sheet 1 (page 56) to create individual hand stencils and/or a class stencil.

Step 4 – How people use the reserve

- Display satellite image of Bidjigal Reserve and surrounding area. Explain that in the past, when only Aboriginal people lived there, the bush covered the whole area
- Students use Activity Sheet 2 (page 57) to colour the reserve area, trace the creeks and three main bushwalks. Students follow instructions to create a key for the map
- Display the Bidjigal Reserve website to show students the volunteer activities people can become involved in to help care for the reserve.

Step 5 – Reflection

Display some of the heritage images used at the beginning of the lesson and ask students to discuss why these places from the past are important to people in the present.

Extension activities

- Plan and plant a 'Bidjiwong Garden' in the school grounds. Seek advice and perhaps also a guest speaker from the Bidjiwong Community Nursery
- Conduct an excursion to Bidjigal Reserve, a range of activities can be found in the publication My Wildlife Journal.

Activity sheet 1

Hand Stencils

Equipment

- Paper plates (optional)
- 2-3 metre length of paper or fabric
- Tempera paint diluted 50/50 with water
- Spray bottle

Steps

Show students a range of examples of Aboriginal hand stencils so they understand what they are aiming for.

Explain how Aboriginal people made the stencils – by filling their mouths with a mixture of ochre and water, then spraying it over their hand held against the rock.

Explain that for safety reasons they will be using a slightly different method.

1. Students place one of their hands on a sheet of paper, trace around it and cut it out.
2. For individual stencils, students place their hand cut-out on a paper plate. For class stencil, students arrange their hand cut-outs on a length of firm paper or fabric.
3. Add diluted tempera paint to a spray bottle.
4. Squirt lightly around each hand. Let dry thoroughly.
5. Remove the hand cut-outs.

Tips

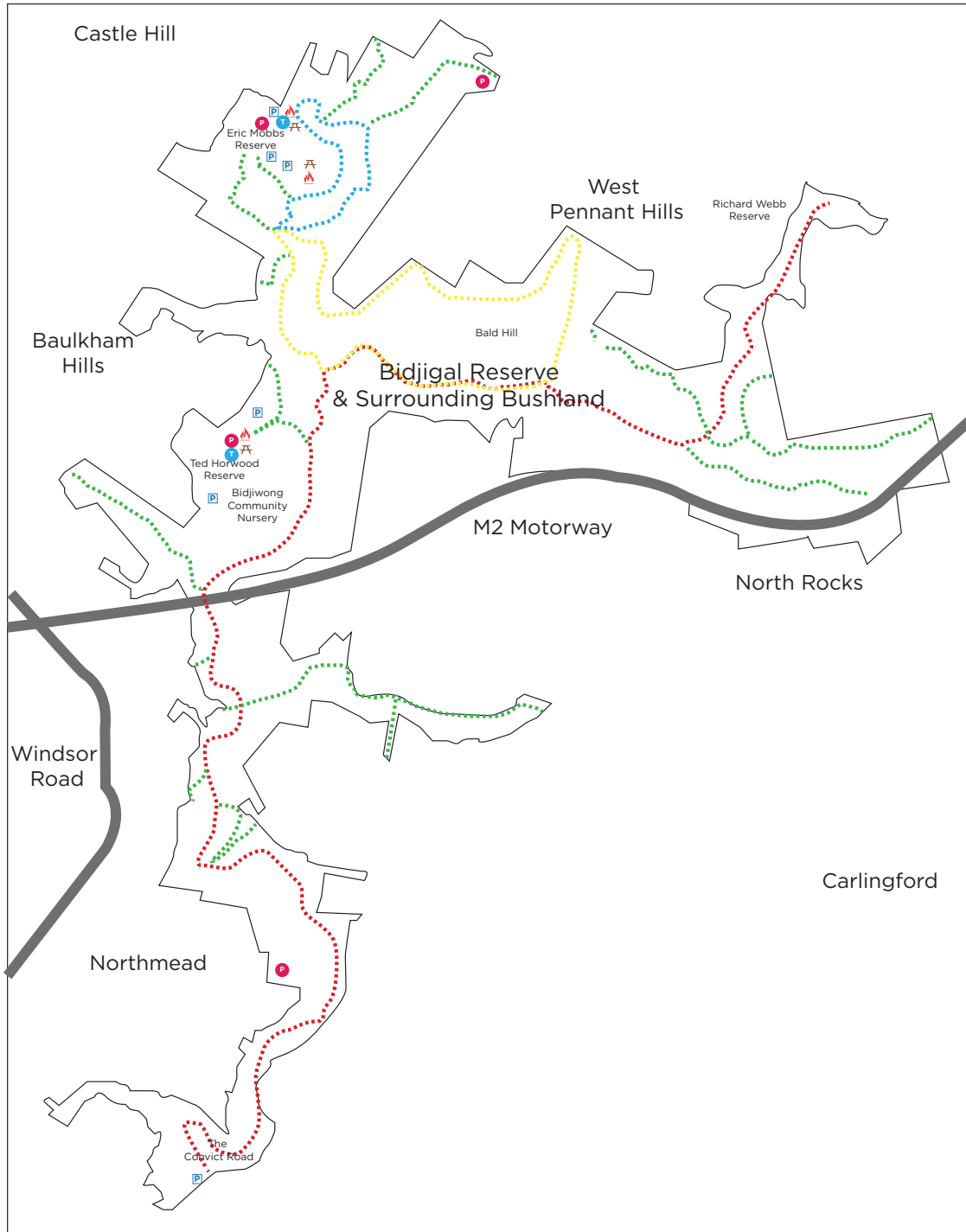
Black, white or yellow paint looks good against cream or ochre coloured paper or fabric.



Figure 5: Aboriginal hand stencils, Red Hand Cave, Blue Mountains National Park, believed to be between 500 and 1600 years old. National Parks NSW: <http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/things-to-do/Aboriginal-sites/Red-Hands-Cave>

Activity sheet 2

Bidjigal Reserve Map



Instructions

Shade reserve land green and built-up area pink.

Create a key showing reserve land and built up area, major roads and three walking tracks, Burraga (yellow); Platypus (blue); Murri-yanna (red); Other tracks (green) include parking, barbeque, picnic facilities, playground and toilet.



Northwest