

Teachers Notes
by Nadia Wheatley
Going bush
Nadia Wheatley & Ken Searle,
in association with 8 Sydney schools
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Recommended for ages 7-12 yrs

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In 2005, author Nadia Wheatley and artist Ken Searle developed a Harmony Project with sixteen students from eight infant and primary schools in Sydney - some Muslim, some Catholic, and some government schools. As well as experiencing the harmony of the natural environment, the children were encouraged to learn about harmony between the traditional owners and the land, and to find harmony in friendship and collaboration with each other. *Going Bush* showcases the participating students' illustration and writing, linked together with art and design by Ken Searle and a narrative by Nadia Wheatley.

The Sydney schools involved in the project were:

Al Zahra College, Arncliffe

Arncliffe Public School

Arncliffe West Infants Public School

Athelstane Public School

Bexley Public School

Our Lady of Fatima, Kingsgrove

Rissalah College, Lakemba

St Francis Xavier's, Arncliffe

After the Harmony Project was concluded, one student wrote: "On this journey I experienced the bush and I experienced life. I found a brand new way to learn, and know new things."

The following teachers notes explain the central activity, 'Learning from land: making a journey' and were written by Nadia Wheatley to explain the teaching and learning that created Going Bush, and to encourage other teachers to try similar projects with their own students.

INTRODUCTION

THE HARMONY PHILOSOPHY

Going Bush is a template for a learning journey which engages with all Key Learning Areas in the primary curriculum, and a number of areas in the secondary curriculum.

The book came out of a short school-based Harmony project. Ken Searle and I wanted to open a pathway for students to experience four types of harmony:

- the harmony of the natural environment
- the harmony in which traditional owners lived with the environment, through preserving the law of the land
- harmony within ourselves, through connecting with the land

- harmony as a group, by working together in a non-competitive way

The educational principles underlying our work with the students reflect the Papunya Model of Education, developed by Indigenous educators at Papunya School (Northern Territory) during the 1990s. This model puts country (in the Aboriginal sense¹) at the core of the curriculum, and values the knowledge which students bring from their homes and communities. In place of the competitive and individualistic outlook that is common in the European educational system, the Papunya Model encourages students to engage in a special type of teamwork. In the *Going Bush* project, we applied Indigenous principles of learning with a group of urban students from multicultural backgrounds.

In following these Notes, teachers should bear in mind that the philosophy embodied in *Going Bush* is far more important than any specific activity. While it would be easy to develop a holistic and cross-curriculum unit of work for a whole term based on *Going Bush*, we have concentrated here on three aspects:

- Making a Journey in the local area
- Making a Journey Map
- Writing Nature Poetry

The learning skills include experiential research as well as text-based research, mathematics, art, design, and writing in a variety of modes.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Learning from Land

All learning begins with the land. It is vital that students learn to identify with and understand the particular 'country' (part of Australia) in which they live. From this we move outwards to learn about our history, and our individual place in our community.

Acknowledging the Traditional Custodians

Find out the name of the Traditional Custodians of your part of Australia. Display a map showing the language groups of the whole continent. In some inner urban areas, the name of the clan is not known, but you can still acknowledge the Traditional Owners.

¹ The following definition, from a label in the Australian Museum in Canberra, is a good one: "Country is the land, water, sky, plants, animals, sites and ancestors of a particular place. Created by Dreaming ancestors, it is looked after by their human descendants. People have rights and responsibilities in their country, which provides both a spiritual identity and an economic base for survival. Country is sacred. Country is life."

Begin each stage of the project by reciting together with students appropriate words of acknowledgement (eg *Going Bush* p.5). Specifically acknowledge clan or language group, if known.

Outcomes

As part of preparation for the journey, a chart of intended OUTCOMES should be negotiated with the students, and displayed in the classroom. For example:

As a group, we hope to develop a sense of

- respect for the land where we all live, and its traditional custodians
- joy in exploring and sharing our place together
- community as a group of individuals from diverse backgrounds
- harmony with each other and our environment

We will together produce a record of our journey and our discoveries about:

- Our environment:
 - The land and the water
 - Indigenous plants and animals
- Our community:
 - Traditional life in our area
 - Post-settlement history
 - How our families came to live here

As individuals, we will also each produce a record of our explorations, showing how we feel about our country (local area), our community and ourselves.²

Learning Journeys

A weekly chart displayed in the classroom makes a timeline that enables students, teachers and parents to know how the journey is progressing. (see *Going Bush* pp 30-31 and notes on learning journeys, Appendix A). Examples of work and photos are featured, as well as ongoing evaluations.

² This could be in the form of a portfolio (loose-leaf binder of plastic sheets) containing personal responses to the project (eg. poetry, research, information text, illustrations, labelled photos, leaves etc). Or it could be a bound journal, or a slide show or video.

LEARNING FROM LAND: PREPARING TO MAKE THE JOURNEY

In this form of experiential learning from land, students learn through their senses, using skills of observation, investigation, and imaginative guesswork before going to other sources of information.

No matter where your school is based, it is possible to make a short excursion that gives students a sense of their country — an understanding of the topography, environment and history of the part of Australia in which they live.

From the centre of any Australian city, a patch of bush is usually no more than half an hour away. (It may just be a native garden in a park.) For a short outing from the classroom, there is probably a gum tree in the school grounds, or a bottlebrush on the nature strip.

However, we do not need to see bush in order to learn from the land. If you can't take students to the bush, then go for a walk around the suburb. Even in the most urban of environments we can find the country hidden beneath a thin skin of buildings and bitumen, by feeling the lie of the land and understanding the movement of water. Wherever we are, we experience the weather and seasons.

PREPARATION FOR THE TEACHER

You may need to do a bit of preliminary research to find out about the local area. Visit the municipal library and talk to the local history librarian. Look at the local map collection. Ask for books about local plants and geology, and for information about the Aboriginal people who are the Traditional Custodians of your area. Get information about local post-settlement history.

You could contact National Parks and Wildlife to ask if there is a nearby park. Or contact the Botanic Gardens in your city. Either organisation may have an Education Officer who can help you.

PREPARATION FOR THE STUDENTS

Taking students on an excursion is a big commitment. As with all learning, the value of an activity is greatly increased if students are prepared beforehand, and if there is follow-up afterwards. As preparation students could do some of the following activities. (Try to do at least one thing from each category.)

DEVELOPING STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING

Develop an understanding of the local country through mapping

Students need to place themselves in the environment of their homes, school, community and local area. Activities could include:

- Each student makes a map, showing location of her home and school, and how she journeys between these places. These maps should be done from memory and without reference to street directory. Aim is to include a lot of writing on the map, noting things of importance to individual student.
(Reference: see my book *My Place* illustrated by Donna Rawlins.)
- Tip: a good idea is to draw a large circle on a piece of A3 paper and draw the map inside the circle. A key and extra information can be put outside the circle.
- Display a large map of your local area on classroom wall. Help students to mark position of school, library, town hall, community centres, places of worship, etc. Each student should mark location of his home on map. Include the place where you will be going for your journey.
- Find your country (part of Australia) on satellite map of Australia.
- Get a compass and orient things in the classroom according to compass points.
- Attach letters (A to H) and numbers (1 to 10) to equidistant points along walls to make a grid map (as in a street directory). Each student to locate desk and place self on classroom map. At home, students could map their bedrooms or gardens in the same way.
- Map outwards into playground. Make a grid-map of school. Play a game in which students are given a grid number and have to orient their way to the right place.
- Discuss topography of the school area. Is it all flat, or are there high places and low places? How could these be marked into the map? (Tip: Don't try to do contours! A note is enough eg 'Hill'; 'Higher place'; 'Gully'; 'The land slopes down here'.)
- Move out from the school playground to a mapping walk of surrounding streets. Be aware of your feet. Are you going up and down hill? Are there any creeks, or even storm water drains? Include written notes about the topography in your map.
- Take students to the highest hill in your area, or arrange to go to the top of a tall building. What can you see? Note compass points. Use binoculars. Students can do

quick sketch-maps of topography on site. Back in the classroom, use these sketches to write a report or short unrhymed poem about what a bird can see.

- Take students to the local library to see old maps (including aerial maps) of your area. Let them find their own houses. Or invite the local history librarian to bring a selection of maps to school.
- In the school library, find books with maps in them. Not just atlases, but also realistic fiction and fantasy novels.
- Ask students to make a map of an imaginary place, where they would like to live. There should be lots of writing on the map. In addition, they can write a report, explaining why they would like to live there, or a tourist brochure, encouraging other people to visit.

Develop an understanding of the role of water in making topography

Water is a magic substance. Not only does it give us life as individuals, but it helps to make the land around us. From playing in the sand as infants, most students know that water runs downhill, and that by its movement it shapes the surrounding soil. However, they often do not grasp the meaning of this knowledge, when applied to country on a large scale.

- Help students understand the shaping of topography by conducting experiments in an area of soft playground soil. They can make miniature channels and creeks, billabongs and rivers. Then in small groups or pairs, write and illustrate a report.
- Discuss different types of water: fresh and salt. (See *Going Bush* pp 8-9.)
- Where does fresh water come from? (Springs as well as sky).
- On a current map of your area, mark the flow directions of fresh water. Get old maps and compare. Are there places where creeks have been covered over or directed into stormwater drains? Where does the water to your suburb or town come from? Discuss whether water shortage could be solved if storm water was saved. In what other ways can water be conserved? In small groups, write reports.

Develop an understanding of seasons in your area.

In traditional times, Aboriginal people across the continent lived according to the seasons, organising food gathering and religious ceremony to suit. When Europeans came, they brought the European model of four seasons with them. In many parts of the continent this does not fit very well.

Try to help students be aware of the weather and seasons for their area, and how this affects rainfall and plant growth.

- Read *Walking with the Seasons in Kakadu*, written by Diane Lucas and illustrated by Ken Searle. How do these seasons compare with the seasons with which students are familiar?
- Keep daily records of temperature and rainfall at your school. Make graphs.
- Discuss seasonal customs (eg Christmas, Easter, Ramadan) in northern and southern hemispheres. Do changes have to be made, to suit a different season?

Develop an understanding of different types of local plants

Help students start to recognise plants in your area. (If you don't know a dahlia from a dandelion, see if there are any parents or grandparents who would like to help.) Learn to distinguish between plants according to their place of origin.

- Plants that are indigenous to your area and those that are native to the continent.³
- Plants that are 'exotic' or introduced. Of the introduced plants, which ones have become problem weeds?

See *Going Bush* pp 6-7; 8-9; 12-13; 16-17; 19; 22; 26-27.

Don't worry if you have trouble distinguishing between indigenous and native plants. What is important is that you divide plants into the two groups: those from this continent, and those from elsewhere.

As activities, you could:

- Go into the school grounds. Together make two lists of plants, according to the two categories.
- Go to the local park or take a walk around nearby streets, looking into front gardens. In small groups, students make similar lists of plants.
- For homework, students can make a list for a home garden (their own or a friend's).
- Discuss the issue of weeds and pests. Is a plant like privet (or morning glory) a pest in a home garden, or only in the bush?

³ The term 'Native plants' means plants that originally grew in this continent. 'Indigenous plants' are specific to a particular area.

- Once you have enough information, compile the lists into a chart. This can be illustrated with leaves, twigs, flowers, seeds. Or use photos or drawings. Or photocopy leaves.
- Arrange for students to visit a local nursery, and discuss plants and soil with nursery staff.

Develop an understanding of local animals, reptiles, birds, insects

Many urban students have a limited understanding of the animal life that is indigenous to their area. Some students think that before settlement, there were crocodiles and koalas from one end of the continent to the other. Working as you have done with the plants, help students find out about the creatures that are indigenous to your area, those that are native to the continent, and those that have been introduced.

- Make lists big sheets of paper of creatures in your area: animals, birds, reptiles, insects and (if appropriate) fish, crabs etc. Divide these into two groups: Indigenous and Introduced.

If your school is in the city, you probably won't have much in your Indigenous category, but there should be some birds, spiders, frogs, lizards, snails, ants, cicadas, and maybe crabs, fish etc.

The Introduced list will include dogs and cats. Discuss the situations in which introduced animals become pests. (When is a cat a pest? How can cat-owners act responsibly?)

- Expand the list of Indigenous creatures that once lived in your area by research in the school library, local library and internet. Write these on your lists, using a different colour. Discuss why they no longer live in the area.
- Once you have enough information, compile the lists into a chart. This can be illustrated with photos and drawings.

Develop an understanding of how Aboriginal people lived in your area.

Aboriginal Studies tends to become difficult, dull and inauthentic when we discuss Aborigines across Australia as if they have a single collective experience and history. In this project, the aim is to help students connect with the traditional owners of the part of Australia where students live. You may need to do a bit of research about the history and way of life of Aboriginal people from your area. Your local library should have resources.

- From your mapping of local sources of fresh water, discuss with students where people traditionally camped. Talk about the seasons. Would different camp sites be

used in dry weather and wet weather? (See *Going Bush* pp10-11; 22-23; 24-25) Are there local caves or rock overhangs?

- From your charts of indigenous plants and animals, make a further chart of what the local people ate, what they used to make coverings and shelter, canoes and containers, fishing lines, tools etc. Remember that you are only concerned with your area. There will be big differences according to whether you live on the coast or inland, in the north or south of the continent. Compare your results with information about the coastal people in *Going Bush* pp 6-7; 10-11; 12-13; 22-23; 24-25.
- Discuss the division of labour in Aboriginal society. Go through the lists of food, and work out which foods the fathers and uncles caught, and which food was got by the mothers and aunties and children. (See *Going Bush* p. 24)
- Research the role of fire in Aboriginal life: for warmth, for cooking, for farming and hunting. Write fire poems. (See *Going Bush* pp. 10; 25)
- Read Daniel's story of catching yabbies (*Going Bush* p. 11.) Do any of the students ever go fishing with their families, or do they gather any wild food? Do students with families from other countries have stories about getting wild food? (Fish; greens; mushrooms; rabbits...)
- With the class, read *When I Was Little, Like You*, by Mary Malbunka. This wonderful picture book tells the story of a childhood in the Western Desert. It is crammed with information about food-gathering (including division of labour).

LEARNING FROM LAND: MAKING THE JOURNEY

Before making the journey, you should do a preliminary walk of the track (or streets) where you are going to take the students. Make a note of things to point out.

If you can prepare a single page checklist of things for students to observe and tick off, the benefit will be enormous. For example:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| • 3 types of gum tree | • a spider's web |
| • 2 types of wattle | • a sewer pipe |
| • 1 camphor laurel tree | • a flood level sign |
| • 3 weeds (fill in names) | • a quarry |
| • 3 types of bird (fill in names) | • a cave |
| • a bird's nest | • a house built of stone |

During the walk, it is useful to take photos (preferably on a digital camera) for reference later. These should be of plants and rocks etc as well as of students. In addition, it's useful if a couple of disposable cameras are available, so that students without cameras can take photos.

Resources for teachers:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• oil based crayons (for rock rubbings)• charcoal (for sketching)• rolls of big paper and textas (for doing journey maps on site) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a roll of masking tape (for labelling plants)• camera(s)• ? a pair of binoculars |
|---|--|

Resources for students:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• hats, food and drink• a clipboard with plain paper and some lined paper | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a couple of small plastic bags and takeaway containers (for collecting)• lead pencils |
|--|--|

AT THE START OF THE WALK

- Acknowledge the traditional owners. (See *Going Bush* p. 5)
- Use a compass to find orientation. As well as determining compass points, determine where things are. (Eg In which direction is the centre of the city? The school? Do students know roughly where their homes are?)
- Encourage students to make a quick sketch (either map or drawing) to record what they want to remember. (See sketch of factory tower, *Going Bush* p. 4. This was done on site.)
- Discuss the senses used in scientific observation: sight, touch (especially through feet), smell, hearing, imagination.

DURING THE WALK:

Study soil and rocks.

- Feel rocks. Look at them. Look at anything growing on them or in crevices (from lichen to ferns to big trees). (See *Going Bush* pp 16; 19; 20; 23.) Collect a few small rocks or pebbles to take back to classroom.
- Find a large area of rock (platform or escarpment) and make rock rubbings with oil-based crayons on paper. (See *Going Bush* pp. 20-21)

- Collect samples of soil in a few different places. Is it all the same, or are there different types? Is it sandy? Is it sticky like clay? What colour is it? (See *Going Bush* pp 12; 16-17; 26 for varieties of soil in a small area.)

Study indigenous and introduced plants

During the walk, draw students' attention to different plants and trees (both native and introduced). Discuss why they should not pull samples from living plants. (This can damage good plants, and can spread weeds.) However, if appropriate, the teacher could collect one sample of each leaf to take back to classroom. (Discuss with National Parks and Wildlife office.)

- Students can collect leaves, cones, bark, twigs, etc *that have fallen to the ground*. They can use masking tape to write labels.
- Take back to school for further study. (Tip: keep in the fridge.)
- Students can feel the bark of different trees. Do any have gum or sap oozing? Are any blackened with fire? (See *Going Bush* pp 26-27.)
- Draw students' attention to plants that have become weeds. (Tradescantia, lantana, blackberry etc.) How could those plants have got there?

DURING REST BREAKS

Experience the environment

Ask students to close their eyes for a couple of minutes and concentrate on what they can hear and smell, and the feel of air on their faces... (See *Going Bush* pp. 14-15). There will probably be city sounds as well as bush sounds.

Then in small groups, students make a particular sound they have heard; eg one group is wind in the trees; another group is aeroplanes; or birds; or rustling in the bushes; traffic; trains.

After a few minutes practice, bring groups together and conduct as an orchestra. Students love this activity, and it's a great way for them to experience quiet and then let off steam.

Study the country through sketching

- At a suitable place, interrupt the walk. Break students into different groups, and assign each group to a different tree (eg gum; wattle; banksia...). Sit down and make a sketch of the tree. In the course of drawing it, groups should discuss its shape, bark texture, where and how it is growing etc. When sketching is complete, each group

should be able to describe its tree in words to the rest of the class. This can be used for writing poetry, either now or back in classroom. (See Appendix 2.)

- Find a high point with a view. While students have a break from walking, ask them to do a drawing of what they can see and what they would like to remember.

The aim is not necessarily to produce beautiful art, but to use sketching as a way of focussing the mind and eye upon the topography, and imprinting the land into the students' memories. See *Going Bush* pp. 22-23.

Study indigenous animals, reptiles, birds, insects...

On the bush walk, you will probably not see any large animals, but you should see or hear some birds, lizards, ants, and spiders, and you might hear frogs or cicadas, or the splash of a fish.

- While students are resting, discuss the role of trees and fallen logs and plants in providing shelter for living creatures. Ask if students can see the homes of any creatures, or places that would make good homes, for example hollow logs, holes in trees, spider webs, ant nests, frog ponds. (See *Going Bush* p. 9; 18-19; 23.) Which creatures use built environments? Do all birds use the same sorts of nests? Do different trees attract different creatures?

Study how the traditional owners lived in harmony with the land

While students are resting, discuss the way in which the Traditional Owners used the plants in your area for food, medicine, shelter, boats, fishing lines etc. You will find information regarding plants of your area in the local library, but some plants were used right across the continent (eg grass seeds and wattle seeds for flour). There are a lot of clues in *Going Bush*, (see pp. 6-7; 10; 12-13).

- What animals would have lived here, and been hunted or gathered? (Remember grubs, lizards etc as well as game meat.)
- Ask students to shut their eyes and imagine this bit of country before European settlement. Quietly prompt them to think where the closest fresh water is and what materials are available for shelter (cave or overhang; or paperbark or brush for making a windbreak or shelter). In imagination, 'see' the animals travelling through the bush to fresh water at the end of the day. 'See' the trees and bushes in season, covered with berries and seeds.

- Map this little patch of country, showing where or how the Traditional Owners would have found water, shelter and plant and animal food. (See *Going Bush* pp. 10-11 and 24-25.)

This activity can be done even if your journey is done in suburban streets. Indeed, you can do it in the school playground.

AT THE END OF THE WALK

Make a Journey Map on site

If you have time (say, half an hour), and if the circumstances are suitable, it is wonderful to make journey maps on site, while the journey is fresh in students' minds. (See Appendix 1)

BACK AT SCHOOL: FOLLOW-UP

MAKE JOURNEY MAPS AND WRITE STORIES ABOUT THE JOURNEY

It is vital to follow up the journey by making a journey map. If you don't do this, you will lose a lot of the value of the walk in a very short time.

If you were not able to make a Journey map at the end of the walk, do it in the classroom — the next day, if possible. Use the photos you have taken to jog memories.

Over the next couple of weeks, follow the steps in Appendix 1 to develop a story plan and write individual journey stories.

EXPAND STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING

Expand understanding of soil and rocks.

- Compare the natural soil which students collected on the journey with garden soil in which compost or fertiliser has been added. Conduct experiments between different soils in regard to water retention and nutrients. Try growing something quick (eg pumpkin seeds) in pots of different soils.
- Students can write poems about rocks (See *Going Bush* pp 20-21; 23.)
- Help students find out from books about the geology of your area, to expand their information from experiments. Students can write reports on their research. (See *Going Bush* p. 20)
- Research the use of rock as a building material in your area. Can students find local houses that use stone in foundations, walls, paths, or entire houses? Take photos.

Expand understanding of indigenous plants

- Use the leaves etc which students have collected for botanical drawing. This is one of the best ways to understand plants. See the various leaves and flowers in *Going Bush* pp 3; 8-9; 12-13; 14-15; 16-17; 18-19; 6-7; 16-17. These were all done by students.
- Write poems about trees and plants. (See Appendix 2.) Use the leaves, bark etc that have been collected to jog memories.
- Plant some indigenous (local) plants at school. If there is no room for a tree, try a small bush or ground cover. You can grow something in a pot.
- Discuss the interaction between trees and water in the environment.
- Through research, find out the sort of trees and bush that covered your area before European settlement. What happened to it? Why? (See *Going Bush* p. 22.)
- Research the plants which the first European settlers brought to your area. Why did they bring them? Which ones were suited to the environment? Which ones failed? Have any become pests? How do problem weeds spread into the bush? (See *Going Bush* pp. 9, 17, 19)

Expand understanding of indigenous animals, reptiles, birds, insects

Find some wild living creatures and observe them. Does your school or a nearby school have a frog pond you can visit? Is there a local nature reserve? It is always possible to see birds and to find lizards, spiders or ants. Expand observation with research.

Research the animals which the first European settlers brought to your area. Why did they bring them? Which ones were suited to the environment? Which ones failed? Have any become pests? Are there still grazing animals in your area? If not, why not? What happened to the native animals when other sorts of animals were introduced? What happened to the native animals when the bush was cleared? In pairs or small groups, students write and illustrate reports.

Expand understanding of how the traditional owners lived in harmony with the land

- Discuss the Law of the Land... the way living things interact with each other, and with their habitat and seasons. How did the Aboriginal people fit in with this? Read the students' poems and statements *Going Bush* pp. 17; 25. Workshop poems on this subject with your students.
- Help students to research Aboriginal tools and technology used in your area. There is not a uniform history. (Eg fish equipment was not used in desert. The returning

boomerang and didgeridoo were not used everywhere.) The museum should be able to help.

- Draw pictures of tools and weapons and write a report. (See *Going Bush* pp. 10-11; 24-25.)
- Get students to make and use tools. Using a sharp stone as a hand-tool, try to shape a piece of soft wood. Get some grass (or wheat) seeds and try to crush them by grinding one stone against a bigger stone. Make string from vines, or soften some lomandra in an oven and try to plait it for baskets.
- Find out about the games that Aboriginal children played. (See *Going Bush* 13; 28) Make a paper-bark ball and a skipping rope from vines, and play with them.
- Using pieces of paperbark, twigs, string and PVC glue, make models of shelters, canoes, food containers. Set up a little campsite in a corner of the classroom or playground. (See *Going Bush* pp. 10-11.)
- Invite local Aboriginal people to visit. You should offer to pay them, just as you would pay a visiting author. Remember that some Aboriginal people find direct questions rude. It is better to invite someone to tell a bit of her or his own life story about growing up, going to the bush, family etc. Students can show the visitor the research they have been doing into the country. When the visit is over, students work in small groups to write down what they remember the visitor saying. Then compile these memories into one account.
- Discuss the long time in which Aboriginal people have lived in the continent and looked after the land. An acceptable estimate is 50,000 or 40,000 years. Be aware that some Aboriginal people believe that their ancestors were created as part of the land, rather than immigrating here. Discuss in terms of the comparatively recent time frame of the history of Ancient Egypt, Rome, etc.
- Read some authentic Aboriginal Dreaming stories, and (if appropriate to your students) compare with Creation stories from other religions and cultures (eg Genesis; Greek myths).
- As a mathematical exercise, make a timeline of Aboriginal history. For this you need 50 metres each of red, black and yellow wool, roughly plaited or twisted together to make one strand. Take the coloured wool to the playground. Lead students to mark off 50 lengths of one metre in chalk on asphalt, and lay down the wool strand to represent 50,000 years in which Aboriginal people have looked after the land. This activity must be done before the first activity in the next section.

DEVELOP AN UNDERSTANDING OF POST-SETTLEMENT HISTORY, INCLUDING STUDENTS' OWN PLACE IN HISTORY

By now, students should be starting to feel 'at home' in the environment of their local area. Now you can help them develop a sense of themselves and their families as part of history, and as part of the community.

- Add post-Settlement history to the timeline made above. If one metre = 1000 years, discuss how to represent the 220 or so years since settlement began at Sydney Cove 1788. Use blue wool to add to end of red black and yellow timeline. Let students see the vast difference. Wind the wool around classroom walls, as a reminder.
- Bearing in mind the length of Aboriginal history, it is now possible to make a separate timeline for post-settlement history on a series of charts or a long roll of paper. Mark off decades from 1788 until today. Include a few significant dates (eg 1788 Settlement at Sydney; 1854 Eureka Stockade; 1901 Federation; 1915 Gallipoli).
- Now fill in information about the coming of settlement to your area: When were the first settlers and/or first land grants? When was your town/suburb established? When did roads and railway come? Electricity and sewers? When was your school built?
- As well as doing research from books, take students out of the classroom to look for plaques on buildings and/or gravestones in cemetery. Do rubbings of plaques and gravestones.
- Into the framework of the history timeline, students can fill in the date when their family came to live in the area. (Not the date their ancestors came to Australia.) This is not a competition. It does not matter if someone's family arrived yesterday. What is important is they are here now, making history in the present.
- Read *The Papunya School Book of Country and History*, by students and teachers at Papunya School in the Western Desert. In particular, look at the timeline. How does this compare with the timeline which your students have made of the post-settlement history in their area?

EXTRA READING:

Diane Lucas, illus Ken Searle, *Walking with the Seasons in Kakadu*. (Allen and Unwin 2003)

Mary Malbunka, *When I was Little, Like You*. (Allen and Unwin 2003)

The Papunya School Book of Country and History, (Allen and Unwin 2001)

Nadia Wheatley, illus Donna Rawlins, *My Place*, (Collins Dove 1987)

Nadia Wheatley, illus Andrew McLean, *Highway*, (Omnibus 1998)

ABOUT THE WRITER AND ILLUSTRATOR

NADIA WHEATLEY began writing full-time in 1976, after completing postgraduate work in Australian history. Her published work includes fiction, history, biography and picture books. She writes for adults as well as children and young adults.

Nadia Wheatley's books have won many awards, including the New South Wales Premier's Children's Book Prize (1983 and 1986), the Children's Book of the Year for Younger Readers (1988), the *Age* Book of the Year (Non-fiction) for 2001 and the New South Wales Premier's History Award (Australian History) for 2002.

Since the beginning of her career, Nadia Wheatley's books have reflected the author's commitment to social justice. Her first book, *Five Times Dizzy*, was often described as the first multicultural children's book in this country. In print continuously for over twenty years, it is now reaching its second generation of readers.

My Place, illustrated by Donna Rawlins, showed Australia's history through the eyes of many different children who lived in one place over hundreds and even thousands of years.

In 2006 Nadia publish the anthology, *Listening to Mondrian*. Including some stories from the award-winning collection *The Night Tolkien Died*, this new collection was specially chosen to appeal to secondary students.

KEN SEARLE grew up around the Cooks River, in the south-west suburbs of Sydney, where he still lives, and where *Going Bush* is set.

He is best known for his large works in oil on canvas, depicting the suburban and industrial areas of a number of Australian cities.

A self-taught artist, in the mid-1970s Ken Searle began regularly exhibiting works in oil on canvas at Watters Gallery in Sydney, where he has held thirteen solo exhibitions. He has also held exhibitions at a number of commercial galleries in Melbourne, and at various regional galleries. His paintings are held in the collections of the Australian National Gallery, the Art Gallery of South Australia, the National Gallery of Victoria, the New South Wales Art Gallery, and many regional galleries and private collections.

Ken has also worked as a book designer and illustrator. In 1994 he illustrated *Lucy in the Leap Year*, by Nadia Wheatley. More recently, he designed *When I was Little, Like You*,

by Pintupi/Luritja artist Mary Malbunka. In 2003, Ken illustrated and designed the picture book *Walking with the Seasons in Kakadu*, written by Diane Lucas.

Over the period 1998-2001 Ken Searle and Nadia Wheatley worked as consultants at the school at Papunya in the Northern Territory. Their role was to support Anangu staff and students in the development of materials for the school's Indigenous curriculum. As part of this work, they helped forty staff and students produce their own book, the multi-award-winning *Papunya School Book of Country and History*.

APPENDIX 1

JOURNEY MAPS

Journey Maps are a great way to record observations, tell a story, make a story plan and write a story. Ken Searle and I have successfully developed journey maps with students of all ages in many parts of Australia. The activity works particularly well with NESB (non-English speaking background) students and students who have difficulty with literacy, because words can be replaced with pictures or symbols, and the story of the journey can be told orally.

The journey being mapped could be a bushwalk or a walk around a suburb but the method can also be adapted to an excursion on bus or train.

A journey map should be done as soon as possible after a journey is completed. (In the *Going Bush* walk, we did the maps in the bush, at the conclusion of the walk.)

STEP 1: DEVELOPING A JOURNEY MAP

Explain to students that the aim is not to produce a beautiful piece of finished art, or even a complete story of the journey. The map is a way for the group to put down what they collectively want to remember. At the same time, there is room for individual comment. (Someone may have seen a bird or a billboard that others did not see.)

Show students journey maps in endpapers in *Going Bush*, and pp. 28-29. A different journey map is in the endpapers of my book *Highway* (illustrated by Andrew McLean.)

Draw students' attention to common map devices such as a Compass, a Key and symbols or icons, and the shading of areas (eg an area of houses could be shaded red. An area of forest could be shaded green. It is not necessary to draw all the houses or trees.)

The compass: If you did not draw attention to compass points during the walk, you can do this now. It is not necessary to orient maps to north (see compass in endpaper *Going Bush*.)

Divide students into groups of about 6:

- For each group, take a piece of paper from a roll (about 2.5 metres by 1 metre is a good size). Roll it out on a big table or (if necessary) the floor or ground. Students need textas and possibly coloured pencils.
- First, on pieces of A3 paper folded or cut in half lengthways (to make a thin rectangle), students make a rough sketch of the shape of the journey (eg a straight line, a loop, a rectangle). Compare with others in the group. When a rough shape is agreed upon, this is copied in ratio (more or less) onto the big paper.
- Put the START of Journey at left side and END at right. If possible, put the pathway of the journey along the centre of the sheet.
- Then students start filling in the big items of topography — hills, gullies, water sources. If it is an urban map, a couple of main roads and railway line may be appropriate.
- Add major landmarks, eg big gum tree, town hall, quarry, railway station...

- Students add in things that they observed, discussing and helping each other to remember. These things can be described in pictures (especially symbols and shading) and/or words. If appropriate, items collected on the journey can be stuck on. (A gum leaf or piece of bark. A train ticket or museum catalogue.)

As teacher, your role is to walk between groups, encouraging students to put into written words the memories that can't be expressed in pictures. For example:

- 'The leaves of this gum tree smelled like peppermint. The bark felt like string.'
- 'We could hear the birds in the tree tops but we couldn't see them.'
- 'We all played ball here. It was fun.'
- 'There was a big black dog behind this fence. It barked at us when we walked past. Some people got a bit scared.'
- 'This factory smelled like burning rubber.'

When each group has finished its journey map, groups in turn present the stories of their journeys to rest of class.

After this, allow groups to re-form for a few minutes, to revise and edit their maps if they want to.

The finished journey maps can be displayed, and this can be the end of the activity. Or journey maps can be used as a basis for developing a story plan for a written and illustrated story.

STEP 2: USING A JOURNEY MAP TO DEVELOP A STORY PLAN

A day or two after the journey, teachers can lead students in developing a combined master map, as a basis for a story plan (or story board).

As preparation, familiarise yourself with the students' journey maps. Work out how the journey could be divided into a series of maybe eight to twelve stages. (I would not recommend more than twelve stages. With very young students, four stages might be enough.)

Before class begins, draw the shape of the journey onto another piece of long paper. Attach this to the whiteboard, in such a position that it will be easy to draw and write on.

With the class, revise the idea of Journey Maps as a way of telling a story. Again show students the journey maps in the endpapers of *Going Bush* and *Highway*.

Students sit in their groups with their maps. Groups take turns to suggest things for teacher (acting as scribe) to include in the master map. As before, work from large topographical items, through major landmarks, to things of personal interest. The master map doesn't need to include everything from the group maps, but it should include a range of things, express the use of all five senses, and use symbols, a key, shading etc. Work quickly, in workshopping mode. Don't worry about making the map look beautiful. It is a draft.

When the master map is ready, discuss with students how they might break the journey (story) into stages that show the main points of action or interest, like little chapters. (You should already have determined the number, but be a bit flexible if necessary.)

Make a rough list at the side of the map. Revise and edit. You can collapse a couple of story points together. Not every stage will cover the same distance, or have taken the same time.

When the list is determined, mark off the stages on the map, and number them.

Then on a new piece of long paper, write the storyboard of the stages under easy-to-remember headings.

STEP 3. INDIVIDUAL WRITING OF JOURNEY-STORIES.

Students now use this storyboard to write and illustrate their individual stories of the journey.

Cut A3 paper in half to make long rectangles. Give one to each student to reproduce her own story plan — using the master story plan as a basis, but adding anything she particularly wants to remember, either in words or symbols.

Students are now ready to write their own stories of the journey. For this, we like to give students special little books, with only as many pages as there are stages. Each stage should fit on one page. Probably only half of each page (or less) will be used for written text. I give out small pieces of lined paper, and students show their writing to me for revision and editing and copying, before it is stuck in the finished book. (This can of course be done on computer.)

Now that students have been on the journey and done the journey maps and the storyboard, they will not forget it. The actual writing of the story can be done over a number of days.

Illustrate with drawings, photos taken on the journey, or collage (tracings of leaves, a bus ticket etc).

An annotated map of the journey should be included, as endpapers or as back cover.

Make a cover for the book when it is finished.

APPENDIX 2

WRITING POETRY ABOUT NATURE AND DESIGNING POEMS ONTO THE PAGE

The aim is to encourage students to connect with nature and themselves for a moment, and to express this connection in a short unrhymed poem.

The written text is then used as the basis for an exercise in layout and design.

EXAMPLE: TREE POEM:

Step 1: First show students some poems from *Going Bush* (eg Hannah's poems pp 4 & 7; Liam's poem p. 8; Chaltu's poem p. 15; poems by Dora and Fatima p. 27).

Step 2: Then take students out of the classroom and find a tree — preferably indigenous or native. Identify its name.

- All touch the bark. If there is trunk exposed beneath the bark, touch that too. Touch the soil beneath the tree. Collect bark, leaves and twigs, seedpods and flowers.
- Sit in a circle around the tree. As a group, observe and describe the shape and colours.
- Then all sit for a minute with eyes closed in complete silence.
- At this point teacher should quietly speak to students, inviting them to experience (still with eyes closed) the temperature, the movement of air, the scents (bush or city), the sounds (bush or city).
- Bring twigs, leaves, bark etc back to the classroom.

Step 3: Immediately lead the students in workshopping an appropriate vocabulary about the tree. Write the suggested words on the whiteboard in the following categories:

NOUNS	trunk, branches, bark, twigs, leaf, leaves, roots. seedpods, flowers
VERBS	grow, reach; move, dance, rustle, murmur, shake
ADJECTIVES	green, minty, dry, brittle, smooth, hard, rough, dark, papery, aromatic, slender, thick, tall, clumpy
ADVERBS	gracefully, gently, quickly, slowly

Explain that the poems should express one moment in the life of the tree (as just experienced) in 3 to 5 lines.

Please discourage students from trying to use rhyme, and forbid the acrostic poem. Both forms may have their place, but not here! (The problem with these forms is that students force the meaning of their poem to make a word rhyme or to fit an acrostic letter.)

Tip: to keep poems short, hand out short pieces of paper (one third of A4).

Step 4: When poems are finished, help students to check repetitions, and to compress further if appropriate.

Copy neatly or type out revised poems.

Step 5: Now place the text of the revised poem onto a clean piece of unlined A4 paper, turned sideways (landscape orientation). Move it around and plan where to put the illustrations.

On separate pieces of paper do illustrations of tree or tree parts, or trace around leaves, or photocopy leaves to make a silhouette. Cut out illustrations; move around on paper with text. When satisfied with design, stick down.

Step 6: Then photocopy the black and white images onto coloured paper. Colour illustrations if appropriate.

This activity can be repeated for other parts of nature eg:

Sky; Fire; Water; Earth; Rocks; Wind; Birds; Ducks; Frogs; Lizards; Ants; Wattle Flowers.

Always begin with actual experience, but for some of these, you might use photo references as well.

Be creative with textures and colours of paper. Eg for rock poems make a rock rubbing with oil crayon on paper, placed on a textured rock. Make a veneer of paperbark for a tree poem. Use red tissue paper for fire poem, feathers for a bird poem and cotton wool clouds on blue paper for sky poem.

FROM NATURE TO HARMONY

When students have established confidence in writing nature poems, and when they have developed a sense of trust in each other, read some of the Friendship and Harmony poems in *Going Bush*. (pp 2; 17; 18; 29)

Workshop an appropriate vocabulary and encourage students to write poems on the subject of friendship, or harmony between people and the environment. These can be a little longer than the Nature poems but again dissuade students from using rhyme, and especially from writing acrostics.

Learning from experience, experiencing nature with all their senses, workshopping the language and images to express their experience and finally shaping their words and illustrations on the page – students will be amazed and proud of what they can make!