

# WATCH THEM SOAR!

## INDIGENOUS ART AND THE AFL







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### TEACHERS NOTES:

This lesson supports student learning by introducing an artwork that depicts aspects of Marngrook, the early form of Australian Rules Football. The accompanying pages provides guided instruction and discussion prompts.





## LEARNING INTENTION:

To explore the symbolism behind the artwork entitled “Watch them Soar” created by Indigenous artist Tahnee Lynette, a proud Yorta Yorta, Gunditjmara and Wemba Wemba woman.

## SUCCESS CRITERIA:

- I can learn about the elements of line, shape and colour.
- I can discuss the symbolism used to portray the origins of Australian Rules Football.
- I can share my understanding about what I think the artwork represents.
- I can learn about how the AFL honours Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People through participation of significant events linked to the game.

# INSTRUCTIONS:

As a class, work sequentially through the presentation. Follow the discussion prompts and create opportunities for individuals to reflect on the art and the symbolism depicted.

As a follow up activity, students may like to have a printed copy of the art and cut up the features to label each part; demonstrating their understanding of the features.

# FOR FURTHER LEARNING:

1. **OPTION 1** - “Everyone Matters” is a teaching and learning program that comprises four lessons about Indigenous Games, highlighting concepts about inclusion, diversity and cultural identity.
2. **OPTION 2** - Students can complete a written response to an image that depicts Nicky Winmar, a Noongar man and a player for the St Kilda Football team, who stood in front of spectators who had been yelling out racial abuse, saying the words “I’m black and I’m proud to be black”. This iconic moment prompted action to combat racism in Australia. Students can choose how to respond to this image, either writing a letter to Nicky, creating an awareness campaign about racism, imagining that they are a spectator at the game and write a recount or pretending to be a news reporter witnessing this event.
3. **OPTION 3** - Students can research the significant events that honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples such as Sir Doug Nicholl’s Round and The Long Walk.





# CURRICULUM LINKS

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM VERSION 9.0		THE ARTS: VISUAL ARTS
Foundation to Year 2	Respond to visual artworks and consider where and why people make visual artworks, starting with visual artworks from Australia, including visual artworks of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples ( <a href="#">ACAVAR109 - Scootle</a> )	
Year 3 and 4	Identify intended purposes and meanings of artworks using visual arts terminology to compare artworks, starting with visual artworks in Australia including visual artworks of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples ( <a href="#">ACAVAR113 - Scootle</a> )	
Year 5 and 6	Explain how visual arts conventions communicate meaning by comparing artworks from different social, cultural and historical contexts, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artworks ( <a href="#">ACAVAR117 - Scootle</a> )	
VICTORIAN CURRICULUM F-10		THE ARTS: VISUAL ARTS
Foundation Level	Respond to visual artworks and consider where and why people make visual artworks ( <a href="#">VCAVAR020</a> )	
Levels 1 and 2	Respond to visual artworks, including artworks by local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, by describing subject matter and ideas ( <a href="#">VCAVAR024</a> )	
Levels 3 and 4	Identify and discuss how ideas are expressed in artworks from a range of places, times and cultures, including artworks by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples ( <a href="#">VCAVAR028</a> )	
Levels 5 and 6	Identify and describe how ideas are expressed in artworks by comparing artworks from different contemporary, historical and cultural contexts, including artworks by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples ( <a href="#">VCAVAR032</a> )	
NSW CURRICULUM		THE ARTS: VISUAL ARTS: APPRECIATING
Early Stage 1	VAES1.4 Communicates their ideas about pictures and other kinds of artworks.	
Stage 1	VAS1.4 Begins to interpret the meaning of artworks, acknowledging the roles of artist and audience.	
Stage 2	VAS2.4 Identifies connections between subject matter in artworks and what they refer to, and appreciates the use of particular techniques.	
Stage 3	VAS3.4 Communicates about the ways in which subject matter is represented in artworks.	



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## **STUDENT TASK:**

You may want to do a group acknowledgement of Country, where you ask the children to repeat each line as follows:

**HERE IS THE LAND, HERE IS THE SKY  
HERE ARE MY FRIENDS AND HERE AM I.  
WE STAND TOGETHER, HAND IN HAND  
TO RESPECT AND ACKNOWLEDGE THE  
TRADITIONAL OWNERS OF THIS LAND**





**“ WATCH THEM SOAR! ”**



This is an artwork entitled 'Watch them Soar' was created by Tahnee Lynette Day, a proud Yorta Yorta, Gunditjmara and Wemba Wemba woman.







**LOOK CLOSELY AT THE ARTWORK. WHAT DO YOU SEE?**







**THE ARTWORK IS CALLED “WATCH THEM SOAR”,  
WHY DO YOU THINK THIS IS THE NAME OF THIS ART  
PIECE?**



**DISCUSS THIS QUESTION AS A CLASS AND ESTABLISH WHAT THE WORD ‘SOAR’ MEANS.**



**I SEE ...**



**DISCUSS AND CREATE A LIST OF WHAT YOU SEE IN THE ARTWORK,  
FROM THE IMAGES, SHAPES, COLOURS, TEXTURAL ELEMENTS.**





**I THINK...**



**DISCUSS OR RECORD WHAT YOU THINK IS BEING REPRESENTED IN THE ARTWORK.**



**I WONDER ...**

**DISCUSS WHAT THIS ARTWORK MAKES YOU WONDER ABOUT.  
CREATE A LIST OF QUESTIONS YOU HAVE ABOUT THE ART; THE MEANING AND SYMBOLISM.**





# THE STORY OF THE ARTWORK

- The artwork features Bungil the Eagle.
- In the Kulin nation in central Victoria, he was regarded as one of the ancestral creators and represents transformation.





# THE STORY OF THE ARTWORK

- The symbolism within the artwork is the transformation from Indigenous forms of the traditional game of Marngrook, to the growth of the game of Australian Rules Football across the country.





# THE STORY OF THE ARTWORK

The grey colour on the shapes represents the grey possum skins used to make Marngrook balls. The red diamonds are symbolic of red leather footies. The pointed shapes are to show the diverse range of people who come from all across the land to play.

The blue rounded shapes show the bodies of water around the country. The key styles of lines, geometric shapes, animals and x-ray design are also to showcase the Kulin nation style of artwork.





## DID YOU SPOT ALL OF THESE SYMBOLS AND PICTURES HIDING IN THE ART?

Take another look at the artwork and focus on the symbols and imagery.

- What makes up the body of the eagle?
- Discuss the symbolism of the Indigenous Flag, particularly the colours. Did you see it hiding in the eagle?
- Why do you think the sun is represented as an oval shape?







The background of the slide is black and features several colorful Indigenous art patterns. These include concentric squares, zig-zag lines, and wavy lines in shades of red, orange, yellow, and blue. The patterns are scattered across the slide, with some larger and more prominent than others.

# LET'S LOOK AT HOW THE AFL HONOUR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE

Reflect as a class about the significance of Indigenous artwork linked to Australian Rules Football. Where have you seen the AFL acknowledge and celebrate Indigenous Australians?





# SIR DOUG NICHOLLS ROUND

- The Sir Doug Nicholls Round (Indigenous Round) celebrates and highlights the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to the game of football and to our country.
- The round celebrates the relationship between the game and Indigenous Australia by connecting AFL fans to Indigenous cultures. Traditionally, Sir Doug Nicholls Round is held in mid to late May (approximately Rounds 10 and 11 of the AFL competition).





# THE LONG WALK

- Twenty years ago, Michael Long walked from Melbourne to Parliament House in Canberra to increase awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues. The Long Walk was born and it has become an iconic Australian event.
- The Long Walk festivities at Alexandra Gardens commence at 12:00pm . There is a Welcome to Country and a number of cultural activities and performances occur throughout the day.
- At 5:30pm, Long Walkers make their way to the spectacular Dreamtime match, held at the famous Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) between Essendon and Richmond, the centrepiece of Sir Doug Nicholls Round.





# SIR DOUG NICHOLLS' ROUND CELEBRATES

THE CONTRIBUTION OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITIES TO AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL  
AND OUR COUNTRY.



The specially designed shirt is often a feature of this round. AFL Umpires wear a uniform celebrating the contribution of ABORIGINAL and TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER people.



# UNDERSTANDING THE SYMBOLISM IN INDIGENOUS ART

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The designs for the uniform often comes from Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander students or artists. The 2022 design came from two students from Worawa ABORIGINAL College.



**KYANNA MCINTOS, Anula NT**

In my painting I show a representation of my grandfather shown as the goanna. Three spears represent my name (MUPA) in my Djambarrpuya language.



**KYLINDA ALICE Santa Teresa, NT. Arrernte.**

My painting is about everyone coming together as one and being proud of who they are. The different symbols are about people from different places coming together to be part of one tribe. I have done the painting because it's a part of where I am from and the language group that I speak. Every background in this painting has a meaning such as dreaming and shield patterns. The main design shows tribes coming together.



# MATCH DAY BALL – SIR DOUG NICHOLLS ROUND

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The Sherrin footballs are also printed with a traditional design.



**Artist – LULU COOMBES;**  
**Tiwi ABORIGINAL Artist**  
**(NT Tiwi Islands)**

- LULU creates art in the traditional Tiwi style, developing her artistic skills and cultural knowledge by watching and listening to her elders.
- The ball features a Spear representing strength, Armbands which represent culture, footprints which acknowledges past, present and future INDIGENOUS men and women who have walked the AFL path as players or volunteers and a Kulama design which means a celebration of life past, present and future.
- LULU paints, makes screen prints and LINO prints, as well as pottery.
- LULU has previously designed Hawthorn Football Club's INDIGENOUS Guernsey for the 2018/2019 SIR





**AFTER WORKING THROUGH THIS PRESENTATION, HOW DO YOU FEEL  
ABOUT THE 'WATCH THEM SOAR' ART PIECE?**

**WHY DO YOU THINK THIS IS THE NAME OF THIS ARTWORK?**

**REVIEW THESE QUESTIONS AND RE-ESTABLISH THE DEFINITION OF THE WORD 'SOAR'.**

**AS A FOLLOW UP ACTIVITY, STUDENTS MAY LIKE TO HAVE A PRINTED COPY OF THE ART  
AND CUT UP THE FEATURES TO LABEL, DEMONSTRATING THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF  
THE FEATURES.**









# THE AFL

## OUR VISION

Our vision is that the AFL community will be known as a place where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are respected and celebrated and that they have pathways to successfully and equitably participate at all levels, not only in our game, but in a reconciled Australia.

More than 90,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples contribute to the AFL. Our great game unites the country extending from grassroots in urban, regional and remote communities, to the big stage at the elite level. Football creates a foundation to build stronger relationships and bridge the gap between Torres Strait Islander peoples with the wider community. By deepening these relationships the AFL can continue to actively demonstrate institutional commitment to the reconciliation agenda and show respect for the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in football and the life of the nation.

