



IN MY BLOOD IT RUNS

History.
Learning.
Love.
Resistance.

“A powerful
essential portrait of
Australian youth”

MIFF

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A STUDY GUIDE BY ATOM
in collaboration with Keren Shlezinger,
Reconciliation Australia, NIYEC, AHRC, Shark Island



Acknowledgement of Country

The Filmmakers and project partners would like to pay respects to the Arrernte and Garrwa peoples of Mpartwe and Borroloola where this film has been made, and also to the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Lands on which this film is being screened and/or studied. These Lands always have been, and always will, be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lands.

In My Blood It Runs was made on Arrernte Country. Felicity Hayes, Senior Traditional Owner of Mparntwe, is the Executive Producer of the film and she offered the film team ongoing support, security and permission to respectfully make this film on Arrernte Country.

Thank you to the *In My Blood It Runs* Advisory Board who read, discussed and redrafted this guide over many months. Special thanks to Alanna Raymond, Tessa Keenan, Stephanie Woerde, Esma Livermore and Julie Bover from Reconciliation Australia, Alex Shain from Shark Island, Maria Katsabanis from Australian Human Rights Commission, Renee Phillips from National Indigenous Youth Education Coalition, and Keren Shlezinger. We thank you deeply for ideas, writing, and expert advice on the development of this ATOM Guide.

CONTENT HYPERLINKS

- 3** BEFORE YOU START
- 5** ABOUT THE FILM
- 7** CURRICULUM APPLICABILITY
- 9** PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITIES
- 14** WATCH THE FULL FILM
- 22** TAKE ACTION



Professional Development – A Note for Teachers

The truths of our history - either from before or after invasion - have not been typically taught in schools and universities. If they have, they may have been taught in ways that marginalise First Nations perspectives. As such, it is not uncommon for educators to feel unsure about how to approach teaching about the violence committed against First Nations peoples, nor about how these ongoing injustices can continue to have an impact today.

In My Blood It Runs recognises this challenge and encourages educators to engage in learning and reflection, which may involve processes of “unlearning” and “relearning”— challenging assumptions and recognising that what was previously taught in schools about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories and cultures may have been inaccurate or incomplete.

Our film team and education partners strongly encourage educators (and anyone interested) to further their understanding of themes in the film by taking up the following Professional Development opportunities from our incredible partners the Stronger Smarter Institute and Reconciliation Australia before engaging with our classroom resources with students.

We also encourage you to check out our campaign #LearnOurTruth (www.learnourtruth.com) led by National Indigenous Youth Education Coalition (NIYEC).

Stronger Smarter Institute

The Stronger Smarter Institute is the largest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education initiative in Australia. The Institute aims to directly improve the educational outcomes for Indigenous Australians and, by extension, all Australian school children. Every student deserves to feel safe, respected, valued and happy, and to dream, believe and succeed. Unfortunately, this is not always the case in Australia. Many children face a school culture of low expectations and negative perceptions of who they are. As a result, their self-esteem, achievements and ambitions

can be, and often are, deeply corroded. The [Stronger Smarter Institute](#) provides schools with the tools and support to address entrenched beliefs and assumptions, embed [high expectation relationships](#) and create Stronger Smarter classrooms.

In My Blood It Runs strongly encourages teachers to learn more about the Institute’s [Leadership Program](#) or take part in their free accredited [Online Learning Course](#) before introducing this ATOM Guide in the classroom.

Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Education

Reconciliation Australia’s [Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Education](#) program supports all schools and early learning services in Australia to foster a high level of knowledge and pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and contributions.

The Narragunnawali [online platform](#) is free to access and provides practical ways to introduce meaningful reconciliation initiatives in the classroom, around the school and with the community. Through the Narragunnawali platform, schools and early learning services can develop a [Reconciliation Action Plan \(RAP\)](#), and teachers and educators can access [professional learning](#) and [curriculum resources](#) to support the implementation of reconciliation initiatives.

In My Blood It Runs strongly recommends that teachers engage with the professional learning resources on the Narragunnawali platform before facilitating film viewing and learning activities with students and school communities. The most relevant professional learning resources to the film are contained under the following RAP Action pages on the Narragunnawali platform:

- [Take Action against Racism](#)
- [Curriculum Planning](#)
- [Cultural Competence for Staff](#)
- [Opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students and Children](#)
- [Recognise and Respect Rights](#)
- [Inclusive Policies](#)

In My Blood It Runs Professional Learning Resource

As a project partner for *In My Blood it Runs*, Reconciliation Australia’s Narragunnawali team have co-developed a specific professional learning resource shaped around the film. Visit the [Education page on the *In My Blood it Runs* website](#) to learn more about how you can freely access the *In My Blood It Runs* professional learning resource for teachers.



Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) outline what teachers should know and be able to do throughout their career progression, and include specific expectations pertaining to teachers' development of programs inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and communities, as well as programs informed by a knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and languages. APST Focus Areas that are of particular relevance to engaging with *In My Blood It Runs* are:

- **Focus Area 1.4:** Develop teaching programs that support equitable and ongoing participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students by engaging in collaborative relationships with community representatives and parents/carers.
- **Focus Area 2.4:** Provide opportunities for students to develop understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and languages.

See the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers RAP Action page on Reconciliation Australia's Narragunnawali platform to learn more about addressing these Focus Areas of the Professional Standards for Teachers.

Creating a safe environment for studying the film

It is important that all students feel safe and respected when studying the themes of *In My Blood It Runs*. The strategies below can help students and teachers support positive learning while studying the film:

- Use [respectful and inclusive language](#) when sharing information and ideas.
- Actively listen to others' experiences and perspectives.
- Frame comments as one's own ("I think") and avoid forceful language ("You should").
- When responding to others within the discussion, challenge *ideas* ("I have a different perspective..."; "I have some questions around that suggestion") rather than *people*.
- Share feedback with thoughtful consideration, drawing on strengths-based language and a positive attitude to others.
- Remember that Djuwan is a real person. Be respectful when discussing him and his family.
- Appreciate privacy – each participant has the right not to share.
- Demonstrate an active respect for the personal and cultural needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff and/or visitors in the room.
- Step up and step back. Know when to let others share who may not always speak up first so that diverse voices and perspectives can be considered.
- Allow adequate time to reflect on and/or debrief discussion items.

Note: Make sure you know the students you are teaching and their specific needs, aspirations and experiences. If you have First Nations students in your class, consider checking in with them and their families before the lesson so that both they and you can best prepare for the lesson, with a focus on socio-emotional and cultural safety.

Explain that they are not obliged to share information but are more than welcome to speak up if they want to contribute or give feedback on the lesson.

Activity

Invite students to work in pairs or small groups to brainstorm some expectations to help everyone to feel safe and respected in the class (for example 'listen attentively'). Record on the board. Invite pairs to now choose one expectation from the list and brainstorm what it might look and feel like in practice. Display students' guidelines in the classroom while they work on the film.

LEARN MORE

The following Reconciliation Australia resources may further support you in shaping a culturally safe classroom and film screening/discussion spaces:

- [Cultural Safety and Respect in the Classroom Narragunnawali professional learning resource](#)
- [Evaluating Resources Narragunnawali professional learning resource \(and accompanying Evaluating Resources Guide\)](#)
- [Tackling Tokenism Narragunnawali professional learning resource](#)
- [Facilitating Culturally Safe and Respectful Film Screenings and Discussions Guide](#)
- [Guide to National Reconciliation Week 2019 \(see 'How do you have honest, respectful conversations?', p. 16\)](#)
- [Truth-telling Symposium Report \(see the draft Principles of Truth-telling, p. 23\)](#)



ABOUT THE FILM

Synopsis

Director Maya Newell's acclaimed feature documentary, *Gayby Baby*, follows the lives of four children in same-sex families during the fight for Marriage Equality and sparked a national debate in Australia. *In My Blood It Runs* tackles another heated topic: how the Australian education system is failing Indigenous children. Like *Gayby Baby*, it places the missing voice of children front and centre.

In My Blood It Runs follows the life of ten-year-old Arrernte/Garrwa boy Djujan and his family. The film charts the challenges Djujan faces as he meets the overt and concealed prejudices still perpetuated against Aboriginal people/First Australians in Australia today: in school, at home and on the streets of Alice Springs. *In My Blood It Runs* reveals the ways marginalised First Nations communities negotiate the colonial culture and keep their identities and cultures alive through self-determination, the revitalisation of languages and cultural practices.

Ten-year-old Djujan is a child healer, a good hunter and speaks three languages. Yet Djujan is 'failing' in school and facing increasing scrutiny from the police. As he travels perilously close to juvenile detention, his family fight to give him a strong Arrernte education alongside his western education. We walk with him as he grapples with these pressures, shares his truths and somewhere in-between finds space to dream, imagine and hope for his future self.

Filmed candidly and intimately, *In My Blood It Runs* depicts a real world on the fringes of Alice Springs through Djujan's eyes. Djujan's family light candles when the power card runs out, often rely on extended family to drop around food and live alongside the ingrained effects of colonisation and dispossession. Every day in the classroom, Djujan's strength as a child-healer and Arrernte language

speaker goes unnoticed. While he likes school, his report card shows a stream of 'E's, which make him feel stupid. Education is universally understood as a ticket to success, but school becomes a site of disempowerment for Djujan and he starts running away from the classroom.

On his ancestral homeland surrounded by his family, Djujan is focused, engaged and learning. We begin to see his Country as a classroom – a place where resilience can grow and revolution is alive. The practice of self-determination through the education of young people becomes the foundation for Djujan's future.

But in the Northern Territory, where 100% of detained youths are Aboriginal, the forces of modern colonial society work powerfully to marginalise Djujan into a life of disempowerment. Djujan's learns that not only has he inherited the burden and trauma of history and dispossession of his land, but also the strength, resilience and resistance of many generations of his people that holds the key to his future.



Director's Statement: Maya Newell

Over the last decade, I have had the privilege to be repeatedly invited to make films alongside Elders and families at two Arrernte organisations in Alice Springs, Akeyulerre and Children's Ground. Over these years, I sat with Elders as they recorded songlines for their grandchildren for fear they may be lost, seen kids visit their Country for the first time and heard children speaking confidently and fluently in their first, second or third language.

I was shocked to learn that many of these children felt like failures at school. And it's no surprise, when Australia and in many Western countries, First Nations children are only taught in English and their successes are measured by western values. The motivation for this film is encapsulated by Margaret Kemarre Turner who said to me "they are always telling us to make our children ready for school, but when will they make schools ready for our children".

Rarely do we see into the inner lives of First Nations children growing up as they navigate the rich and complex bicultural society they are born into. *In My Blood It Runs* is a film to dispel the conventional myths of failure, trauma and dysfunction of First Nations families and instead amplify the resilience, strength and love that is often exempt from our screens.

The Making of *In My Blood It Runs*

In My Blood It Runs was shot in Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Sandy Bore Homeland and Borroloola Community, Northern Territory, Australia over the last three years. Maya, the director, has been making films alongside Arrernte Elders and families at an NGO called Akeyulerrre Healing Centre for about a decade. These years of prior work with Arrernte families making films about the empowering work they are doing to educate their children in language, culture and identity is the foundation of *In My Blood It Runs*, which arose organically from those relationships.

The intimacy of the film and the delicacy with which it has represented the complex struggles of Djuwan and his families lives has been achieved through a deep and collaborative process between the filmmaking team and the family.



When I made my first feature documentary *Gayby Baby*, I learnt that children are rarely given the agency to tell their own stories. But when they do, people stop and listen. When *Gayby Baby* was banned in NSW schools by the government, the film spurred a national debate about the welfare of Gayby children. *In My Blood It Runs* takes on another heated national debate about how Australia treats Indigenous children and presents a missing voice – the voice of the kids themselves.



It has been a privilege to have had the opportunity to learn from Djuwan, his family, our advisors, producers and community partners that sit behind this film. I have often been inspired by Djuwan's innate moral code and his heartbreaking wisdom. He is growing up to be a strong young man and I believe his truth-telling has much to teach 'Australians'.

Over these years filming *In My Blood It Runs* it is clear to me that we need systematic and radical change. Consistently, it was the solutions offered by Djuwan's own family that were what ensured his safety not the systems that were meant to uplift him. I have no doubt that it is the solutions created by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities that will be what leads to real change if our leaders have the courage to listen.

The Arrernte and Garrwa families in the film and the board of Advisors to the film are core partners and have been involved in robust consultation at all stages of production. This has been an ongoing process to ensure that everyone has deep understanding of the terms of involvement and has control over how their stories and images portrayed.

Some of the core pillars of the film's protocols include: fair credits for 'Collaborating Directors' and 'Advisors', formal recognition of Traditional Owners of the land being filmed, frequent and ongoing consultation, shared profit with those represented, a team structure that has both First Nations and non-First Nations members as the core creatives, professional development for the film team in the form of capacity building for First Nations film team members and exposure to cultural safety in filmmaking concepts for non-First Nations team members.

To build the filmmaking approach that felt right for this film, our team drew on the leadership of many First Nations filmmakers and community initiatives nationally and internationally who have fought for the right to have agency over their own stories. It is vital that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia tell their own stories.

For further advice on filming in and with Indigenous communities we highly recommend you refer to Screen Australia's Pathways & Protocols: a filmmaker's guide to working with Indigenous people, culture and concepts document available at; <https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/about-us/doing-business-with-us/indigenous-content/indigenous-protocols>

CURRICULUM APPLICABILITY

Given the complexity of the themes it explores, *In My Blood It Runs* is most suitable for use with senior secondary students (Year 10-11).

While teachers are encouraged to consider the [cross-curriculum relevance](#) of *In My Blood It Runs*, the film's content, themes and messages are most clearly linked to the following areas within the Australian Curriculum:

YEAR 10 ENGLISH

Language

- Understand how language use can have inclusive and exclusive social effects, and can empower or disempower people
- Understand that people's evaluations of texts are influenced by their value systems, the context and the purpose and mode of communication

Literature

- Compare and evaluate a range of representations of individuals and groups in different historical, social and cultural contexts
- Identify, explain and discuss how narrative viewpoint, structure, characterisation and devices including analogy and satire shape different interpretations and responses to a text

Literacy

- Analyse and evaluate how people, cultures, places, events, objects and concepts are represented in texts, including media texts, through language, structural and/or visual
- Identify and analyse implicit or explicit values, beliefs and assumptions in texts and how these are influenced by purposes and likely audiences

YEAR 10 LANGUAGES – ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER LANGUAGES FRAMEWORK

- Describe and discuss the relationship between people, community and Country/Place, and how individuals and groups demonstrate connections to areas of land and sea/water and their rights and obligations with respect to those areas
- Investigate and discuss how connections between Law, story, ceremony, visual design, people and Country/Place are demonstrated and manifested in individual and community behaviour
- Reflect on and discuss the relationship between language, culture and identity, and how this shapes and reflects ways of communicating and thinking
- Investigate programs, initiatives and techniques that keep Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages strong

YEAR 10 CIVICS AND CITIZENSHIP

- How Australia's international legal obligations shape Australian law and government policies, including in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples
- The challenges to and ways of sustaining a resilient democracy and cohesive society

YEAR 10 GEOGRAPHY

- Reasons for, and consequences of, spatial variations in human wellbeing in Australia at the local scale
- The role of international and national government and non-government organisations' initiatives in improving human wellbeing in Australia and other countries

YEAR 10 HISTORY

- The origins and significance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including Australia's involvement in the development of the declaration
- Background to the struggle of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples for rights and freedoms before 1965, including the 1938 Day of Mourning and the Stolen Generations
- The continuing nature of efforts to secure civil rights and freedoms in Australia and throughout the world, such as the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)

YEAR 10 MEDIA ARTS

- Evaluate how technical and symbolic elements are manipulated in media artworks to create and challenge representations framed by media conventions, social beliefs and values for a range of audiences
- Analyse a range of media artworks from contemporary and past times to explore differing viewpoints and enrich their media arts making, starting with Australian media artworks, including media artworks of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and international media artworks





YEAR 11 MODERN HISTORY

- The nature of the relationship of Indigenous peoples with their Land and their response to perceptions of, and feelings about, the arrival of the colonisers
- The basis on which the colonists claimed sovereignty and imposed control, including conquest, treaty and the doctrine of 'terra nullius'; and the consequences for the legal status and land rights of Indigenous peoples
- The nature of government policies and their impact on Indigenous peoples, for example protection, assimilation (including the Stolen Generations), and self-determination
- The role of individuals and groups who supported the movement for Indigenous recognition and rights, including the methods they used and the resistance they encountered
- The economic, political and social challenges and opportunities Indigenous peoples have faced, including the role of cultural activity in developing awareness in society
- The achievements of Indigenous peoples at the end of the 20th century, including the right to vote, land rights/ native title, and attempt at reconciliation
- The continued efforts to achieve greater recognition, reconciliation, civil rights, and improvements in education and health

GENERAL CAPABILITIES

In My Blood It Runs is also particularly relevant to the following General Capabilities: **Intercultural Understanding**, which involves students learning about and engaging with diverse cultures in ways that recognise commonalities and differences, create connections with others and cultivate mutual respect; and each of the **Personal and Social Capabilities**, particularly **Social Awareness**, which involves appreciation of diverse perspectives and understanding relationships.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HISTORIES AND CULTURES CROSS-CURRICULUM PRIORITY

Through the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures Cross-curriculum priority](#), the Australian Curriculum works towards addressing two distinct needs in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education:

- that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are able to see themselves, their identities and their cultures reflected in the curriculum of each of the learning areas, can fully participate in the curriculum and can build their self-esteem
- that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority is designed for all students to engage in reconciliation, respect and recognition of the world's oldest continuous living cultures

LEARN MORE

To learn more about how your school can effectively embed the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures Cross-Curriculum Priority, visit the [Embed Cross-Curriculum Priority RAP Action](#) page on Reconciliation Australia's Narragunnawali platform.



PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITIES

1: Children's Voices and Rights

“Adults never listen to kids, but we have important things to say.”

– Djujan, 10 years old

Djujan Hoosan is the child that stars in *In My Blood It Runs*. He is an Arrernte and Garrwa Aboriginal child, which means he has homelands near Alice Springs at Sandy Bore and also in Borroloola, both in the Northern Territory. He is a *Angangkere*, which means a Traditional Healer, a role which was passed on to him from his Country and great-grandfather.

In My Blood It Runs is not just a film; it is also a **social change campaign** that is driven by Djujan's family and builds on the film's release. To support Djujan and his family's vision for change to be heard, the film-making team partnered with the Australian Human Rights Commission and Human Rights Law Centre to foster an opportunity for Djujan to speak at the United Nations.

In Sept 2019, at 12 years old, Djujan became the youngest person to address world leaders at the United Nations Human Rights Council.

Watch this video of Djujan's formal address:

<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/stop-jailing-10-year-olds-indigenous-boy-addresses-un-on-australia-s-youth-detention-laws>

Read Djujan's full speech:

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/sep/12/i-am-cheeky-but-no-kid-should-be-in-jail-this-is-why-i-addressed-the-un-at-just-12-years-old>



Reflective/Discussion Questions

In his UN speech, Djujan says 'Adults never listen to kids, but we have important things to say'. Do you think children's voices are heard in the international media? At home? In the classroom? In the community? Why?

When, where and how does society hear children's stories? Which stories are told? Who speaks on behalf of children? Are children usually the authors of their own narratives?

What important things might young people know or be able to talk about, that could provide new perspectives for adults to learn from?

How might a child's story of their family, community and life experiences be different from stories told from an adult's perspective? How and why might there be a difference between children's interpretations of the world compared to adults' interpretations?

Why is it important to actively recognise and respect children's rights to freedom of expression? You might like to consider your response to this question in reference to Article 13 (1) of the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child](#), which specifies that "The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice."

Why is it important to actively listen to the voices of children and young people, including the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people?

Activity

If you had an opportunity to address world leaders about a matter that is important to you, what would you say? Why? How? Consider writing a letter or speech to the United Nations, perhaps in reference to the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#). What would you like the adults to know? To think about? To do?



2: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voices and Rights

“This man came on a ship. He was the first man on Australia... The first white man. The Aboriginal people told them to go and find another land, because this was their Land. But the people didn’t listen to them. Aboriginal People survived here... The first ones that had the magic was the First People, that had the land. History runs straight into all the Aboriginals. It travels all the way through from my blood pipes all the way to the brain.”

- Dujan, 10 years old

Alongside the importance of actively listening to children’s voices, actively listening to the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and appreciating First Nations sovereignty and self-determination, is paramount. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices and perspectives have often been excluded, marginalised, mistranslated or silenced in the stories that mainstream Australia tells about its past. Today, many Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander people continue to fight for their voices to be included in the national narratives, systems and policies from which they have historically been excluded since colonisation.

The [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(UNDRIP\)](#) highlights the imperative to actively recognise and respect the unique rights and voices of First Nations peoples, with Article 16 making explicit reference to the imperative for “full freedom of expression,” and Article 31 reflecting the particular importance of cultural expression.

Furthermore, the 2017 [Uluru Statement from the Heart](#) called for both the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution, as well as a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between Australian governments and First Nations peoples, alongside processes of historical [truth-telling](#). As expressed in the Uluru Statement from the Heart, “*Makarrata is the culmination of our agenda: the coming together after a struggle. It captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination.*” (Uluru Statement from the Heart).



Activity

Read the 2017 Uluru Statement from the Heart, and consider the quote below in the context of the full Statement:

https://www.referendumcouncil.org.au/sites/default/files/2017-05/Uluru_Statement_From_The_Heart_0.PDF

“Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, and possessed it under our own laws and customs. This our ancestors did, according to the reckoning of our culture, from the Creation, according to the common law from ‘time immemorial’, and according

to science more than 60,000 years ago.

This sovereignty is a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or ‘mother nature’, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty. It has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.”

(Uluru Statement from the Heart)

Reflective/Discussion Questions

The film is titled *In My Blood it Runs*, and the above quote from Djuwan expresses that “*History runs straight into all the Aborigines. It travels all the way through from my blood pipes...*”

What do you think Djuwan is saying about the connection between the past, present and future, or between history and the individual? What does the quote suggest about the intergenerational and often embodied impacts of historical experiences – whether positive or negative? What does it suggest about the unique stories and perspectives that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can share?

What do you think ‘sovereignty’ means, based on the quote from the Uluru statement above? What might be some of the connections between ‘voice’ and ‘sovereignty’?

For approximately how long have First Nations peoples been connected – physically, culturally and spiritually – to Lands, seas and skies across the Australian continent? How might these longstanding and continuing connections justify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander claims of sovereignty?

Captain James Cook and his crew engaged with First Nations communities in 1770, and declared that lands across the continent of Australia were ‘*terra nullius*’ (‘land belonging to nobody’). The legal fiction of *terra nullius* was upheld by colonial Australia until it was dispelled by the historic [Mabo decision](#) in 1992. Why do you think the sovereignty of those First Nations communities was not recognised by Cook? And how has this lack of recognition impacted on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, cultures, and connections to Country? Why is recognising and respecting [rights to Land](#) important to [recognising and respecting](#) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights more broadly?



Activity

Engage with the Narragunnawali [Languages Map Activity \(Secondary\)](#) to build understanding of how the continent/nation of Australia is comprised of hundreds of distinct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander geo-cultural Nations.

Who and what does the phrase, “*the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands*” refer to?

What do you think the expression “sovereignty was never ceded” means, and why is it important to actively understand this expression?

What does the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander linguistic-cultural communities across Australia suggest about the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities, cultures and perspectives more broadly? Why is it important to understand that there is no single ‘Aboriginal’ identity, culture, or perspective, and to actively listen to and learn from the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices accordingly?



3: Arrernte Language (Arrernte Angkentye)

“There are words used to describe the features of a Country, like a human spine.

A hill or a mountain is a backbone. Because that’s the part that holds you together.”

– Margaret Kemarre Turner OAM, Advisor and great grandmother

Arrernte Language is one of 250+ distinct [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages](#) spoken in Australia at the time of colonisation. In 2014, the [National Indigenous Languages Survey report](#) estimated that, following unjust colonial practices such as explicit condemnation of First Languages use, and forced separation of children from their families and speaker communities, only 120 of Australia’s First Languages were still being spoken, with just 13 of these being considered ‘strong’. Approximately 100 of those languages still spoken are considered severely or critically endangered, meaning that they are at risk of becoming no longer spoken or ‘sleeping’. The damage done to the state of First Languages in Australia is, in many ways, reflective of the damaging, inequitable relationships that have existed between non-Indigenous and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout history.

About a quarter of these languages are, nonetheless, seeing significant increases in levels of use as a result of language revival programs. There is also an emergence of new formally recognised languages and dialects such as creole/Kriol languages and Aboriginal English. Aboriginal English is the dialect that Djuwan mostly speaks in *In My Blood It Runs*, although Djuwan is also a learner/speaker of English, Garrwa, Aboriginal English and Arrernte.

Arrernte is spoken by about 3000 people in central Australia, particularly in Mparntwe/Alice Springs. The Eastern Arrernte dialect is spoken in *In My Blood It Runs*.

“Language is more than just a means to communicate, it is an essential characteristic that makes people and communities unique, and plays a central role in a sense of identity. Language also carries meaning beyond the words themselves, and is an important platform within which much cultural knowledge and heritage is passed on. Speaking and learning traditional languages improves the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, by providing a sense of belonging and empowerment.”
(AIATSIS)

Reflective/Discussion Questions

What do you think the phrase “language is more than just a means to communicate” means, and why is it important to actively appreciate this?

How might language be a means of passing on cultural knowledge and heritage?

In what ways might learning or speaking First Languages support a sense of ‘belonging’ and ‘empowerment’ for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples? In what ways might appropriately learning, or learning about, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples be important for non-Indigenous Australians, and/or for the relationships between non-Indigenous Australians and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

What do terms such as “Strong,” “Endangered,” “Critically Endangered” or “Extinct” mean when referring to language? Can you think of any reasons why a term such as “sleeping” or “dormant” might be more sensitive than a term such as “extinct”, and might better help to recognise instances where revival processes have led to Languages that had once ceased to be spoken come back into use?

In researching and reflecting on colonial policies and practices, what do you think are some of the reasons that so many First Languages have become endangered in Australia?





Activity 2

Apmere angkentye-kenhe is a language project led by Djujan's family and some of the Arrernte Advisors to this film. It is a project about valuing Central/Eastern Arrernte as the First Language of Mparntwe/Alice Springs. As defined by Arrernte Language custodians, Apmere angkentye-kenhe makes different resources and events to revitalise Language and support linguistic-cultural knowledge transfer within Arrernte families and with a broader public.

Listen to an introduction to Apmere angkentye-kenhe project here: <https://soundcloud.com/watch-this-space-ari/50-words-everyone-who-lives-in-mparntwe-should-know>.

What do you know about the First Language(s) of the Land where you live or go to school? Where or how could you find out more? Consider engaging with the information and resources on the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages](#) RAP Action page on Reconciliation Australia's Narragunnawali platform to support you in responding to this question.

The film often uses subtitles to translate what people are saying in Arrernte into English. Why do you think the Director filmed people speaking in their First Languages? To maintain the authenticity and authority of voices within the film, as well as to honour the fact the Aboriginal English is formally recognised as a distinct dialect, quotes in Aboriginal English are not translated into Standard Australian English subtitles, however. Why is it important to appreciate that speakers of Aboriginal English are not speaking the English language 'poorly' or 'incorrectly,' but are indeed speaking a distinct and formally recognised dialect of the English language?

Note to teachers: Even if local community may not have immediate capacity to contribute to a language education program at your school, simply learning about the context, history and continued significance of a language is already an important step for students.

Activity 1



Research one or more examples of First Languages maintenance, revitalisation and/or revival programs in Australia.

What do you think the purpose of such programs are, and what are their existing and/or potential impacts? What could Australia be doing to support the maintenance, revitalisation and/or revival of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages into the future?

LEARN MORE

Research strongly shows that First Languages maintenance, revitalisation and revival processes can be recognised as important acts of reconciliation. As well as increasing intercultural awareness and understanding for all involved in language revitalisation initiatives, research emphasises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who speak First Languages are at once more likely to:

- Attend school
- Gain a post-school qualification
- Be employed
- Have markedly better physical and mental health
- Be less likely to engage in high risk alcohol consumption/illicit substance use, or to have been a victim of threatened or physical violence.

For more information, see [Our Land, Our Languages](#) (House of Representatives, 2012)

Consider also engaging with the [Languages Resource Guide](#) and wider [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages](#) RAP Action page on Reconciliation Australia's Narragunnawali platform to learn more.



WATCH THE FULL FILM

After engaging with some of the themes explored in the pre-viewing activities, your class should now be ready to watch the film.

Note that there is an option to watch the theatrical version (84 min) or the schools version (54 min). Timecodes used in this guide are from the schools version

The education version is available at: <https://theeducationshop.com.au/dvds-and-other-media/in-my-blood-it-runs/>

EXAMINING THE SCENES:

1: Whose story of 'history'?

"The history we were told at home is in Language and it's about the Aborigines, but the one back at school, that was for white people"

- Dujuan, 10 yrs old

CLIP: 00:12:12:10 – 00:15:56:05 – 3 mins 45 secs
(Scene in which teacher reads history book to the class)

Reflection/Discussion Questions

What have you been taught about the history of Australia at school? (What) Have you learnt about 'Australian history' in other contexts? From whose perspective(s) were you taught? Is there anything that you wish you learnt more about – or learnt differently – regarding 'Australian history'?

Compare and contrast the teacher's comment, "This isn't a story; this is history" (in reference to the 'Australia Book' that she is reading to the class) with Dujuan's comment, "The history that we're told at home is in Language, and it's about the Aborigines."

Whose (hi)story does the 'Australia Book' tell, and from whose perspective? (Note that the book, authored by Eve Pownall, was first printed in 1952).

Why do you think First Nations histories have often been excluded, simplified or undervalued in colonial history textbooks – and wider resources – used in mainstream schools?

Some people prefer to talk about "histories" and "truths" in the plural. Can there be more than one 'history' of a place or people? Can there be more than one 'truth' about historical events? Who decides which is the official 'history' or 'truth' of a place or people? Why is it important to critically engage

with diverse perspectives – including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives – in truthfully and holistically learning about our nation's shared history?

In what ways might Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander understandings of the word "history" differ from western conceptions of history? Can you think of other cultural, language or ethnic groups who might have a non-western conception of history?

Activity

Pick out one or more 'Australian history' books from your school or community library and think critically about the content and perspective of the books – who authored and published the book and when? What stories are being told, how are they being told, and by whom? Whose voices and perspectives are included or excluded? Consider repeating this activity for other resources across other subjects or learning areas, as part of a wider curriculum audit.

LEARN MORE

Everyone has certain privilege and certain bias. While we are born into certain privileges, we also develop biases as we age and through who we hang around with. The majority culture within any population around the world has a certain privilege that comes from being part of the majority, and often leads to a 'marginalisation' of the minority. To be **marginalised** is to be treated as if you are unimportant, or 'outside the margins'.

How do you think it might feel to have your own history or culture marginalised at school, and what might be the impacts?





2: First Nations Connections to Country

“When I’m out bush my Angangkere (healing power) is straight like a line, but when I am in town my Angangkere is wobbly.”

- Djuwan, 10 years old

CLIP: 00:17:30 – 00:21:44 – 4 mins
(Djuwan and his Nan drive to their homeland at Sandy Bore)

First Nations communities have powerful connections with Country. These connections are reflected in spiritual narratives (sometimes referred to as Dreaming stories), which connect humans, animals, plants and minerals back to the creative spiritual forces who made the Lands, seas and skies.

Connections to Country form the essence of identity for First Nations Peoples. First Nations ways of knowing and being, concepts of spirituality, cultures, and Country are inseparable and interlinked in powerful ways that the English language or colonial perspectives often cannot capture.

Australia’s unjust colonial history of invasion, dispossession of and forced removal from traditional lands, and policies of cultural assimilation have impacted on connections to Country and corresponding senses of personal and cultural identity for many First Nations peoples.

The continent of Australia is made up of a great diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Countries/geo-cultural communities. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples maintain a special connection to Country.

Connection to Country is important whether a person lives in the city or in a rural area. This connection has been the core of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander existence in Australia from the time of the Dreaming and continues to be integral in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ lives today, influencing spiritual, physical, cultural, social and emotional wellbeing. ‘Healthy Country, healthy people’ is an intrinsic belief held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have always held a responsibility for caring for Country throughout Australia.

Use the text below to support you to respond to the subsequent set of questions.

“Country in Aboriginal English is not only a common noun but also a proper noun. People talk about country in the same way that they would talk about a person: they speak to country, sing to country, visit country, worry about country, feel sorry for country, and long for country. People say that country knows, hears, smells, takes notice, takes care, is sorry or happy. Country is not a generalised or undifferentiated type of place, such as one might indicate with terms like ‘spending a day in the country’ or ‘going up the country’. Rather, country is a living entity with a yesterday, today and tomorrow, with a consciousness, and a will toward life.”

Rose, D. (1996). *Nourishing terrains: Australian Aboriginal views of landscape and wilderness* (p. 7). Canberra, ACT: Australian Heritage Commission.

Reflective/Discussion Questions

Based on what you see and hear in the clip, how do you think Djujan might have felt when he was driving out to his Country for the first time? What makes you think this? What kind of things make you feel this way?

What do you think Djujan means when he says, *"When I'm out bush my 'Angangkere' (healing power) is straight like a line, but when I am in town my Ngangkere is wobbly."*? How might this quote present a strong metaphor for the importance of connecting with Country and community when it comes to ensuring educational and socio-emotional well-being and empowerment?

Are there any places or settings in your own life that help you to feel strong, or more fully like yourself? What is it about the place that helps you to feel this way? Why do you think Djujan feels differently on Country than he does in the Alice Springs township?

For First Nations peoples, Country is more than just dirt and rocks. Country is more than just property. Country is identity. Country is family and community. Country is culture. Country is spirituality. Discuss these statements as a group.

How do you think Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander understandings of, and connections to, Country, compare to 'Western' understandings of the 'country' of Australia?

Why do you think Djujan thrives when he returns to Country to learn from his grandmother and wider family/community?

From what you have seen in the film, how do you think Language is connected to Country for Djujan's family, and why do you think learning Language on Country is important to Djujan's family?

How might non-Indigenous Australians be able to meaningfully learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and practices pertaining to the lands, seas and skies on which one lives and learns?





3: Education

“We are told to make our children ready for school, but why can’t we make schools ready for our children”

– Margaret Kemarre Turner, Advisor

CLIP: 00:52:52:02-00:54:54:13 – 2 mins 2 secs
(Scene of an Arrernte class at Djujan’s new school)

In relation to this clip, consider the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(UNDRIP\)](#). For example, Article 14 states:

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.
2. Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination.
3. States shall, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for indigenous individuals, particularly children, including those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language.

Reflective/Discussion Questions

What classes at school do you find most engaging? What makes these classes engaging for you? Think about *how* you learn as well as *what* you are learning in those classes.

Why do you think the Arrernte students appear more engaged in this class, compared to the class featured in the clip?

Why do you think Australian schools that have majority Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled whose first language is not English still teach and assess students in the English language? How might this affect students’ engagement with classes and achievements at school?

Djujan’s grandmother Carol emphasises the importance of the children speaking Arrernte. She wants them: “not to speak a poor version of Arrernte, but to speak the language of our old people. I need them to speak their language.” Similarly, Djujan’s mother Megan articulates “white people educate our kids in the way they want them to be educated. But I need them to speak their language so that they can carry on their language. We want our kids to grow up learning in both ways.” Why do you think it is so important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to have their languages and cultures reflected in their learning environments and experiences? How might all students benefit from learning in ways that incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content and perspectives?



Dujuan's grandmother says 'I want them to learn in both ways'. What does she mean when she says this? List the benefits you can think of for Dujuan learning through (a) the Arrernte language and cultural lens and (b) the English language and cultural lens. Why is it important to understand that learning both Arrernte and English can be complementary, co-constructive educational experiences, rather than mutually exclusive or contradictory experiences?

What benefits do you think might arise if First Nations students are taught in/about First Nations languages by First Nations teachers and through a First Nations cultural lens? How might non-Indigenous students also benefit from learning – or learning about – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and cultures, from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and educators in their local community?



Activity 1

Whose perspectives and voices might be missing or marginalised from the timetable, activities and resources in your classroom and around your school? Develop some ideas that would make your school and classroom experiences more inclusive of all students, with a respectfully embedded inclusion of First Nations histories, cultures, languages and worldviews.

Visit the National Indigenous Youth Education Coalition (NIYEC) [website](#) for research. See [Children's Ground](#) for how one organisation has re-designed the approach to schooling to benefit their community. Furthermore, consider exploring the [Actions](#) suggested through the Narragunnawali [Reconciliation Action Plan \(RAP\)](#) framework.



LEARN MORE

Decades of research has shown that young children learn best when they have opportunities to be taught through their mother tongue. The research has shown many benefits for young people who are encouraged to become strong in their mother tongue as well as the dominant language (in Australia, this is English), including:

- stronger cognitive skills
- enhanced literacy in the dominant language
- improved wellbeing

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, bilingual education has been highly valued not only because it supports First Nations children connect with First Languages and cultures, but also because it provides an honoured place for First Languages in the curriculum and an honoured place for First Nations teachers.

See more information at:

<https://aiatsis.gov.au/publications/products/gaps-australias-indigenous-language-policy-dismantling-bilingual-education-northern-territory>

Both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages and Curriculum Planning RAP Action pages on Reconciliation Australia's Narragunnawali platform may also be of additional relevance/interest.

Furthermore, consider engaging with the [Languages Resource Guide](#), alongside the wider Narragunnawali suite of subject-specific resource guides: www.narragunnawali.org.au/about/subject-guides

Activity 2

Imagine that you are given a chance to address all Australian politicians and policy makers. What could you say to them to convince them of the importance of respectfully embedding First Nations histories, cultures, languages and worldviews in schools (for both First Nations and non-Indigenous students)?

4: The right to self-determination

“What I want is a normal life of just being me. And what I mean by ‘me’ is I want to be an Aborigine.”

– Djuwan, 10 years old

CLIP: 00:01:07:15 – 00:01:08:25 – 1 min 10 secs (Scene in which Djuwan’s family determine where he will live and go to school)

After many decades working with the colonial Commonwealth Government of Australia, Yolngu Elder and renowned leader Galurrwuy Yunupingu argued (as many First Peoples do) that it is in their best interest to establish independence, politically and economically, from the colonial state.

“We, the united clans of East Arnhem land ... do humbly petition you, the 26th Prime Minister of Australia ... to secure within the Australian Constitution the recognition and protection of our full and complete right to:

- *Our way of life in all its diversity;*
- *Our property, being the lands and waters of East Arnhem land;*
- *Economic independence, through the proper use of the riches of our land and waters in all their abundance and wealth;*
- *Control of our lives and responsibility for our children’s future.”*

(Yunupingu, Tradition, Truth and Tomorrow, p. 41)

Yunupingu’s position is an example of “self-determination”. Initially proposed in the 1970s as a policy direction away from the previous decades’ Assimilation policies (which aimed at the absorption of First Peoples into colonial culture), “self-determination” captured a new emphasis on

respecting the right to independence and self-governance of First Nations communities and legally/constitutionally enabling, encouraging and empowering communities to exercise this right.

For a vast and complex number of reasons, self-determination has not yet been realised in the way many dreamed it would be. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities continue to face challenges in establishing meaningful independence under the weight of structural inequalities and inequities, and the intergenerational traumas resulting from colonial injustices. Yunupingu argues that if the right to First Nations independence was to be genuinely and actively upheld, communities would grow and benefit not only economically, but also socially, culturally, spiritually and in terms of health and well-being.

Additional Resources: [2017 Uluru Statement from the Heart](#) which reinforces the words of Yunupingu





Reflective/Discussion Questions

When do you feel empowered and strong? What helps you to feel this way?

When have you been allowed to make decisions about your own life and matters that affect you? How does it feel to make decisions for yourself, compared to when others make decisions for you? What are some of the positive impacts of making decisions for yourself, compared to when others make decisions for you?

What do you notice about the camera angles in this scene? Why is most of the film on eye-level with the subjects? What feeling does this convey to the audience?

Consider the scene where Djuwan's Nanas come together to decide what to do when he is expelled from the school. What solution did his Nanas settle on, and in what ways do you think this solution may have been positive for Djuwan's education, wellbeing, and wider life opportunities/experiences? Who was involved in making this decision? In what ways is the decision-making *collaborative*? What is the importance of collaborative decision-making processes?

What do you think Yunipingu means by "self-determination", and what are some of the meanings and measures of self-determination more broadly?

Why do you think many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have continued to lobby for the right to self-determination?

Revisit the Uluru Statement from the Heart (Preview Activity 3: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voices). As an additional resource, you might also like to consider engaging with the Youth response to the Uluru Statement of the Heart: [The Imagination Declaration of the Youth](#)

What parts of the Statement and/or the Youth response involve calls for self-determination?

Activity

In pairs or groups, brainstorm some of the challenges that Djuwan's family and community, and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia, might face in achieving self-determination in some of the following areas. Include examples/references from the film where possible.

- (a) Education • (b) Health and Healing
- (c) Employment • (d) Land and Spirituality
- (e) Language • (f) Culture

How might these challenges be effectively addressed/overcome?

Post-Viewing Activity: Human Rights, Child Rights and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

“This film is about our dreams, our hopes and our rights”

– Dujuan, 12 years old, United Nations

Read the following texts before considering the reflection/discussion questions and activities:

- The [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)
- The [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (CRC).
- The [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(UNDRIP\)](#)
- [Dujuan’s speech to the 42nd Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council](#)

Reflective/Discussion Questions

Human rights are universal, inalienable, indivisible and interdependent. This means that they apply to everyone; they cannot be taken away from you and they are all connected to each other.

‘Inherent rights’ are rights that no-one should be able to take away from you. Did you know that you have inherent and unique rights as a child/young person? Why do you think children and young people have unique rights? Do you think the rights outlined in the convention are important for you in your life to grow into adulthood? For children, specific rights include protection from exploitation and abuse, the right to be cared for and have a home, and the right to have a say in decisions that affect you.

Are these rights respected and upheld for all children in Australia? Why do you think this may be the case?

Article 12 of the CRC, recognises that children – as individuals and collectively - have a right to be heard and respected in matters that affect them. This is one of the 4 core principles of the CRC. The others are;

- Non-discrimination/equality – all of the 42 articles of the CRC relate to every child
- Survival and development. All children must be provided with the opportunities to reach their full potential
- The child’s best interests must be prioritised in every decision or action that affect children

Do you think Dujuan’s rights have been respected in this way? Can you give examples of where they have been, and by who? For example, when are Dujuan’s best interests prioritised?

Can you think of some examples where his rights are not respected? Why do you think this might be the case?

What child rights did Dujuan demand from World leaders at the United Nations Human Rights Council (re-watch his video in Pre-Viewing Activity 1: Children’s Voices and Rights)?

How might leaders respond to Dujuan’s demands in ways that respect these rights?

A question that brings out the interrelated nature of human rights e.g. The fulfillment or protection of one human right often affects the fulfillment or protection of another. Do we see this happening in the film? For example Articles 14 and 15 of UNDRIP and the connections to Dujuan’s survival and development and realising his best interests.

Sometimes it may be necessary to treat people differently in order to achieve equality of outcomes. In some cases, treating everyone the same may further benefit or disadvantage particular groups. Can you think of where that happens in the film - e.g. is it equality if Australian schools that have majority First Nations children whose first language is not English still teach in the English language?

Why is it important to understand and value the experiences and rights that we all share as people (consider the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)), as well as the unique experiences and rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (consider the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#))?

Activity

In groups, recall and list any scenes in the film where you think the *Rights of the Child* or the *Rights of Indigenous People* were being undermined, or where it seemed like they might be breached? Have a go at rewriting the scene to show what it would look like for these rights to be actively upheld. What would need to happen, how would the scene play out and affect the story thereafter?

TAKE ACTION

- **[Buy an education DVD/licence for your school](#)**
- [Host a screening](#) with our #LearnOurTruth schools screening campaign
- Join the [In My Blood It Runs – Teaching](#) Facebook group
- Keep in touch by joining the film's social media pages and the mailing list:
[Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), [Mailing list](#)
- [Donate](#) to an Arrernte-led school to be established on Djuwan's homelands with our key partner, Children's Ground

For more information about the associated impact campaigns and additional education resources visit:
www.inmyblooditrans.com



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