

# Listening to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's Voices: A Self-Directed Learning Guide

This self-directed learning guide has been prepared by Djirra in partnership with Safe and Equal, for family violence workers who have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women as their clients.

Self-reflection and self-directed learning are important to explore and continue learning about how to provide culturally safe responses to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children experiencing family violence. It is hoped this resource list will be used to spark more questions, support you to critically reflect on your own practices and continue your learning.

We strongly encourage you to seek out the writings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who have worked with their communities and have spoken about violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children.

These resources do not solely refer to family violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Rather, they provide the context of invasion and colonisation, of which violence is a significant feature.

## Books - First person accounts, research, and autobiographies

- Aileen Moreton-Robinson, 2000, *Talkin' Up to the White Woman*
- Jackie Huggins, 1998, *Sister Girl*
- Archie Roach, 2019, *Tell Me Why*
- Margaret Tucker, 1977, *If Everybody Cared*
- Anita Heiss (ed.), 2018, *Growing Up Aboriginal in Australia*
- Anita Heiss (ed.), 2018, *Growing Up Aboriginal in Australia*
- Chelsea Watego, 2021, *Another Day in the Colony*

## Books - Historical

- Bruce Elder, 2003, *Blood on the Wattle, Massacres and Maltreatment of Aboriginal Australians since 1788*
- Richard Broome, 2005, *Victorian Aboriginals: A History since 1880*
- Bill Gammage, 2011, *The Biggest Estate: How Aborigines Made Australia*

## Reports and resources

- Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices) *Securing Our Rights, Securing Our Future*

An extensive report led by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, June Oscar AO, of the Australian Human Rights Commission in 2020.

- *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody*  
Commission report and recommendations published in 1991.
- *Bringing Them Home Report*

Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, April 1997.

- *'Changing the picture background paper: Understanding violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children'*

A national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children, published in 2018. The Background Paper contains the research undertaken by Our Watch with an advisory committee of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, working with communities.

- *Always Was, Always Will Be Koori Children*

The Systemic Inquiry into services provided to Aboriginal children and young people in out-of-home care in Victoria, 2016, Office for the Commission of Aboriginal Children and Young People.



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## Websites

### **[www.aboriginalvictoria.vic.gov.au/aboriginal-victoria](http://www.aboriginalvictoria.vic.gov.au/aboriginal-victoria)**

Aboriginal Victoria is the Victorian Government office working in community strengthening and engagement, self-determination and treaty, as well as cultural heritage management and protection.

It has important information about Traditional Owners in Victoria. The Victorian Aboriginal Honour Roll is also an excellent source of information about Aboriginal Victorians who have contributed in many ways to Aboriginal community and the life of Victoria.

### **[www.vic.gov.au/dhelk-dja-partnership-aboriginal-communities-address-family-violence](http://www.vic.gov.au/dhelk-dja-partnership-aboriginal-communities-address-family-violence)**

*Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way – Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families* is an Aboriginal-led agreement to address family violence in Aboriginal communities.

### **[www.indigenousx.com.au](http://www.indigenousx.com.au)**

Indigenous X, hosted through The Guardian, seeks to address the national dialogue about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues that was characterised by a consistent lack of awareness, understanding and respect for Indigenous people.

It provides a platform for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to share their work, opinions, creative writing, knowledge and experiences. Also, their twitter handle @IndigenousX is hosted by different Indigenous people on a regularly rotating basis.

### **[www.aiatsis.gov.au](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au)**

The website for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies is an excellent place to start for research. It is also the home of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages map shown in the e-learning module:

**<https://aiatsis.gov.au/aboriginal-studies-press/products/aiatsis-map-indigenous-australia>**

### **[www.sbs.com.au/nitv](http://www.sbs.com.au/nitv)**

National Indigenous Television (NITV) is an excellent source of current affairs news, documentaries and historical information. Most of the shows are hosted by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander presenters, backed up by Indigenous researchers and production crews. Further, NITV shares experiences and stories of Indigenous peoples from around the world, showing many struggles consistent across countries because of the impact of invasion and colonisation.

The website also has comprehensive information to supplement many of the television content available. The channel reaches over two million unique viewers per month.

### **[www.healingfoundation.org.au](http://www.healingfoundation.org.au)**

The Healing Foundation is a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation that partners with communities to address the ongoing trauma caused by actions such as forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families.

It has comprehensive information on intergenerational trauma, including this specific video explaining the phenomenon and how it impacts on Aboriginal people and communities:

**<https://youtu.be/vlqx8EYvRbQ>**



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## Films

There are many films that have been made by and about Aboriginal people, based on true stories. These are just a few that touch on many of the historical and current issues faced, but also show the strength, humour and power of Aboriginal communities and families.

- *The Sapphires*, 2012, directed by Wayne Blair
- *Rabbit Proof Fence*, 2002, directed by Phillip Noyce, based on the autobiography of Doris Pilkington
- *Samson and Delilah*, 2009, directed by Warwick Thornton
- *Sweet Country*, 2017, directed by Warwick Thornton
- *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith*, 1978, directed by Fred Schepisi
- *Radiance*, 1998, directed by Rachel Perkins

## Documentaries

### ***“Lousy Little Sixpence”, 1983, 54 minutes***

Through old newsreels, archive film, photographs and interviews with Elders who, as children, were forcibly removed from their families then trained to work as servants to white employers and families, this film is a moving account of a hidden history, the early struggle for Aboriginal land rights and self-determination.

*‘Lousy Little Sixpence’* refers to the money promised, but almost never received.

### ***“Servant or Slave”, 2016, 58 minutes***

This documentary uses first person accounts, archival footage and reconstructions to give a powerful and evocative insight into the domestic servitude forced upon Aboriginal women in 20th century Australia. Many girls suffered mistreatment in the form of emotional, physical and sexual abuse, in the ‘training schools’ they were sent to after they were stolen from their families, and in the ‘work’ placements they were later sent to.

This documentary is a testament to the strength of Aboriginal women and communities, in spite of severe adversity and discrimination.

### ***“First Australians”, 2008, series (7 episodes)***

Directed by Rachel Perkins (Aboriginal writer and filmmaker and daughter of activist Charles Perkins), *First Australians* chronicles the birth of contemporary Australia from the perspective of its First Nations people.

It explores what unfolded when the oldest living culture in the world is overrun by the world’s ‘greatest’ empire.

The documentary is a series that involved community consultation with many of the descendants of those depicted in the series at various stages, including checking content of scripts, seeking permission for filming at certain locations, showing the rough cut of content and viewing at final cut.

### ***“Women of the Sun”, 1981, 240 minutes (4 standalone but connecting stories)***

This four-part series tells the stories of four Aboriginal women to demonstrate the impact of invasion and colonisation on Aboriginal people.

Set in the 1820s, the 1890s, the 1930s and 1980s, it shows how these women, and thousands like them, suffered the destruction of family and culture, racist policies, the removal of their children and segregated lives on Aboriginal missions or as fringe dwellers around rural towns.



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# About Djirra

Djirra (formerly the Victorian Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service) was established in 2002 to respond to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing family violence.

Djirra (meaning 'reed' in the Woiwurrung language of the Wurundjeri peoples of the Kulin Nation) is an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation. It is managed and governed by Aboriginal people and employs a high number of Aboriginal staff members. It is an organisation specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing family violence. However, given the rates of family violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, it is overwhelmingly women and their children who access Djirra's services.

Djirra has extensive expertise working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women through the delivery of legal advice and representation services (in family violence, child protection, victims of crime assistance and family law), case management services, cultural and personal supports such as group programs, yarning circles, personal development and counselling.

Djirra also has strong connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women through the delivery of services such as Sisters Day Out, Young Luv and Dilly Bag which are community-delivered programs focussed on the strength of connection between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Djirra is also one of 14 members that comprise the National Family Violence Prevention and Legal Services Forum, which is the only national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim survivors of family violence and sexual assault.

Djirra operates in metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria and can be contacted in the following ways:

**Freecall:** 1800 105 303

**Email:** [info@djirra.org.au](mailto:info@djirra.org.au)

**Website:** [www.djirra.org.au](http://www.djirra.org.au)



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