



A FILM BY

PURSEKEY PRODUCTIONS

ONE MIND ONE HEART



AUSTRALIAN TEACHERS OF MEDIA

Writer Alex Kopp

<https://theeducationshop.com.au>

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**STUDY
GUIDE**



Summary



Title	<i>One Mind, One Heart</i>	Category	Documentary
Director	Professor Larissa Behrendt AO	Length	82 minutes
Release date	19 January 2025	Language(s)	English, Yolngu (subtitled)
Synopsis (short)	When an historic Yirrkala bark petition is found in Derby, Western Australia, the community begin the ceremony of guiding its journey back to Yolngu Country. The repatriation provides the opportunity to track the long political campaign – through petition, song, dance, campaigning – to keep culture strong and to have a voice for Country.		
Learning areas	History, Civics and Citizenship	Year Levels	8–12
Cross-curriculum priorities	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures		
General capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy • Critical Creative thinking • Ethical Understanding • Intercultural Understanding • Personal and Social Capability 		
Key themes/topics explored	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural connection to land • Colonisation and resistance • Yirrkala bark petitions • Environmental impact of mining and development • Legacy of advocacy 		
Learning intentions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding historical significance Students will learn to explain the historical significance of the Yirrkala bark petitions and their role in shaping Australia’s land rights movement. • Exploring cultural connections Students learn to identify the spiritual, cultural and practical connections of First Nations Australians to Country/Place and understand how this shapes identity and resilience. • Developing empathy and advocacy skills Students learn to develop empathy by examining the challenges faced by First Nations Australians due to colonisation and explore how art and advocacy can drive social and political change. • Analysing perspectives Students learn to analyse different perspectives on historical and contemporary issues affecting First Nations Australians, including land rights, environmental management and cultural preservation. • Applying geographical and environmental knowledge Students investigate First Nations Australians’ approaches to environmental management and sustainability, and reflect on how these practices contribute to global strategies. • Engage in critical thinking Students learn to critically evaluate primary and secondary sources to develop evidence-based arguments about historical and cultural issues. 		
Advice/warnings	<p><i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander viewers are advised that the following program contains images and voices of people who have died. It also covers the topics of racism and impacts of intergenerational trauma through colonisation and dispossession, which teachers should be mindful of in the context of the students in their classrooms.</i></p> <p><i>Teachers should watch this film before deciding to show it to students.</i></p>		
Official trailer			



PRODUCTION TEAM AND LOCALS POSE WITH THE BARK PETITION IN DERBY. PHOTO BY BERNARD WRIGHT.

Synopsis

The film *One Mind, One Heart*, directed by Larissa Behrendt, chronicles the extraordinary story of the Yirrkala bark petitions, a groundbreaking moment in Australian history that ignited the fight for recognition of Aboriginal rights. In 1963, Yolngu leaders created two bark petitions combining traditional art and legal demands, which were sent to the Australian Parliament. These petitions represented the first legal acknowledgment of Aboriginal land rights and highlighted the community's resistance to mining activities on their sacred land.

In 2022, a fourth bark petition was discovered in Derby, Western Australia, and its journey back to Yolngu Country became a poignant moment of cultural repatriation.

This event frames the documentary, which explores decades of Yolngu advocacy through petitions, song, dance, and activism. It emphasizes the community's efforts to preserve their culture, protect their land, and advocate for Indigenous voices in modern Australia.

The documentary is both a tribute to the resilience of the Yolngu people and a call to understand the historical and ongoing struggles of First Nations Australians for justice and recognition. Through interviews with leaders, descendants of petitioners, and historians, the film connects past activism with current movements for Indigenous sovereignty and cultural preservation.

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Curriculum links

History

Year 10

The causes of First Nations Australians' campaigns for rights and freedoms before 1965, such as discriminatory legislation and policies, the 1938 Day of Mourning and the Stolen Generations. ([AC9HH10K09](#))

The contributions of significant individuals and groups in the campaign for the recognition of the rights of First Nations Australians and the extent to which they brought change to Australian society. ([AC9HH10K10](#))

The significant events and methods in the movement for the civil rights of First Nations Australians and the extent to which they contributed to change. ([AC9HH10K11](#))

The continuing efforts to create change in the civil rights and freedoms in Australia, for First Nations Australians, migrants and women. ([AC9HH10K13](#))

Locate, identify and compare primary and secondary sources to use in a historical inquiry. ([AC9HH10S02](#))

Identify the origin and content of sources, and explain the purpose and context of primary and secondary sources. ([AC9HH10S03](#))

Explain the usefulness of primary and secondary sources, and the reliability of the information as evidence. ([AC9HH10S04](#))

Geography

Year 10

First Nations Australians' approaches to custodial responsibility and environmental management in different regions of Australia. ([AC9HG10K03](#))

Civics and Citizenship

Year 8

How Australians are informed about and participate in democracy. ([AC9HC8K01](#))

The types of law in Australia, including criminal law and civil law, and the place of First Nations Australian customary law. ([AC9HC8K04](#))

How culture and religion may influence individuals' and groups' perceptions and expressions of citizenship and their actions as citizens. ([AC9HC8K05](#))

Different experiences of, perspectives on and debates about Australia's national identity and citizenship, including the perspectives of First Nations Australians as owners of their respective nations, and of different migrant groups. ([AC9HC8K06](#))

Year 9

How and why individuals and groups, including community, religious and cultural groups, participate in and contribute to civic life in Australia and to global citizenship. ([AC9HC9K05](#))

Year 10

The challenges to and ways of sustaining a resilient democracy and a cohesive society in Australia and/or in our region or globally. ([AC9HC10K05](#))

Analyse information, data and ideas about political, legal or civic issues to identify and evaluate differences in perspectives and interpretations. ([AC9HC10S03](#))

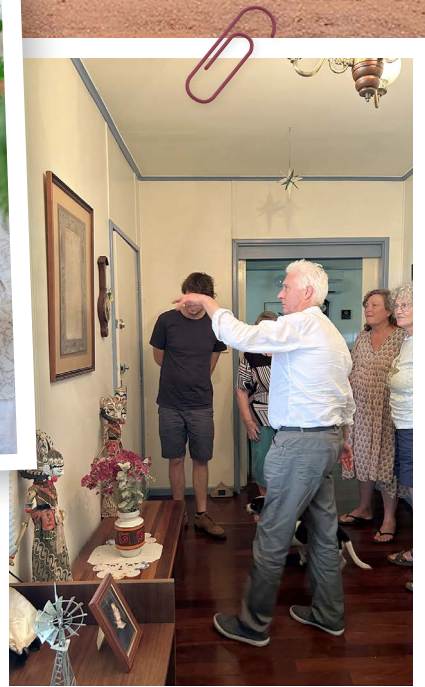
Senior Curriculum – History Unit 2

Recognition and Rights of Indigenous Peoples

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. ([ACHMH070](#))

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. ([ACHMH073](#))

The achievements of Indigenous peoples at the end of the twentieth century, including the right to vote, land rights/native title, and attempt at reconciliation. ([ACHMH075](#))



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: BUNGUL FOR PETITION IN YIRRKALA. PHOTO BY MATTHEW GARRICK; ANDREW DURHAM (ARTLAB) ASSESSING BARK PETITION. PHOTO BY BERNARD WRIGHT. DERBY CEREMONY. PHOTO BY BERNARD WRIGHT.

Glossary of terms

Create a word map or a glossary of terms with definitions for the following key terms

- YIRRKALA BARK PETITIONS
- YOLNGU
- REPATRIATION
- LAND RIGHTS
- CULTURAL CUSTODIANSHIP
- SACRED SITE
- ACTIVISM
- PETITION
- CULTURAL PRESERVATION
- SOVEREIGNTY
- LORE
- CULTURAL REPATRIATION

Pre-viewing activities

Teacher's note: Facilitate a class discussion using the following prompts.

1 What is a petition?

Think about the idea of a petition and discuss these questions:

- Who can create or sign a petition?
- Why might someone create a petition?

2 Locate Gove Peninsula:

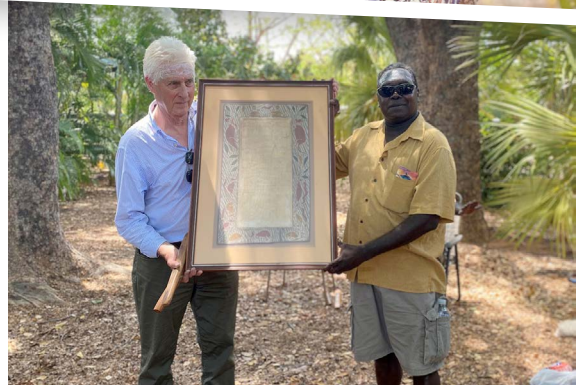
Use a map to find the Gove Peninsula. Once you've located it, research and share:

- Who are the traditional landowners of the region?
- What are three interesting facts about the area?

3 Examine the bark petition:

Look at an image of the Yirrkala bark petition. Take a close look and answer these questions:

- What materials do you think it's made from?
- What symbols or designs can you see?
- What might these symbols represent?



Introduction to land rights and advocacy

Watch this short clip on [Australia's Land Rights: The Mabo Decision and Native Title](#) as an introduction to Indigenous land rights and answer the following questions:

- Why are land rights important to Indigenous peoples?
- Why might land be seen as more than just a physical space to Indigenous peoples?
- How have different groups around the world fought for land rights?

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: WAKA MUNUNGGURR IN DERBY.
PHOTO BY BERNARD WRIGHT; ANDREW DURHAM (ARTLAB)
AND BUWATPUY MICHAEL GUMANA WITH BARK PETITION.
PHOTO BY BERNARD WRIGHT; CROWD AT YIRRKALA
CEREMONY. PHOTO BY MICHAELA PERSKE.





YOU CAN
COMPLETE
THIS PAGE IN
ACROBAT

Viewing activities

Your name

.....

1 Who is Merrkiyawuy, and why is she significant? [10:50]

.....

2 What did the mining company do without consulting the Yolngu people? [10:52]

.....

3 How do Aboriginal people express their connection to Country through art? [10:56]

.....

4 What was added to the bark petition in place of signatures and what was the result? [13:25]

.....

5 What was the result of the first Aboriginal land rights case: Milirrpum v Nabalco Pty Ltd? [25:45]

.....

6 What emotions or reactions does the damage to sacred sites evoke among the Yolngu? [31:12]

.....

7 How did the Aboriginal Tent Embassy contribute to the fight for land rights? [35:07]

.....



YOU CAN COMPLETE THIS PAGE IN ACROBAT

Post-viewing activities

Your name

1 What were the Yirrkala bark petitions and why are they a significant part of Australian history?

2 How did the Yolngu people respond to the threat of mining on their lands in the 1960s?

3 What does the discovery of the fourth bark petition in Derby symbolize for the Yolngu community?

4 How do the Yolngu people express their connection to the land through cultural practices such as song, dance, and art?

5 What role does Country play in Yolngu identity and spirituality as portrayed in the film?

6 Why is the repatriation of the fourth bark petition important to the Yolngu people and their culture?

7 How did the Yirrkala bark petitions influence broader Aboriginal rights movements in Australia?

8 What forms of activism do the Yolngu people use in the film to advocate for their land and culture?

9 How is the Yolngu community's fight for recognition linked to modern-day calls for Indigenous sovereignty and rights?

10 How does Yananyumul Mununggurr's personal connection to the Yirrkala bark petitions deepen the narrative?

Extension activities

Art and advocacy

- Create a petition using a combination of artwork and writing to advocate for a modern issue you care about (such as environmental protection or mental health awareness).
- *Materials Needed:* Paper or canvas, paints, markers and other craft supplies.



Timeline of Indigenous land rights

- Research and create a timeline of key events, starting with the Yirrkala bark petitions through to modern-day milestones like the Mabo Decision and the Uluru Statement from the Heart.
- *Extension:* Include global comparisons with Indigenous rights movements in other countries.



Cultural preservation vs. Economic development

As a class, discuss the following:

- Is cultural preservation more important than economic development?

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: YANANYMUL, DERBY. PHOTO BY BERNARD WRIGHT; ANDREW WITH BARK PETITION. PHOTO BY BERNARD WRIGHT; BEHIND THE SCENES AT BUNGUL YIRRKALA. PHOTO BY MATTHEW GARRICK; GALLERY INSTALL, YIRRKALA. PHOTO BY SOPHIE PARKER.





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: ELDERS IN DERBY. PHOTO BY BERNARD WRIGHT; NATALIE DAVEY (GRANDDAUGHTER OF STAN AND JOAN) WITH PETITION IN YIRRKALA. PHOTO BY MATTHEW GARRICK; SINGING WITH THE PETITION IN DERBY. PHOTO BY BERNARD WRIGHT; DERBY YANANYMUL AND SIAN EDWARDS, ABC COMMERCIAL.

Analyse the petitions

- Examine excerpts from the Yirrkala bark petitions and their accompanying artwork.
 - > Identify the key demands made by the Yolngu people.
 - > Analyse the significance of using traditional art alongside the demands made by Yolngu. The artwork used by Yolngu included sacred designs that conveyed their spiritual and ancestral connection the land. They were essentially stating that their cultural heritage is intertwined with their connection to the land.

You can access a [transcript](#) of the petitions here.



Personal reflection: connection to land

- Write a short essay or create a video about your connection to a place that holds personal significance. Explain how you would feel if it were threatened.
- Discuss the idea of cultural preservation and its connection to land, focusing on sacred sites and the relationship between people and the environment.

Understanding petitioning and political advocacy

- Research significant petitions from history that led to change. Compare these petitions with the Yirrkala bark petitions.
- *Class Debate:* Organise a class debate on the importance of petitions in a democratic society. Focus on:
 - > Whether or not petitions raise awareness about important issues;
 - > Can petitions alone lead to real change, or do they need to be accompanied by other actions?
- *Group Project:* Create a mock petition on a social issue the class cares about.



The making of the film

One Mind, One Heart premiered at the Adelaide Film Festival on 27 October 2024 and will air on NITV in January 2025.

The film explores the history of the Yirrkala bark petitions, traditional documents prepared and signed by the Yolngu people in 1963, which were sent to the Australian Parliament and became the first documentary recognition of Indigenous people in Australian law. The documentary also follows the journey of a fourth bark petition found in Derby, Western Australia, in 2022, as it is returned to Yolngu Country.

About the director

Larissa Behrendt is a distinguished Eualeyai/Kamillaroi woman renowned for her multifaceted contributions as a legal academic, writer, filmmaker and advocate for Indigenous rights in Australia.

Some key facts about Larissa Behrendt:

First Indigenous Australian to graduate from Harvard Law

Larissa made history as the first Indigenous Australian to graduate from Harvard Law School, earning her Master of Laws and Doctor of Juridical Science degrees.

She is an award-winning author

Larissa's debut novel *Home* won the 2002 David Unaipon Award, and her recent work *After Story* won the 2022 Voss Literary Prize and has been optioned for a television series.





She is a film director and writer

Behrendt has directed and written several critically acclaimed documentaries, including *You Can Go Now* (2020), *After the Apology* (2017) and *Maralinga Tjarutja* (2020), which won an AACTA Award for Best Direction in Television Factual that year.

Recognition for contributions to Indigenous rights

Behrendt has been honoured with several prestigious awards, including being named NAIDOC Person of the Year in 2009 and receiving the Order of Australia (AO) in 2020 for her contributions to Indigenous education, law and the arts.

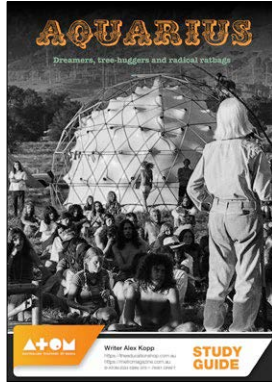
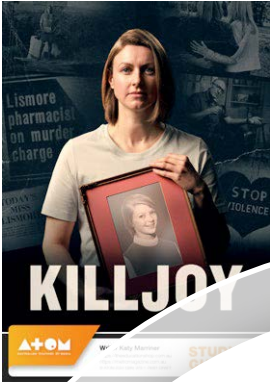
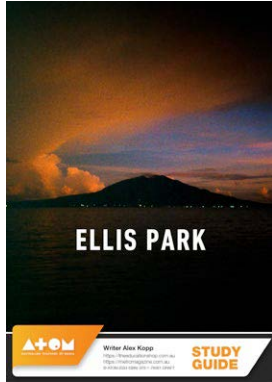
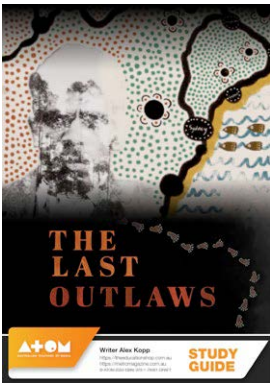
She is a radio host

Larissa hosts the *Speaking Out* program on ABC Radio, where she discusses issues affecting Indigenous communities and advocates for social change.

Pursekey Productions

Pursekey Productions is an independent production company based in Sydney, Australia that specialises in factual content. Founded by Michaela Perske, the company has over twenty years of experience in media, with a portfolio that includes documentaries, short films and animated works. Their productions have garnered national acclaim and have been showcased in over twenty countries. Some of their notable works include *Girls Can't Surf* (2020) and *After the Apology* (2017).





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ATOM study guide

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