

Sikh and Indian Australians

SHARING THEIR STORIES

HTAWA



YEAR 5 HISTORY: SIKH AND INDIAN AUSTRALIANS

Learning sequence 4: Sharing their stories

Just how can people learn about the groups who have been invisible for so long in Australia's written history? How can we showcase their stories to reflect the determination and hardship they experienced, as well as the lifeline they threw to many isolated colonists in rural Australia? Non-European, especially Asian immigrants including Indian cameleers and hawkers, Chinese labourers and businessmen, and Japanese and Malay divers and labourers are very much part of Australia's colonial history.

Throughout these learning sequences students have been given the opportunity to engage with primary and secondary documents to build an understanding of the experience and actions of groups of people who were less well known and often marginalised in Australian colonial society. Many were British citizens from British colonies such as India, Hong Kong and Singapore, but because of Australian colonial political, economic and social (racial) priorities during the 19th century, their contribution has not been recognised.

Discuss the ideas of how to showcase these colonists through more detailed research into their contribution to the Swan River colony up to 1901. Ideas may include how students could demonstrate their learning and fill in some of the "spaces" in WA and Australian History through a classroom, library, school or local council display or presentations to a younger class or to parents. Discuss the ways they can communicate stories from their research: a digital book, a museum display, an interview, a play, a storybook for younger people, a series of posters or an oral presentation on the life of a cameleer, the diary of a hawker or shopkeeper, a report, using models to illustrate research and so on.

Provide the children with a choice of groups of ethnic Australians to research such as:

- Indian (Muslim and Sikh) cameleers
- Sikh hawkers and shopkeepers
- Sikh and Indian entertainers and/or farmers
- Chinese labourers and businessmen
- Japanese and Malay pearl divers

Encourage students to review the questions they developed from Learning sequences 2 and 3 on ethnic groups, the cameleers and "Afghans" and the contribution of Sikh hawkers to colonial society.

For ideas on the process of conducting an inquiry and on how to research and showcase these less well known colonial groups in the Swan River colony and the broader community please see the links to Teacher Resources 1 and 2 below.

[Teacher Resource 1: The inquiry process](#)

[Teacher Resource 2: Showcasing Non-European colonists](#)