

A FEW INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT NOONGAR LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Before colonisation:

- There were more than 250 known Australian languages. About 145 are still spoken. 110 are critically endangered.
- Noongar people had over 45,000 years of uninterrupted living on boodja (land).
- They did not call themselves Noongar which actually meant man or person. Many Noongar people now refer to themselves as the Bibbulmun people and say this was the original term used.

Noongar boodja covers approximately 185,000 sq kms of land from just north of Jurien Bay to north of Moora and down to the south coast between Bremer Bay and Esperance.

Population of the Noongar nation:

- In 1829 it is estimated that the Noongar population numbered 6,000–10,000.
- By 1901 it was decimated to approximately 1500 people.
- By the 1920's nearly 15% of the Noongar population were housed at Moore River settlement and Carrolup (near Katanning).
- Today there are approximately 30,000 Noongar people living on Noongar boodja, amongst hundreds of extended kinship networks, practicing their culture and beliefs and demonstrating their resilience and survival.
- From 1927 to 1954 the centre of Perth was declared a prohibited area, which Aboriginal people were only able to enter with a special Native Pass.
- Forced removal of parents from children continued into the 1960's and 1970's.

Noongar culture:

- It is unique.
- It is also the oldest and largest Nation of Aboriginal people in Australia.
- At the time of British settlement there appeared to be between 3-15 Noongar dialects which have evolved into 3 dialects today. Within these 3 dialects are 14 Noongar groups. In Perth we are part of the Whadjuk group.
- In traditional times Noongar people would live together in clans – united by actual or recognised kinship relations.
- Noongar people are passionate about strengthening their culture and ensuring kaadadjan (knowledge) gets passed on to younger generations.
- They are also passionate about sharing culture with the broader Australian community to help foster positive, harmonious intercultural relationships.

To study the Noongar Language and Culture course:

Either browse for “Curtin Noongar Language and Culture Course” or use this link:

<https://study.curtin.edu.au/offering/mooc-noongar-language-and-culture--cas1x/>

(Note: 2022-2032 is the UNESCO Decade of Indigenous Languages!)

Links to the two other videos Gail showed in her talk:

Della Rae Morrison: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6vufOzbD72M>

Noel Nannup - Point Walter: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gy2kUbrTJTk>

To learn 50 Noongar Words

Browse for “50 Words Project - First Languages Australia” which aims to provide fifty words in every indigenous language of Australia and follow the ‘click here’ link. Alternatively use this direct link: <https://50words.online>

A list of Australian languages will come up. Browse for ‘Wadjak Noongar’. A list of Noongar words will appear with their English equivalent. Click on a word and you will be able to hear it spoken too!

For more information check out ‘Noongar Wikipedia’ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noongar>

This webpage include a map of the location of the 14 Noongar groups.