



CONSEQUENCES OF COLONIALISM

When Europeans first settled the region in the early 1800s, the area was already occupied by Taungurung people. From that time, life for the Taungurung people in central Victoria changed dramatically and was severely disrupted by the early establishment and expansion of European settlement. Traditional society broke down with the first settler's arrival and soon after, Aboriginal mortality rates soared as a result of introduced diseases, denial of access to traditional foods and medicines and conflict.

At various times, Aboriginal settlements were established in the area by missionaries and governments at Michellstown, Acheron and Coranderrk. These however, despite relative success, were eventually dissolved through various government policies.

The Taungurung and other members of Kulin Nation were deeply impacted by the dictates of the various government assimilation and integration policies. Today, the descendants of the Taungurung form a strong and vibrant community. Descendants of five of the original clan groups meet regularly at Camp Jungai – an ancestral ceremonial site.

Elders assist with the instruction of younger generations in culture, history, and language and furthering of their knowledge and appreciation of their heritage as the rightful custodians of the Taungurung lands in Central Victoria. Evidence of the Taungurung can be found in many places throughout Taungurung Country. Scar trees, rock shelters, rock art and even place names all indicate that we have been in this part of Victoria for thousands of years.

While travelling through Taungurung lands you will be aware of the following towns. All these towns have a Taungurung origin:

Benalla

Benalta = Big waterhole

Delatite

Delotite, wife of Beeolite, clan head of the Yowung-Illam-Balluk clan

Murrindindi

Murrumdoorandi = Place of mists, mountain

Trawool

Tarawil = Turkey

Nagambie

Nogamby = Lagoon

Many Taungurung people still live on their country and participate widely in the community as Cultural Heritage Advisors, Land Management Officers, artists and educationalists and are a ready source of knowledge concerning the Taungurung people from the central areas of Victoria. We are pleased to welcome you to our country – to enjoy the landscapes, the flora and fauna. The Taungurung will continue to care for this country and welcome those who share a similar respect.

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ABOUT US



The Taungurung (Daung Wurrung) people occupy much of central Victoria. Our country encompasses the area between the upper reaches of the Goulburn River and its tributaries north of the Dividing Range. From the Campaspe River to Kilmore in the West, eastwards to Mount Beauty, Benalla in the north and south to the top of the Great Dividing Range, our boundaries with other Aboriginal tribes are respected in accordance with traditional laws.

Traditionally, our people lived a hunter/gatherer existence. The various clan groups migrated on seasonal basis through their territory dependent upon the seasonal variations of weather and the availability of food.

The Taungurung people are closely affiliated with the neighbouring tribes, through language, ceremonies and kinship ties. We are part of an alliance with the five adjoining tribes to form the Kulin Nation. Other members of the Kulin Nation are the Woiwurrung, Boonwurrung, Wathaurung, and Djadjawrung. The Kulin Nation group also shares common dreamtime ancestors and creation stories, religious beliefs and economic and social relationships.

TRADITIONAL TAUNGURUNG

The Taungurung people shared a common bond in moiety affiliation with the other tribes. Their world was divided into two moieties: Waang (Crow) and Bunjil (Wedge Tail Eagle). Members of the tribe identified with one or the other of these moieties and it was their moiety which determined the pattern for marriage between individuals, clans and tribes and transcended local allegiances by obliging clan members to find spouses from some distant clan of the opposite moiety either within or outside their own Wurrung (Language group).

The nomadic nature of the Taungurung people enabled us to utilise the resources available in our vast country. Our ancestors had an intimate knowledge of their environment and were able to sustain the ecology of the each region and exploit the food available.

A staple plant food was the Mirniong (Yam Daisy) which provided a reliable source of carbohydrate. Other plants such as the Bracken Fern (food and medicine), the Tree Fern, Kangaroo Apple and Cherry Ballart

were a valuable food source and can still be seen growing on Taungurung country today.

Wangnarra (Stringybark) was used to construct Yilam (Shelters) or to weave Benak (Baskets). Fibrous plants, such as Buarth (Tussock Grass) produced Burr-t-tean (Twine) for Garrt-girrk (Nets) while other tree species were utilised for their timber to fashion Malgarr (Shields), Gudjerrun (Clubs), Wangim (Boomerangs), Darnuk (Water Carriers) and Gurrong (Canoes). The rich resources of the permanent rivers, creeks, tributaries and associated floodplains enabled the Taungurung to access an abundance of fish and other wildlife. Fish were speared and trapped while water birds netted and the Mirrm (Kangaroo), Gorbil (Koala), and Barraimal (Emu) provided nourishing food.

The pelts from the Walert (Native Possum) were sewn together to form Googarra (Cloak) ideal for the often cold and wet conditions. Plants such as Kurrajong provided fibres to weave Garrt-girrk (Nets) for harvesting the nutritious Deberer (Bogong Moth). In the summer the Taungurung would travel South for the Deberer season and then head back Northwards when the weather cooled.

The traditional Taungurung people consisted of nine clans:

Buthera Balug – The Buthera Balug was located on the Upper Goulburn, as far down as Yea and Seymour.

Look Willam – The Look Willam roamed the area on the Campaspe River, near Kilmore.

Moomoom Gundidj – The Moomoom Gundidj lived west of the Campaspe River, and northwest of Mitchellstown.

Nattarak Balug – The Nattarak Balug lived on the Coliban River and upper Campaspe River.

Nira Balug – The Nira Balug ‘Cave People’ bordered the Woiwurrung at the Great Dividing Range, and lived on creeks and hills near Kilmore, Broadford, Pyalong and westward towards Mt Macedon.

Warring-Illum Balug – The Warring-Illum Balug, (Warring being the name for the Goulburn River), lived on the Upper Goulburn River, at Yea and Alexandra.

Yarran-Illam – The Yarran-Illam clan were located on the east side of the Goulburn River, below Seymour.

Yeerun-Illam-Balug – The Yeerun-Illam-Balug inhabited the area around Benalla and the Yowung-Illam-Balug lived at Alexandra, Mansfield and the Upper Goulburn River.

Sadly there are descendants of only five of those clan groups that survive today.

