

KULIN NATIONS

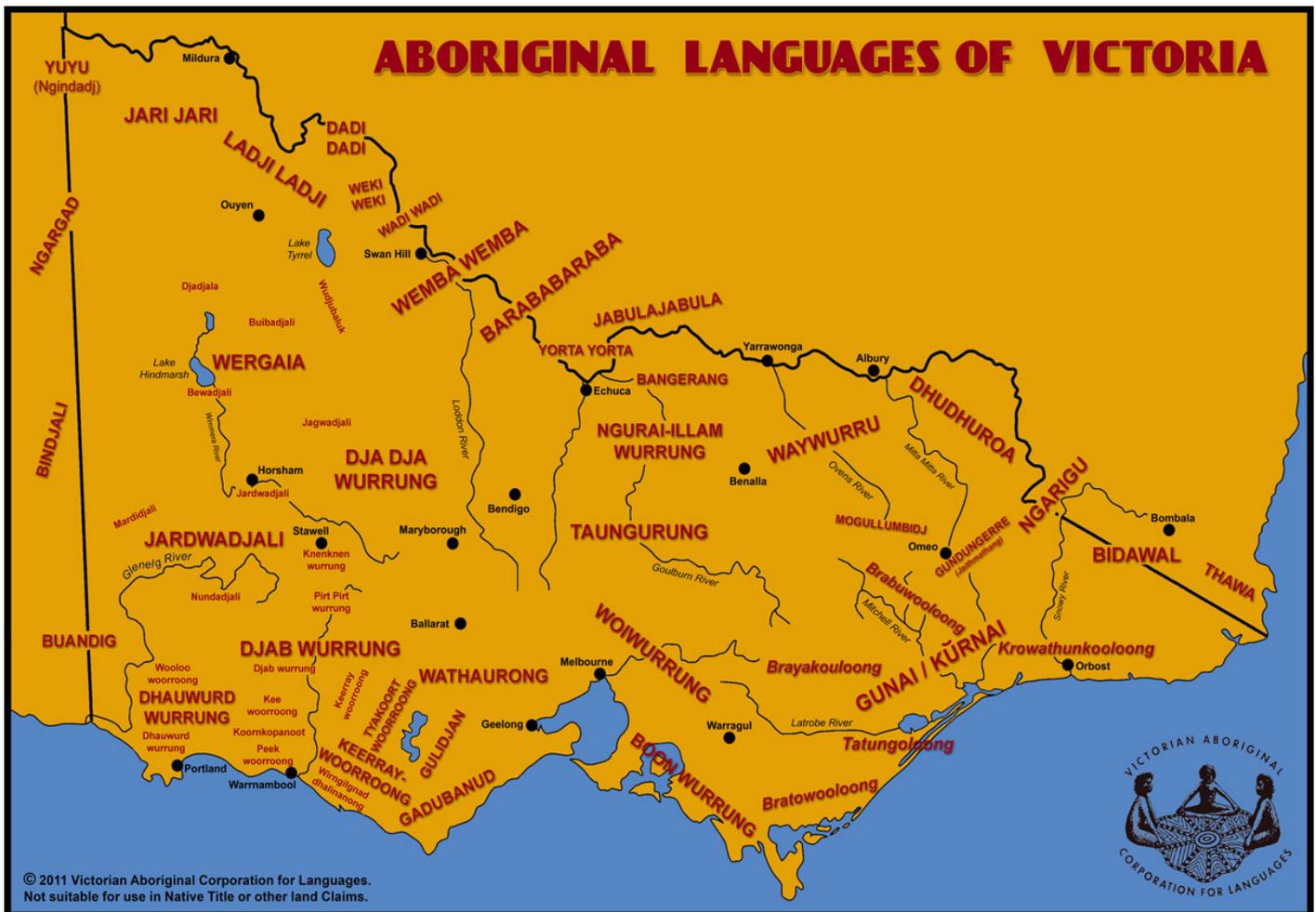
The Kulin nations are the five language groups that traditionally lived in the Port Phillip region. These language groups were connected through shared moieties – the Bunjil (wedge tailed eagle) and Waa (crow). Within each language group, members of the community identified with one or the other of these moieties. It was their moiety that determined the pattern for marriage between individuals, clans and tribes. Community members had to find spouses from another language group of the opposite moiety, either within or outside their own wurrung (language group).

In Kulin mythology, Bunjil, the eagle or eagle hawk, is the creator deity, culture hero and ancestral being. Waa, in contrast, is a trickster character but also an ancestral being.

The Kulin people believed that during the Dreamtime, Bunjil took shelter in a cave located in the part of Gariwerd that is now known the Black Range Scenic Reserve. Bunjil’s Shelter is today a popular tourist attraction and one of the most important Aboriginal rock art sites in the region.

The five language groups of the Kulin are:

- Taungurung
- Wurundjeri
- Wadawurrung
- Boon Wurrung
- Dja Dja Wurrung



TAUNGURUNG

Area of Victoria: North of the Great Dividing Range in the watersheds of the Broken, Delatite, Coliban, Goulburn and Campaspe Rivers

Language: Daungwurrung language

Background Information:

The Taungurung people, also known as the Daung Wurrung, were nine clans who spoke the Daungwurrung language and were part of the Kulin nations.

The Taungurung people used the King and Howqua River valleys as a major route for trade or war between tribes. The Howqua River valley contains a number of archaeological sites of significance including at least two quarry sites for greenstone, an exceptionally hard rock used for stone axes, spears and other cutting tools which the Taungerong traded with other tribes.

The 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 Taungerong country today.

WURUNDJERI

Area of Victoria: From the north of the Yarra River, including what is now metropolitan Melbourne to the Werribee River. The boundary spreads south east as far as Mordialloc creek and over to Healesville.

Language: Woi Wurrung

Background Information:

The Wurundjeri have lived in the area for up to 40,000 years.

The Wurundjeri had regular camping spots along the Merri Creek, which they would visit according to season. In winter the low-lying land next to the creek was subject to flooding and the general dampness made it an unsuitable place for camping. At this time they would move to the hills. In summer time when food supplies were plentiful along the creeks, clans would visit one another and host meetings and ceremonies.

Women were responsible for 90% of food collected, of which the staple were plants. All Wurundjeri women carried a long fire hardened digging stick known as a *kannan*. They used their *kannan* to dig up the root or tuber of the murnong or yam daisy.

The Merri Creek supplied the Wurundjeri with an abundance of food such as eel, fish, and duck. Women waded through the Merri with string bags suspended around their neck, searching the bottom of the stream for shellfish. Emu and kangaroo were hunted in the surrounding grasslands. The Hobson's Bay in particular was once an excellent Kangaroo hunting ground.

In the forests and hills, possum was also a staple source of food and clothing. The flesh of the possum was cooked and eaten, while the skin sewn into valuable waterproof cloaks. These cloaks were fastened at the shoulder and extended to the knees. Clan designs were incised with a mussel shell tool into the inner surfaces of the skins. Wearing the fur side next to the body showed off the designs, which were highlighted with red ochre.

WADAWURRUNG

Area of Victoria: Wadawurrung live around Melbourne, Geelong and the Bellarine Peninsula. The Wadawurrung territory extended from the southern side of the Werribee River to Port Phillip, the Bellarine Peninsula, the Otway forests, and northwest to Mount Emu and Mount Misery. Their territory encompassed the Ballarat goldfields.

Language: Wada Wurrung

Background Information:

The Wadawurrung ranged over a wide area according to seasonal food sources, ceremonial obligations and trading relationships. The people conscientiously managed their land by building substantial houses, cultivating root vegetables and promoting grasslands by using controlled winter fire to promote the best conditions for plants and game while eliminating the risk of wildfire in summer.

In Wadawurrung culture, certain animals were symbolic. Examples include: the turtle symbolised love, the goanna for journey, platypus for wisdom and the barramundi for freedom.

The Wadawurrung were particularly good at cultivating and harvesting Old Man Weed, which is a very effective healing plant used for curing colds and chest infections. They continue this tradition today.

DJA DJA WURRUNG

Area of Victoria: Extended from Mount Franklin and the towns of Creswick and Daylesford in the southeast to Castlemaine, Maldon and Bendigo in the east, Boort in the north, Donald in the northwest, to Navarre Hill and Mount Avoca marking the southwest boundary. Their territory encompassed the Bendigo and Clunes goldfields.

Language: Dja Dja Wurrung

Background Information:

Dja Dja Wurrung, also known as the Jaara people and Loddon River tribe.

They were part of established trade networks, which allowed goods and information to flow over substantial distances. The Tachylite deposits near Spring Hill and the Coliban River may have been important trade goods as stone artefacts from this material have been found around Victoria.

There is evidence that smallpox swept through the Dja Dja Wurrung in 1789 and 1825, which would have decimated the population at the time. The epidemics were incorporated into Dja Dja Wurrung mythology as a giant snake, the Mindye, sent by Bunjil, to blow magic dust over people to punish them for being bad.

BOON WURRUNG

For information about the Boon Wurrung language group please visit the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages at www.vaclang.org.au