

## 11. Human history of the Port Campbell area

### Aim

This activity encourages students to investigate the human history of the Port Campbell area.

### Materials

- Resource sheet: History and culture.

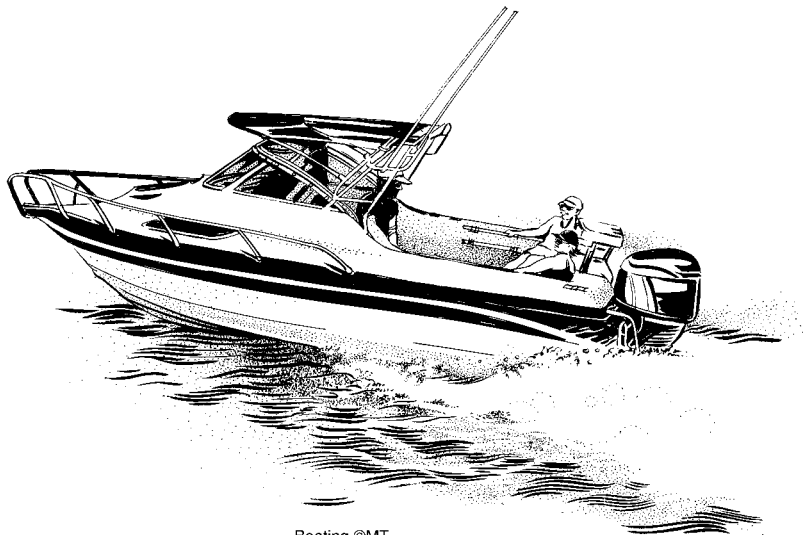
### Activities

1. Use the resource sheet: History and culture, plus other references to research the ways that people have used the Port Campbell area over time.
2. List the different groups of people that have used/visited the area in the last three centuries. Beside each group compile a dot point summary of the kinds of activities they undertook in the area.

3. Compare the ways they used the area. Suggest what impacts these user groups might have had on the area.

4. List the kinds of evidence/relics there might be at Port Campbell National Park of these different people and the uses they made of the area.

5. For each different group of people, write a short story depicting their lives in the Port Campbell area. Include details about why they visited or lived in the area, their lifestyle, and what hardships, pleasures or benefits (if any) the area may have given them.



Boating ©MT

## 11. History and culture around Port Campbell

The Port Campbell area is rich in human history and culture. It includes Indigenous people's history - the Kirrae-Whurrong people, the impact of European settlement, the history of European immigration in sailing ships, elements of isolated settlement and pastoral history, early coastal maritime trade, and recreation and tourism.

### Indigenous culture

#### *Kirrae-Wurong – a coastal life*

Twenty-one clans speaking the Kirrae-Whurrong (literally meaning blood lip) language occupied the country along the coast of Warrnambool to Princetown inland to Mount Shadwell, Timboon and Mount Hamilton. Kirrae-Whurrong clans gathered with Djab wurrung, north-eastern Dhauwurd wurrung, and Wath wurrung clans to harvest eels at Lake Bolac. These people also met at Mirraewuae Swamp, near Hexham, to hunt emus and other game and to conduct other business.

When the Kirrae-Whurrong first sighted a European ship at sea they considered it a monster of the deep, named a Koorong, and fled the coast.

The Ngaragurd gunditj (pronounced ngarah-gurd-goonditch) people, a clan of the Kirrae-Whurrong, lived along this rugged coastline, believed to be created by Bunjil (the creator spirit) in the time of the Dreaming. Their hunting territories lay between the Curdies and Gellibrand Rivers.

Initiated men of the clan would hunt for large game such as kangaroos and emus. They would fish and collect shellfish off the many rock shelves along the coast. Access was gained by cutting steps into the cliff to make a staircase. The women would hunt the smaller game like echidnas and lizards and collect seeds to grind for damper, harvest fresh fruits, dig up bulbs and pick vegetables that grew in abundance.

Remnants of great feasts remain in the form of oven mounds and shell deposits (middens), often scattered with stone tools, and other artefacts made from bones and shell.

The children would stay with their mothers and learn handicrafts that would build a skills base for future reference. They played games that imitated hunting and gathering, and learnt the laws through stories, songs and dances from the Elders of the clan.

The Ngaragurd gunditj people adapted their lifestyle as the climate and geographical environment changed. Their diets changed as the landscape changed. They walked across land that has now been claimed by the sea!

Today the descendants of the Ngaragurd gunditj and Kirrae-Whurrong still live in their country of birth and have an ongoing connection with many of the culturally significant and sacred sites within Port Campbell National Park.

Indigenous people's artefacts found in the Port Campbell area include shell middens, stone artefacts and a number of staircases cut into the coastal cliffs.

All Indigenous sites are protected by law. Please respect Indigenous heritage by not removing, damaging or trampling any artefact or sites.

Sources:

*Port Campbell The Original Peoples.* John Clarke.

*Scars in the Landscape. A register of massacre sites in Western Victoria, 1803 - 1859.* Ian Clark, Aboriginal Studies Press.

### Early European settlement

The most notable historic building remaining from this period is Glenample Homestead, situated outside the park, four kilometres east of the Loch Ard Gorge. Glenample is the site of one of the first homesteads along the Port Campbell coast, and the place to which the survivors of the Loch Ard disaster were taken.

The Glenample homestead building also has considerable architectural interest as an example of primitive architecture. It is on the Register of Historic Buildings, and was progressively restored by 1989. There is a display describing the Loch Ard story and life at the Homestead.

Evidence of past land use remains at a number of other sites. The foundation remains of 'Clifton', an early holiday house is situated in the sand dunes at Clifton Beach, close to the boundary of the national park. Much of the stone from the structure was used to maintain outbuildings at 'Glenample'.

The Rocket Shed was built to store rocket equipment used in coastal rescues. It was built many years ago on the Port Campbell foreshore near the jetty access road and now houses a display of former rescue equipment. Rockets were used for firing rope lines to shipwrecks to help bring in the survivors.

The Point Ronald tunnel was constructed to prevent water in the Gellibrand River estuary building up behind the sand bar and flooding grazing lands in the river valley but it is now choked with sand and abandoned.

### Port Campbell's development

Before being surveyed in 1870, the township of Port Campbell was a small trading centre for coastal vessels plying between Melbourne, Warrnambool, Port Fairy and Portland. Whalers and sealers used the bay for shelter. Settlers cleared the surrounding lands for agriculture.

The township began developing with the construction of a jetty and special efforts to attract visitors in the summer. Accommodation houses opened, bathing boxes were set up on the beach and picnics were organised. The Loch Ard shipwreck and other shipwrecks gave Port Campbell considerable publicity.

Surrounding agricultural land developed and more people came into the district, although irregular trading by sea and lack of a railway to Camperdown made it difficult for farmers to get their produce to markets.

From the 1900s onwards Port Campbell became known as a seaside resort. The Port Campbell Progress Association built paths and provided seats, signs and walking tracks to beauty spots.

In 1959 Port Campbell moved to support a government decision to establish a National Park. Since the park's establishment in 1964, the town's services and character have increasingly focussed on servicing tourists.



'Glenample' homestead today.