

The Taungurung First Nation People



Taungurung people are the Traditional Owners of a large part of central Victoria and lived on this Country for more than a thousand generations.

The Taungurung people are many clans sharing one language and deep spiritual connection with Country.

The current generation of Taungurung people is strongly committed to the resurgence of their cultural knowledge and practice, reversing the dire effects of colonisation.

Taungurung History

Life before European invasion was characterised by a strong, ritually-expressed connection to Country, with a number of clans making up the Taungurung 'wurrung' (language group) or First Nation. When settler society spread from Melbourne to Taungurung Country, the Taungurung people's occupation of and unique connection with the land was seriously diminished.

The Taungurung, along with all other Victorian First Nation peoples, were profoundly impacted and were for well over a century rendered powerless and largely invisible by the prejudice and ignorance of settler society.

Taungurung Present

Today, Taungurung people are recovering a sense of shared identity, common purpose and cultural vitality. They are embarked upon an intentional journey to reclaim their culture, assert their history, revitalise their language and embrace their rightful involvement as custodians of the Taungurung lands. Evidence of scar trees, rock wells, rock art, cultural artefacts and place names all indicate that Taungurung people have been in this part of Victoria for many thousands of years. There is currently a strong emphasis on facilitating the return of Taungurung people to reside on their traditional estate. The Taungurung sovereign flag, designed by Taungurung Elder Loraine Padgham and launched on 7 May 2021, symbolises the reassertion of the identity and pride of the Taungurung people.

A Taungurung Future



An historic agreement with the State Government was reached in 2018 to recognise the Traditional Owner rights of the Taungurung people after many years of dispossession and denial. The Recognition and Settlement Agreement provides a range of rights and benefits by which Taungurung people can provide a strong future for their children, and it is an avenue for their culture and relationship to Country to be recognised, safeguarded and promoted. The agreement also grants native title rights to Crown land on Taungurung Country and provides mechanisms for land management, economic development and recognition into the future.





Taungurung Culture

Land, family, law, ceremony and language are five key interconnected elements of Indigenous culture. These five elements combine to create a way of seeing and being in the world that is distinctly Indigenous. The people of the Taungurung First Nation share in common their understanding of each of these elements - and so share a distinctive culture.

Social Organisation

Our ancestors shared a common social organisation, based on moiety affiliation, with the other Kulin groups. Their society was divided into two moieties: Bundjil (Wedge Tail Eagle) and Waang (Crow). Every member of the tribe identified with one of these moieties and it was this identity that determined their pattern for marriage, ceremonial life and other activities. The various Taungurung clans were all associated with defined estates within the tribal lands. Each clan had strong connection with and responsibility for its clan estate, and for the songlines that traversed their estate. The Taungurung people of today, whilst retaining clan affiliation, collectively take responsibility for the entire Taungurung estate. Their continuing strong sense of connection with their traditional lands is at times expressed through ceremony.



Cultural Practices



Taungurung creation stories, tools, artefacts, baskets, kinship, weaving, songs, language and dance are all important elements that together form a rich cultural identity for the Taungurung people.

The possum skin cloak is another important traditional item that contributes to cultural unity today. Whereas once it provided warmth and water protection from in harsh winters, it is now used to signify status and for ceremonial activities and occasions. The possum skin cloak is often adorned with designs, sometimes displaying totemic identity and stories.

Tanderrum is a coming-together ceremony enacted by the nations of the Kulin confederacy to express welcome, safe passage, and cultural unity. An annual Tanderrum is generally held at Federation Square to open the Melbourne International Arts Festival and the Taungurung people, in preparing for these significant public events, enact and re-imagine their ancient stories and songlines in contemporary dance and song in order to provide a powerful presentation of their traditions.

Pictured: Taungurung Elders, Aunty Jacqui Stewart (left) and Uncle Mick Harding (right), participating in the annual Tanderrum at Federation Square.

