



*Healthy Parks  
Healthy People*



**The Original Custodians of the Land**

There is evidence that Aboriginal people have lived in the Canberra region for at least 21,000 years. Their descendants still live in the region today but not in the same way as their ancestors did.

In past times the ACT was a meeting place for people from different language groups including the Ngannawal, Ngarigo and Walgalu. Here they gathered together to hunt and feast on Bogong Moths as well as other native plants and animals.



Hanging Rock, Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve

**The Dreaming**

Every Aboriginal group has its own ancestral Dreamtime stories which have been handed down through generations. These stories describe how Aboriginal people are connected to certain plants, animals and the land.

Aboriginal people regard themselves as custodians of the land. This custodianship carries responsibilities for survival of the land and preservation of the spirit in the life forms of that land.

**Aboriginal Sites**

Canberra has numerous Aboriginal heritage places called 'sites', which indicate the extensive occupation of this area by Aboriginal people. Many sites are located in Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and Namadgi National Park.

It is a common misconception that Aboriginal sites are all 'sacred sites'. While it is true that some places are considered sacred, such as ceremonial or initiation grounds, the great majority of Aboriginal places (campsites for example), relate to the pursuance of everyday activities.

Many Aboriginal heritage sites have been discovered as a result of archaeological and heritage surveys and information provided by members of the local Aboriginal community. Others have been reported by interested members of the public who have accidentally discovered them. Since the whole of the ACT has not been subjected to a comprehensive survey, a record of all Aboriginal sites that occur in the Territory does not exist. At present there are more than 3000 known Aboriginal heritage places in the ACT.

**Significant Sites and Places**

Sites that show Aboriginal occupation in the region include:

**Artefacts:** artefacts and artefact scatters are found throughout the entire region. These are stone remnants from toolmaking.

**Campsites:** significant campsites are located at Pialligo and Smokers Gap on the Corin Road.



Aboriginal stone artefact, Farrer Ridge Nature Reserve.



Aboriginal stone artefacts may consist of rocks shaped by striking one rock against another to form sharp edges. These were then used as knives or hatchets to cut animal skins or shape wooden tools.

**Grinding grooves:** these can be found in the suburbs of Theodore and Latham as well as some in Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve. Grinding grooves are the result of grinding of one stone against another many times to produce tools and weapons and to grind native seeds into flour.

Axe grinding grooves, Theodore, southern Canberra



**Rock shelters and art sites:** the most significant ACT rock art site is at Yankee Hat in southern Namadgi National Park. There are also rock shelters at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve including Birrigai Rock Shelter, Hanging Rock and Wallaby Rocks.

**Stone arrangements:** Mt Namadgi in Namadgi National Park has stone arrangements where initiation ceremonies were held.

**Scarred trees:** There are a few scarred trees on the property of Lanyon as well as in the suburbs of Wanniasa, Gilmore, Garran and Kambah. Scarred trees can result from removal of bark to make shelters, canoes and carry bowls. They were also deliberately scarred for use as markers or to reach another resource such as possums or birds eggs in the tree.



Scarred tree in Wanniasa

**Ceremonial grounds:** Acton Peninsula is the site of a former ceremonial ground.

**Quarries and sacred sites:** A number of chert rock quarry sites are located in the Gungahlin and Symonston areas. These chert quarries were used to manufacture stone tools. An ochre quarry is located at Red Hill.

There are also significant Aboriginal sites where Aboriginal people made contact with Europeans including historic settlements, cemeteries, reserves and recent burial sites.

### Cultural Awareness

Interpretation of local Aboriginal culture, such as the use of plants, tools and weapons, gives an insight into traditional ways of life and builds respect for Aboriginal sites and custodians of the land. Some of our Ranger Guided Walks are dedicated to explaining Aboriginal culture.



Ngambri dancers performing arts group is composed of mainly Ngambri/Ngunnawal descendants.

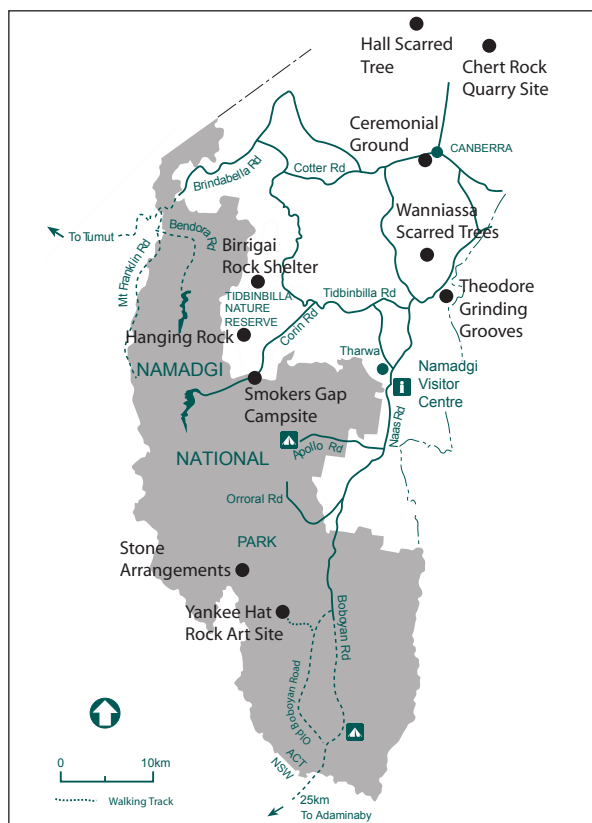


Yankee Hat Rock Art site, Namadgi National Park

### Protect Our Heritage

Please respect all heritage sites. It is an offence to damage, disturb or destroy Aboriginal heritage places including objects, whether registered or not.

### Significant Indigenous Sites in the ACT



### Canberra Tracks

For more insights into Aboriginal and European cultural history in the ACT, take the self drive *Ngunnawal Track*, the *Limestone Plains Track* or *Looking at Canberra Track* starting at Mt Ainslie. Information is available from the Canberra Visitor Centre and the TAMS website.



### Further Information

Canberra Connect: 13 22 81

Website: [www.tams.act.gov.au](http://www.tams.act.gov.au)

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PCL Vision Statement: *Integrated land management conserves biodiversity and supports an enjoyable, healthy and sustainable lifestyle.*