

# Indigenous Immersion Experience

## Saltbush, Balnarring Victoria



### Teaching Reflection

In July, a group of our Year 10 students were fortunate to take part in an Indigenous Immersion camp at 'Saltbush' in Balnarring.

In conjunction with students from Kilbreda College, the group participated in many activities ranging from weeding, planting native species, painting, baking damper, eating Indigenous plants and bulbs and learnt more about Indigenous culture.

Our leader of these activities was Adam Magennis, a Bunurong artist who frequently works with our College Community. Each day began with a smoking ceremony where native plants including wattle, manna gum and cherry ballart were used. Adam explained to the group the significance and meaning of each and the order of which these plant species are used in ceremony.

During the day the group participated in activities and walks on country and in the evening gather for movies including the eye-opening documentary, "In My Blood It Runs". A highlight of the Immersion experience for myself, was the guided tour of the bush, where plants were identified that could be used for cooking, medicinal or practical purposes.

This was a beautiful and respectful experience and I am grateful to Adam, the Kilbreda staff who attended and the 19 students who were truly immersed and moved.

**Kylie Paterson-Zigouras**  
INTEGRAL ECOLOGICAL LEADER  
VCE ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE

"It truly made me rethink what I value in my life."

### Student Experience

*"The Indigenous Immersion camp was an amazing opportunity to experience one of the world's richest yet ignored cultures that has existed for over 40,000 years. Under the guidance of Adam, a proud member of the Bunurong People, our group from St Bede's College and Kilbreda College participated in numerous activities in the countryside of Balnarring.*

*From smoking ceremonies, to creating fire with sticks, learning about geology, painting artwork in a meditative space and baking traditional Indigenous cuisine; all in a picturesque natural environment - these activities kept us immersed and served as a valuable insight into a thriving culture. My personal favourites were learning about the numerous bush medicines that were used as ancient remedies from Shaun who was very passionate about his craft. It was also great to perform firestick farming, maintaining and transporting a campfire to control burn all the dried grasses.*

*Besides the activities, I found this camp an invaluable retreat from the overstimulation of the modern world. The escape into the natural scenery, away from the urban environment and technology was refreshing. Before this camp, I used to be quite ignorant of Indigenous culture, but this experience has made me view the practices of the Aboriginal peoples as simple, yet so purposeful. Unlike the Western World, they didn't want much and fulfilled their lives with a communal and spiritual connection to the country. It truly made me rethink what I value in my life.*

*Finally, this was a great opportunity to spend time with friends back in the cabins and even make new ones. I had numerous profound conversations and laughs during this experience that I will remember for a lifetime. I also want to thank Ms Patterson-Zigouras for going to the extra effort just to make my birthday so special!*

*This camp was an insightful and fun time that I am glad I had the privilege of experiencing. I thank Ms Patterson-Zigouras, Mrs Griffiths as well as all the other staff and facilitators who made this camp possible."*

**Harry McCawley**  
YEAR 10

