

A photograph of a coastal landscape. In the foreground, a large, dark tree stands on a sandy beach. The beach is reddish-brown. In the background, the ocean is a deep blue, and the sky is a clear, light blue with a few wispy clouds. Two people are visible on the beach, one near the tree and one further away. The text is overlaid on the image.

# **Contestation of land in Western Australia:**

## Environmental history and justice of Aboriginal Australians in WA

**Research Proposal, by Sophie Overington**

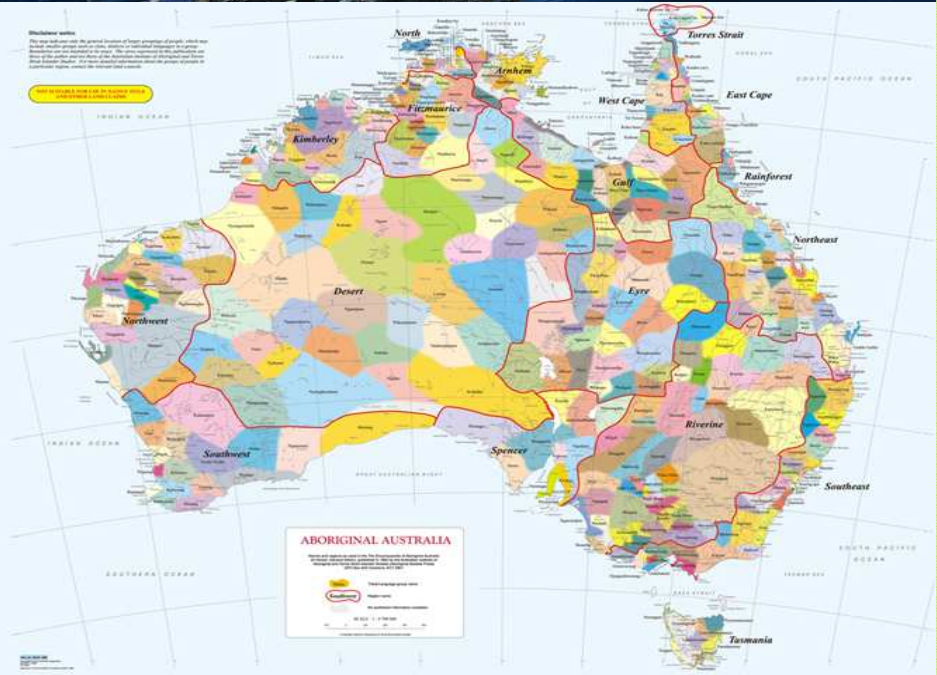
# DESCRIPTION

- Aboriginal culture present from 40,000+ years ago
- European colonization of Australia in 1788
- Traditional land rights not recognized until the 1970's in Western Australia, developments including *Western Australia v Commonwealth* (1995), *Western Australia v Ward* (2002)
- Industry beginnings in Western Australia include agriculture (approx. 1830) and mining development in Western Australia (approx. 1890s), spanning until now with strong industry in gold, petroleum, gas, and iron ore
- Contestation for land space first and foremost political issue
- Need for industry and it's products, yet "not in my backyard" attitude
- Look at history through a lens of environmental history, and environmental justice – the role in which nature played in this particular history, not just politics

# RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze how the political actions of European settlement in Western Australia has impacted the environment and the social/cultural impact on the Indigenous West Australians, *and vice versa*
2. To identify the environmental justice issues related to contestation for land space for the traditional owners of land in WA and the historical context
3. To determine if the change in land-use over time has been purely the result of political impacts, or whether social and environmental aspects have played a role

# RELEVANCE?



# METHODOLOGIES

- Literature review
- Outline legislation regarding Aboriginal land rights in WA
- Construct timeline of Aboriginal history compared to development projects in WA
- Surveys and interviews with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australian's in the community
- Interdisciplinary approach: Environmental, social, political history
- Time scope: Approx. 1830 – 1970 (First beginnings of agriculture development by Europeans → development of Native Title legislation in Australia)



# SOURCES

## PRIMARY:

- Dept. of Aboriginal Affairs, archives from 1886
- Legislation of Aboriginal Land Right law
- Oral history from Aboriginal elders
- Interviews of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal locals
- Development Proposals of interested companies

## SECONDARY:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics
- Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Cultural Centre publications
- News reports regarding conflicts
- Scholarly literature - *The Journal of Australian Indigenous Law, Tourism Management, Biogeography, Environmental Management, Social Science and Medicine, Australian Journal of Anthropology, Australasian Journal of Environmental Management*

# Expected findings?

