

SE News
HD **'Treaty' averted massacre in early Melbourne**
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WC 387 words
PD 25 August 2008
SN The Age
SC AGEE
ED First
PG 5
LA English
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EUROPEAN settlement of Melbourne might have ended in a slaughter if local Aborigines had not adhered to an agreement they made with one of the city's founders, John Batman, according to a new documentary.

Indigenous writer **Bruce Pascoe** has found that an Aboriginal group known as the Duangwurrung from northern Victoria, not party to the "treaty", were planning to wipe out the first settlers.

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But the whites were warned of the attack by the indigenous people on whose land they had settled, because of obligations under a ceremony known as "tanderum". This was an Aboriginal guarantee of protection to people they had allowed on their land.

Mr Pascoe's research will be aired in a documentary to be shown on SBS television in October. The seven-part series has been directed by two Aboriginal filmmakers, Rachel Perkins and Beck Cole.

The First Australians seeks to chronicle the birth of contemporary Australia, and the collision of two worlds, through the eyes of Aborigines.

It will begin with the interaction between the Aboriginal people of Sydney and the British Empire that started on January 26, 1788. It reveals friendships that evolve and ultimately turn to mistrust.

The documentary also shows that it was fortunate that the new colony's governor, Arthur Phillip, was missing a front tooth. This gave him respect among the original inhabitants because it was the tooth knocked out in an initiation ceremony.

Like many Aboriginal people who grew up in white society, the only Australian history Mr Pascoe had heard was about the triumph of European settlement.

His family had talked little about their past and it was only when he was 18 that he discovered Aborigines might have a different story to tell.

While investigating his personal history and genealogy he discovered, mainly from documents in the State Library, what had happened in the early years of settlement.

"I have no doubt it was a war. I believe that most Victorian Aborigines, particularly adult males, had been shot at in the first few decades of white settlement," he said. "Many were killed and many were injured."

He found that all Tasmanian Aborigines resettled on Flinders Island had shotgun pellets embedded in their flesh.

The First Australians begins on October 12.

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AN Document AGEE000020080824e48p0001d

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Text	Bruce Pascoe
Date	01/01/2000 to 24/12/2010
Source	All Sources
Author	All Authors
Company	All Companies
Subject	All Subjects
Industry	All Industries
Region	All Regions
Language	English
News Filters	Region: Australia
Results Found	116
Timestamp	12 August 2021 19:44 GMT