Making music
Indigenous Australians believe that the spirit ancestors created the world by singing it to life during the Dreamtime. Music and song are at the heart of their culture. Gatherings such as the Gattijirrk Music Festival on Milingimbi Island celebrate different clans’ musical traditions. Each clan has its own storytelling songs called bunggul.

Musical instruments
Traditional Indigenous Australian music is usually made with rhythmic singing, or chanting, and percussion-style instruments. Handclaps, body slapping and blima (clapsticks) keep the beat going. Drums are made out of lizard skin and rattles are made from bunches of seed pods.

Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu
(born 1970)
Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu is a famous blind Indigenous Australian musician. He only speaks a few words of English and records in the Yolngu language. He sings about the stories of his Gumatji clan.

The didgeridoo is an ancient wind instrument still made and played today. Didgeridoos are made from branches of stringybark, woollybark or bloodwood trees that have been hollowed out by termites (small burrowing insects). The player produces the sound by blowing and buzzing down the hollow wooden tube.

Today, Indigenous Australian music is a mixture of traditional and modern instruments, and modern pop and hip-hop beats. Country music is also popular. Musicians, such as the group Yothu Yindi and singers Archie Roach and Christine Anu, use their lyrics to protest about politics, raise awareness about the environment and to celebrate their culture.

Word bank
seed pod part of a plant that holds the seeds. When it dries out and someone then shakes it, the seeds rattle around inside it.