Critical Indigenous Pedagogical Practice

I would like to acknowledge the Kaurna people, the traditional owners of the lands and waters where the city of Adelaide has been built.

‘Our Lands, Our Waters, Our People, All Living Things are connected. We implore people to respect our Yarluwar-Ruwe (Country) as it is created in Kaldowinyeri (the Creation). We long for sparkling, clean waters, healthy land and people and all living things. We long for the Yarluwar-Ruwe (Sea-Country) of our ancestors. Our vision is all people Caring, Sharing, Knowing and Respecting the lands, the waters and all living things (Hemming, 2009).’

Learning is created in the spaces between. Within these precious and fragile spaces reside dynamic possibilities. These possibilities swim like dreams and hold the promise of peace, wonder and new ways of being; maps worth following. These spaces occur not just between people and people, but also between people and things, animals, plants, places, spaces, knowledge and ideas. With a willingness to grow and to listen, what comes of these meetings; the spaces between, can be truly transformative.

**Rationale**

As a result of invasion, Indigenous students are often faced with a challenge when it comes to school. They attend less frequently and are more likely to develop anti-schooling attitudes, leading to their early exit (Rahman, 2010). Racialisation is apparent within government systems and schools; working in a hierarchical manner to empower the dominant race, ‘white’ Australia. In looking at recent figures of Indigenous students in the education system (Rahman, 2010), it is clear of the need for change. It cannot be ignored that Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander students, if left to struggle alone in a system that does not allow them to be, to see themselves and does not show them equity,
will be consumed by the continual colonizing project that we call school. I am a ‘white’ teacher of Indigenous Australian and Torres Strait Islander students. I am in a challenging yet ideal position to aid the healing process (Dyson, 1998).

I have created a Critical Indigenous Pedagogical Practice (CIPP) framed within the theories of Reconciliation Pedagogy and Critical Race Theory in order to meet the needs of Indigenous Australian and Torres Strait Islander students. This CIPP forms a structure with which to begin unpacking racialisation within the classroom (Tannoch-Bland, 1998) and privileges Indigenous ways of knowing; contributing to the de-colonising project, leading towards reconciliation.

The CIPP works to maintain focus, to assist in the healing of Australia’s festering historical wounds within the classroom (Dodson, 2007). Reconciliation works ‘to bring peoples and their different as well as common histories, interests and aspirations together, in a just and progressive cause, through thorough examination of privilege and ‘progress’ on the one hand and redress, rights and needs on the other (G Worby, 2006).’

**Critical Indigenous Pedagogical Practice – The Three Issues**

Within my CIPP, I work towards equity in learning outcomes for all students with excellence accessible to all. I use key strategies in the maintenance of an engaged pedagogy which will assist in the success of Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander students at school (Robinson, 2011), (Greenfield, 2011), (Hooks, 1994). In order to meet the needs of all students, I have developed my CIPP around three key issues.

1. **The appropriateness of the curriculum specifically Year 4 Geography and Art.**
2. **Engaging the Indigenous student in the primary years at school.**
3. **The suitability of the resources to support the curriculum.**
The issues are interconnected, working together in the establishment of engaged pedagogy (Hooks, 1994). Engagement is central to learning however, without appropriate resources and curriculum, students will not engage. It is vital I promote culturally appropriate frames of reference relevant to Indigenous children, families and communities (Hare, 2011). With the use of appropriate resources, a curriculum that privileges Indigenous ways of knowing and allows the Indigenous student to see themselves, students are more likely to know they belong and engage with learning. ‘The child is the starting point in making decisions about an appropriate pedagogy (Robinson, 2011).’ With this in mind, Individual Learning Plans (ILP’s) would be developed for each Indigenous Australian and Torres Strait Islander student.

1. **The appropriateness of the curriculum specifically Year 4 Geography and Art.**

Within the Australian Curriculum, teachers are provided with a framework in which to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures in an integrated way (ACARA, 2013). Although there are rich learning opportunities suggested, care must be taken to not only provide information about Indigenous cultures and histories but to provide curriculum that privileges Indigenous ways of knowing, allowing Indigenous students to see themselves. Learning through engaging in Indigenous Studies and culture should in no way be treated as an ‘add on’.

> ‘Indigenous Studies has the capacity to prepare all Australians for more effective engagement with one another, a reality that can only lead to a more democratic society one that is truly egalitarian rather than one that gives lip service to the notion of individual freedom while denying the First Nations peoples (Herbert, 2010).’

The CIPP frames students learning in a way that allows for the sharing of stories. A safe space is created, enabling the acknowledgement of struggle. Indigenous students see themselves and each other within the curriculum and know they too are valuable; their contribution to the learning space
welcome and needed. Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander students are enabled within the system through a culturally appropriate curriculum, and are encouraged in the development of strategies to play with knowledge and speak truths with rich and honest voices.

2. Engaging the Indigenous student in the primary years at school.

With the development of Individual Learning Plans, students are more likely to have their needs met and engage at school (MCEECDYA, 2010-2014) (Australia, 2013). ‘Children who are engaged in school develop lifelong skills in learning, participation and communication (Robinson, 2011).’ Without engagement, students receive messages of exclusion. If Indigenous students are not able to see themselves within the curriculum and Indigenous ways of knowing are not privileged; if the space does not feel safe then why would they invest in the learning? Students are likely to disengage.

As a non-Indigenous person, I acknowledge the difficulties in teaching Indigenous ways of knowing. As a result, within my CIPP I withhold a willingness to grow and dis-arm myself as an authoritative figure at the top of the classroom hierarchy. ‘Deference and respect are things teachers need to earn rather than an automatic right bestowed by my position (Robinson, 2011)’. Building a safe environment leads to greater engagement (Hooks, 1994). Diversity is shared through creative expression, Indigenous perspectives celebrated. Within my CIPP, students collaborate with other classes, parents and community members, contributing to a more engaged experience (Australia, 2013).

3. The suitability of the resources to support the curriculum.

‘Indigenous knowledge is inherently tied to land, where meaning and identity are constructed through landscapes, territory and land formations. Land and community
Indigenous students may have connections to a number of places, English may not be the first or second language spoken. Within my CIPP, the contributions of students, families and community members language and experiences within the learning space are a highly valued as resources.

Traditionally, Indigenous children engaged in learning that was experiential, land based, narrative and inter-generational (Hare, 2011). Opportunities are provided for students to explore creatively through a range of materials, formats and modes, assisting in the experience of deep and connected learning. The chosen resources have predominately been developed by, or in consultation with Indigenous Australian people so that Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander students see themselves within the curriculum. Students learn that they too can contribute positively to the world.

Critical Indigenous Pedagogical Practice - The Activities

I will now discuss and describe the activities, highlighting the curriculum and identifying appropriate resources. I imagine the activities would be adjusted based on student need and availability of community involvement. This CIPP would be developed as a long term project, with the possibility for expansion within any of the activities and integration with other subject areas.

The Year 4 Geography outcome I have focused on is: ‘The custodial responsibility Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have for Country/Place, and how this influences their past and present views about the use of resources (ACHGK023) (ACARA, 2012).’ This outcome relates to learning through connection to and care of Country and offers an opportunity to privilege Indigenous ways of knowing. This CIPP has been developed for the Fleurieu Region. The resources support learning around connection to place, locally.
Learning within this outcome contributes to the development of a stronger sense of identity within Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students, promoting reconciliation.

The Arts curriculum outcome I have chosen is: ‘4.4 Observe and identify intended purposes and meanings of artworks using visual arts terminology to compare artworks, starting with visual artworks in Australia including visual artworks of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACARA, 13).’ In the Australian Curriculum, learning within and through the Arts also provides opportunities for Indigenous ways of knowing to be privileged; ‘The Arts explores the way the relationships between People, Culture and Country/Place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples can be conveyed through a combination of art forms and their expression in living communities, and the way these build Identity (ACARA, 13).’

In my CIPP, students are encouraged to take risks, helping to build resilience. A variety of learning styles are supported. In the safe and creative space, students explore and share stories and celebrate diversity. The visual Arts capitalize on students’ skills and enhance learning by utilizing modes of learning that students use outside of school (Robinson, 2011).

1. **Stories shared/connection to place/language**

As an introduction, to establish a trusting and safe environment, I would share my story, my connection to place. I would invite students and their families to share their stories. This dialogue may include students and families sharing their stories of disconnection. Languages would be shared.

2. **Maps**

- Compare the Aboriginal map of Australia with a map of the Commonwealth of Australia, students explore differences.
Locate land occupied by the Ngarrindjeri and Kaurna people.

‘Within the context of colonialism…an overriding concept of ‘place’ exists which sanctions dispossession and dislocation of land (Worby, 2008).’ Within a safe space, students would be supported in the sharing of understanding around the impact of invasion. At this stage it would be important to work gently with students, to listen, observe and react sensitively and respectfully. Race and difference could be brought to the centre of the classroom.

• Listen to/watch rap by Kylie Sambo (Worby, 2008).

Kylie Sambo – Muckaty

• Develop a rap around the impact of invasion on Indigenous Australian People.

3. Story/Place

• View 12 Canoes website: ‘Creation’ (Incorporated, 2008).

• View Dust Echoes website: ‘Mimis’ (ABC, 2004).

‘Stories were the primary medium used to convey cultural knowledge (Hare, 2011).’ Students would explore the roles of story within Indigenous Australian cultures, these are as follows:
To convey information about the landscape

To explain natural phenomena

To teach lessons about morality, ethics and the right behavior (Centre, n.d.).

Students begin to explore, through story, their connection to place and discuss the importance of care of Country, helping to support cultural identity development.

4. **Tjilbruke – excursion & following classroom activities**

- Warriparinga: Workshop exploring native plants, bush tucker, Kaurna culture.

At Warriparinga, students would take part in a workshop. They would hear stories from Indigenous perspectives. Students would be introduced to contemporary issues affecting Indigenous peoples (Warriparinga, 2013). ‘Learning for the children…is constituted through…interactions with Aboriginal people. These interactions… produce an understanding of a relationship to place and identity (Greenfield, 2011).’ Students engage with ‘place’.

- Kingston Park: Fresh water springs and the monument of Tjilbruke and Kulutuwi.

(Warriparinga, 2013)

[Map of Tjilbruke Trail & Tjilbruke monument, Kingston Park.](Malone, 2012)

- Explore Tjilbruke story and monuments.
Through experiencing the Tjilbruke Dreaming trail, students would experience the importance of sites and the role they play for Kaurna people in maintaining connection to Country.

5. **Maps/Thukeri**

- View Thukeri story. 

((UAICC), 2009)

Students would view the story. They would discuss the connection to care of Country. Students could be introduced to the Ramindjeri, Ngarrindjeri and Kaurna countries and where they connect. Students explore the diversity of Indigenous countries, cultures and people.

- Students locate the three areas on map (ABC, 2013).

6. **Claymation of Thukeri**

- Students work in groups to create the story of Thukeri in Claymation.

With a hands-on approach, students explore the story of Thukeri through the development of a short film depicting the story with narrated or rapped dialogue. This process would require student collaboration, assisting in students learning through engaged pedagogy (Hooks, 1994).

7. **Language**

- View 12 Canoes website: ‘Language’ (Incorporated, 2008).

- YouTube clip – ‘The Language Slept’

(School, 2010)
• View Jack Buckskin teaching traditional Kaurna greetings.

Students explore language and develop an understanding about the links between language and connection to, and care of Country. Students develop understanding around the impact of invasion on Indigenous languages. Students learn to speak some Kaurna words.

(Pinhyanthi, 2013)

8. Art work tour (virtual)

Mural - Tjilbruke, Adelaide.

(Pintyandi, 2013)

In viewing examples of public artworks created by Indigenous children and artists (school murals etc.), reconciliation is highlighted. ‘The artworks provide a contemporary Kaurna presence within the physical public space of their own lands and in the public imagination and support Aboriginal self-determination (Malone, 2012).’

• Students explore the sharing of stories through the creation of public artworks contributes to Reconciliation. Students may ask: *What actions could be taken in my community? How can I contribute?*

9. Indigenous community, students, families and artists design, plan and produce an artwork for the school.
Knowledge developed throughout the CIPP would form the basis for an action, an artwork at the school. The artwork would be created in aid of reconciliation. The design would involve a collaborative process with other classes, families and consultation with Indigenous community. Correct protocols would need to be adhered to prior to and throughout any activity. The assistance of Indigenous community members would be supported by appropriate funding.

The artwork would act as a means to connecting Indigenous children to their community and place; claiming space, naming place and experiencing wellbeing. ‘Children can understand themselves as part of a much bigger, global art community – of art, artists and those who appreciate the power and importance of art (Wright, 2012).’

As a white educator, I would act as a facilitator and privilege Indigenous knowledge’s through the provision of space for the sharing of stories and through collaborating creatively with Indigenous people. I would encourage the connection to place through creative expression.

Students explore the Kaurna language within the artwork, contributing to meaning. ‘Kaurna Warra Pintyandi is keen to see the Kaurna language used as a means of promoting reconciliation (Adelaide, 2013).’ In using the Kaurna language, with due respect, approval would be sought. ‘Support and back-up from Kaurna Elders and institutional bodies such as KWP are essential (Buckskin, 2012).’

10. Reflection

- Students may ask: ‘how has the process and creation of this artwork assisted in connecting me to this place?’

11. Artwork opening celebration
The CIPP I have developed has been framed in a way that privileges Indigenous ways of knowing and allows Indigenous students to see themselves within the curriculum. With a safe and collaborative learning environment, students are supported in the development and maintenance of cultural identity as Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander students and experience themselves as valuable contributors to the learning space and community. With a variety of learning modes and activities, engagement and deep learning is encouraged. Students explore connection to place and care for Country through learning within relationships, story, language, Art and Geography.

Race and difference are brought to the centre of the classroom. Stories are shared. Speaking of language is valued and encouraged within a culturally inclusive environment. Diversity is supported and celebrated through creative expression. In learning about invasion, dislocation and the importance of connection to, and care for Country, students are able to build understanding and acknowledge the struggle.

My CIPP works towards equity in all learning areas with excellence accessible to all. Individuals are supported with the formation of ILP’s and in the building of positive self-concept and the maintenance of cultural identity. Students explore the role public art and monuments play in connecting/re-connecting Indigenous Australian people to place. Within my CIPP, Indigenous Australian and Torres Strait Islander students are key players in their learning. Students experience reconciliation through action. With the development and creation of an artwork, students affirm their position and contribute to a positive future.
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