Indigenous perspectives for teaching children about days of remembrance by decolonising curriculum

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In this discussion paper, we argue the need to decolonise curricula in our educational institutions and outline practical steps to do this to acknowledge, respect, empower and elevate Indigenous voices. As an example of colonised curriculum, Australian children previously learned about remembrance of war service days, such as Anzac Day and Remembrance Day, through teaching resources that tended to focus on the service of military personnel in wars external to Australia, for example, WWI and WWII. Less emphasis has been placed on other wars, and despite a century of conflict on homelands, even scarcer mention is being made of Australia's Frontier Wars. We explore an exemplar that aimed to address this gap, but despite meritorious intentions, the authors did not ensure that Indigenous authors were part of the process, thereby recolonising curricula. After practising reflexivity, we recommend better ways forward for future projects, by embracing truth-telling that empowers Australian Indigenous voices. This will be of interest to researchers, educators, curriculum designers and policymakers.

Introduction

On the 14 of October 2023, Australians were asked to vote on a proposed change in the Australian Constitution, to include an Indigenous Australian *Voice*. This idea was first proposed in the 2017 *Uluru Statement from the Heart*, which was a declaration from *First Nations* Australians about improving the lives of Indigenous Australians. An overwhelming majority of Australians voted against the proposal. This has left Indigenous Australians[1] without an effective voice on issues such as *Closing the Gap*, and for many, it

[1] In the Australian context, the term Indigenous Australian/s can be used to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Aboriginal refers to indigenous populations but in Australia is used to designate the Australian Aboriginal population which is located on the mainland and surrounding islands, such as the Tiwi Islands. Torres Strait Islander refers to the Melanesian people of the Torres Strait area of Australia, who are a separate and distinct culture. Many First Australians now prefer to use other descriptors, such as First Nations People to self-define their identities. Indigenous Australians also identify themselves via their language group names, for example, 'I am a Meriam man/woman'.

will be 'a long road to recovery' (Atkinson & McBeath, 2023, para. 11). Also, changing Australia Day to a more culturally neutral date could be a very difficult task.

In light of this, our discussion paper argues why we need to continue our efforts to decolonise the curriculum in Australian educational institutions (Cornelius & Mackey-Smith, 2022), as done in other post-colonial countries (Groenewald & Teise, 2024). We provide steps to decolonise curricula with reference to the available literature. After this general discussion, we specifically examine an exemplar of a historical resource that includes content that explores Indigenous colonisation. The authors of our article (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) reflect on the content of such resources and the use of non-Indigenous authors to create content that recounts historical events experienced by Indigenous communities. We reflect on the way this may silence Indigenous voices and add to the historical wrongs of the past. We use an exemplar from a project to support children's understanding of commemorations and remembering as part of the curriculum. The author of the resource (also an author of this paper) reflected on how the inclusion of Indigenous voices would have strengthened the learning outcomes for children, along with assisting in the decolonisation of the history curriculum. We engage reflexively and discuss ways to improve our project team's future practice. We conclude with our recommendations for further research before tying together our arguments in the conclusion.

Decolonising curriculum

Before decolonising curriculum, it is important to note that Australian Indigenous culture is a holistic, reciprocal community where everything is about relationships, and everything in it is viewed as a living entity (Turner & McDonald 2010; Tynan, 2021). These relationships come with responsibilities to land (country), kin, animals, plants and spirits. Esteemed elders are the conduit through which this knowledge is passed. These have existed from time immemorial and continue until the present day (Flood, 2006). They predate and transcend colonisation.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and students, as a cultural group, have lower, or even significantly lower, educational outcomes than the mainstream population (Productivity Commission, 2023). Addressing this is a high priority for all Australian State and Federal Governments. Early childhood educators, classroom teachers and school administrators are essential in facilitating the process of decolonising the curriculum for children and students.

Charles (2019) provided an excellent definition of what is meant by decolonising the curriculum. She suggested that it means creating space for a dialogue between all the school communities on how to find a cultural space for all of them in the curriculum (Charles, 2019). Hendrick and Young (2017) referred to this as 'the third space'. This space is a place where communication is available between different cultures, each with their own distinct communication. In practice, this means that multiple worldviews, values and perspectives are included in classroom teaching (Ahmed-Landeryou, 2023; Charles, 2019; Hendrick & Young, 2017). It allows children and educators to start to understand

the way in which our educational systems have been shaped by colonialism (Charles, 2019). This process includes decolonising pedagogies, topics and content, assessments, and assessment feedback (Ahmed-Landeryou, 2023).

Decolonising the curriculum is a labour-intensive and time-consuming task, which may prompt the reader to question whether it is worth the effort. The simplest answer to this question is that curriculum equals culture, and it should contain the things that our society values the most (Sleeter, 2010). It can prove extremely problematic when our society does not share a common culture, or common values. As Arday et al. (2021) suggested, emphasis in colonial societies, such as Australia, is on white ideologies and knowledge in these societies that are presented as universal. Other knowledges become devalued by this process, and their authenticity can be called into question when it differs from the 'universal' knowledge (Ahmed-Landeryou, 2023; Arday et al., 2021; Race, Ayling, et al., 2022). Colonised curriculum also excludes non-white identities and worldviews, thus only allowing one official worldview to the exclusion of all others (Abu Moghli & Kadiwal, 2021; Arday et al., 2021; Race, Ayling, et al., 2022). When Indigenous knowledges are included in the curriculum, it is often presented by a non-Indigenous teacher or academic, with the implication that it is their knowledge. Such practice is exploitive at best (Abu Moghli & Kadiwal, 2021), but also differs from the presentation of the knowledge as given by the knowledge holders due to the differing cultural lens of the presenter (Hendrick & Young 2017).

An obvious example of this inside the learning environment can be seen in the way that Australian Standard English is used as the official language of education and assessment (Osborne, 2019). Aboriginal children and students, along with culturally and linguistically diverse children and students, can feel that this means that their languages (including Aboriginal English) are not seen as valuable. Language is a defining element of identity, and thus, devaluing language means devaluing the individual's identity and culture (Osborne, 2019). This sense of disconnection is reinforced when minority learners cannot see their culture, knowledge, values and worldviews reflected in their school curriculum (Abu Moghli & Kadiwal, 2021; Ahmed-Landeryou, 2023; Arday et al., 2021; Hendrick & Young, 2017; Race, Ayling, et al., 2022; Sleeter, 2010). When this occurs over several generations, learners can begin to devalue their own culture, knowledge, values, language, and worldview and begin to see the coloniser's 'universal knowledge' as superior (Race, Ayling, et al., 2022).

As the stated goal of the Australian Government is to provide an equitable education for all children and students (Australian Government Department of Education, 2023b), it is imperative that educators in Australian schools are mindful of, and take active steps to alleviate this perceived devaluation from their school curricula. To do this, it is essential to enable children to connect and interact with their local cultures and languages, bringing these into the classroom via student-drawn pictures and other art guided by artists from said cultural and language groups. Additionally, the following steps need to be implemented: truth-telling, community engagement, including community voices, forging meaningful relationships, knowledge creation, reflexivity, dealing with decolonisation backlash, and relevant pedagogical methods.

Truth-telling: Empowering

Truth-telling in Australia is a critical process that challenges the dominant narrative and confronts the historical silences surrounding the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Scates & Yu, 2024). Truth-telling of Australia's history has been absent from curricula across all levels of formal education in Australia (Craven, 2011; Gleeson et al., 2020). Truth-telling challenges the master narrative of Australia, one that values Anglo-Saxon privilege. This stance constructs Australia as an imagined community (Anderson, 2008; Elder, 2007) that prefers to view reality as one of equality and a 'fair go for all'. This is not the case for Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. In contrast, truth-telling includes the reality of the past and present. It is confronting and stark and includes the Frontier Wars, massacres, dispossession, stolen children, and racism. The ramifications of the past are manifested in the experiences of today. The inability to come to terms with Australia's true history constitutes a 'cult of forgetfulness' that became 'the Great Australian Silence' (Hinkson & Beckett, 2008).

Knowing the truth about our shared history is a fundamental right, and the new and accurate knowledge can be empowering to all through a process of conscience raising, as proposed by Darlaston-Jones et al. (2014). Students now in higher education, who were not taught authentic Australian history in school, have described learning the truth as transformational and even life changing. However, we acknowledge the challenges of facing and telling the truth, especially to children. Decolonisation of the curriculum has now become a requirement across education, from schools to universities, despite the challenges (Hlatshwayo & Alexander, 2021; Morreira et al., 2020).

Engaging with community

Schools need to connect with their communities, and engaging guest speakers is a helpful way to do this, as stated by Emblen-Perry (2023). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families have a wealth of knowledge and memories, and these can be shared by storytelling. Children usually respond well to live storytelling, and Indigenous children in the class feel proud and empowered by the fact that a family member is speaking (Barton & Barton, 2017; Bishop, 2021). They can then see themselves and their culture in the curriculum.

Engaging the community and building a trusting relationship can see families become more involved in their school, breaking down the 'other' status. Educators and schoolteachers can learn more about the community and their Indigenous children and students (Lloyd et al., 2015). Partnering with the community by inviting First Nations peoples to teach their experiences of historical events is a respectful way to engage and empower. This constitutes a contribution to decolonising the curriculum.

Voices for the educational future

It is best practice to avoid soft, superficial, or stereotypical changes (Abu Moghli & Kadiwal, 2021; Arday et al., 2021; Race, Gill, et al., 2022). The use of Aboriginal Flags and

artwork, canteen foods, and representing diversity in newsletters and promotional materials are examples of this (Ahmed-Landeryou, 2023). Although it could be argued that any change is better than none, change for change sake does nothing to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and students and their respective communities, or to give them a voice in determining their educational future (Abu Moghli & Kadiwal, 2021; Arday et al., 2021; Hendrick & Young, 2017; Race, Ayling, et al., 2022). Schools need to ensure that multiple voices are being represented in their curriculum, their pedagogies, and assessments (Ahmed-Landeryou, 2023). There needs to be opportunities for Indigenous voices to be involved in writing and speaking and many other modes of literacy, as recommended by Roy et al. (2019). Additionally, we need to acknowledge multiple voices beyond the standard Australian or state curriculum (Ahmed-Landeryou, 2023; Osborne, 2019; Race, Gill, et al., 2022). If changes occur at this level, then the softer changes will obviously be a part of that process, however, they will not, and must not encapsulate the whole process.

Meaningful relationships built on trust

What processes need to be followed to accomplish this level of change? As Collishaw (2022) argued, building meaningful relationships with local Indigenous peoples to ensure that your educational setting gains and maintains their trust is vital to the success of your decolonisation process. We deliberately use the plural *peoples*, rather than the singular *people*, to make the point that, unlike in traditional times, representatives of many different Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Nations may be present in different communities. It is vital to the success of the decolonisation process to work in partnership with all of them. To accomplish this, education settings must be prepared to take the necessary time to listen quietly (e.g., don't interrupt, wait for your turn to speak), tread softly and ask permission (Hendrick & Young, 2017). Essentially, it is necessary for schools to decolonise their processes and conduct their approach in an Indigenous Australian manner (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003). Trust has been eroded over 230 years of government policies that have largely disadvantaged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This is especially true in the educational sphere, where social engineering was used to limit the education opportunities of Indigenous Australians (Harrison & Sellwood, 2022). Therefore, it is essential that educational settings are prepared to take the necessary time to rebuild this trust and demonstrate that they can share power with, and not exert power over, the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations (Collishaw, 2022; Hendrick & Young, 2017).

Knowledge creation

In line with this principle, knowledge creation for the curriculum needs to come from the local Indigenous Australian groups and be constructed with them rather than about them (Abu Moghli & Kadiwal, 2021). Indeed, Abu Moghli and Kadiwal (2021) suggested that 'substantial harm' can arise when this process is subverted, and Indigenous knowledge holders are excluded from the process (Ahmed-Landeryou, 2023; Arday et al., 2021; Race, Ayling, et al., 2022; Sleeter, 2010). Hendrick and Young (2017) argued that unlearning ways of knowing, doing and being, and then relearning them with the new worldview and

values learnt from Indigenous Australians, can facilitate potentially successful partnerships. This is not to suggest a subversion of traditional non-Indigenous understanding of knowing, doing and being, but rather the development of a new shared understanding that can bridge both cultures (Hendrick & Young, 2017).

Reflexivity

It is of vital importance to use reflexivity throughout the process of decolonising curricula (Abu Moghli & Kadiwal, 2021). Reflexivity is defined as: 'the fact of someone being able to examine their feelings, reactions, and motives, and how these influence what they do or think in a situation' (Alley et al., 2015). The decolonisation process involves continual 'self-reflexivity and learning' (Hendrick & Young, 2017; p. 4). As part of this process, they recommended:

- ongoing critical and dialogical engagement with students' diverse histories, and with those of educators and the wider community
- drawing on the work of Indigenous [knowledge holders] … for inspiration and guidance
- addressing White fragility and discomfort through pedagogical practices. (Race, Ayling, et al., 2022, p. 4)

Connection with the wider global communities may not be relevant to decolonising local Indigenous Australian curricula. However, the advice to work widely with multiple representatives (within the local context) is still considered good practice.

Dealing with decolonisation backlash

Any decolonisation process may face backlash as it moves curriculum, including content and pedagogy, away from the currently accepted knowledge by the dominant culture and ways of doing, towards new inclusive ways of understanding (Hendrick & Young, 2017; Race, Ayling, et al., 2022). The most effective approach to deal with issues that may arise from any decolonisation efforts is to deal with them directly. Conducting and guiding difficult conversations regarding race and power has been found to be a much more productive process and much more conducive to change (Hendrick & Young, 2017; Race, Gill, et al., 2022).

We should not avoid or ignore the feelings which arise as peoples' assumptions and expectations are challenged. However, as educators we need to facilitate examination of why people may have these feelings (Hendrick & Young, 2017; Race, Gill, et al., 2022). This can lead to a re-evaluation of stereotypes and assumptions (Abu Moghli & Kadiwal, 2021; Hendrick & Young, 2017; Race, Gill, et al., 2022). As educators, we should turn these critical reflexivity processes on ourselves in order to ensure that there is a continuous, ongoing process of self-decolonisation occurring in our thinking and actions (Hendrick & Young, 2017, p. 18). For Race, Ayling, et al. (2022), this included thinking in an 'other tongue', or the ability to empathise in a way which makes us be, do and know what it is to be the other. Hendrick and Young (2017) call this 'walking together' (p. 17).

Pedagogical methods

In practice, educators can use pedagogical methods, such as storytelling, and authentic learning tasks based on child and student interests and connections to their cultural and social environments. These approaches can provide much-needed support and motivation for Indigenous children and students' learning (Collishaw, 2022; Gunawardena & Brown, 2021; Hendrick & Young, 2017; Race, Ayling, et al., 2022). Additionally, using the traditional educational methodology of observation, model, imitation, and practice (trial and error) rather than early self-directed learning can strengthen learning outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and students. This allows them to work within a familiar and culturally appropriate framework (Harrison & Sellwood, 2022). Indigenous knowledges need to occur naturally throughout the whole of the curriculum content, rather than being an obvious addition (Hendrick & Young, 2017; Race, Ayling, et al., 2022). This will demonstrate their equal value and worth to educators, children, students, and the local Indigenous Australian communities. In this space, questions and critical thinking regarding what is being learnt should be actively encouraged, rather than avoided (Collishaw, 2022; Race, Ayling, et al., 2022). This can be especially relevant to areas such as Australian history, where it is important to honestly present multiple perspectives and the diverse experiences of all involved (Collishaw, 2022). Following the policy of the state and federal education departments to ensure that the questions and comments are always framed in a respectful manner is essential.

The final suggestion is that strong Indigenous role models and significant people of colour be included in teaching materials (Collishaw, 2022; Race, Ayling, et al., 2022). This needs to move beyond the stereotypical sports people to include others who have made significant contributions to Australian society. This might include Charles Perkins (the first Aboriginal person to graduate from an Australian university and the first Director of Aboriginal Affairs, and the leader of the Freedom Ride), David Unaipon (inventor of the current Australian sheep shearing tool, a centrifugal motor, a multi-radial wheel and a mechanical propulsion device), and Mandawuy Yunupingu (clan leader, educator, first Aboriginal person from Arnhem Land to gain a university degree, and lead member of the internationally renowned Aboriginal band Yothu Yindi).

The ability to see strength in their own cultural identity allows Indigenous Australian children and students a glimpse of a possible positive future where they can remain true to themselves and their own cultural identities (Collishaw, 2022). It allows for the hope of a better tomorrow in which they will be valued members of Australian society on their own terms (Hendrick & Young, 2017).

Exemplar

One way to support the decolonisation of the curriculum is through story-telling. Here, we give an example of an e-storybook that, despite being designed to support the decolonisation of the curriculum, also unwittingly contributes to its colonisation.

Story-telling as truth telling

Knowing the truth about our shared history is a fundamental right, and accurate knowledge can be empowering to all through a process of raising conscience, as proposed by Darlaston-Jones et al. (2014). The Australian Government now requires teachers to demonstrate expertise in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (Lowe & Yunkaporta, 2018). To take active steps in the decolonisation of curricula, educators must be well informed and well supported. Teachers do not necessarily feel confident engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history or contemporary issues, and may struggle to design learning activities as a result. Professional development opportunities need to be readily available to assist. Knowledge of our authentic history, together with practical in-class knowledge of cultural inclusivity and community engagement, is required. The provision of support, via quality resources, is key to assist in the process. In order to provide educators, children and students with a resource, our interdisciplinary team created a variety of Australian stories in the form of research-based e-storybooks.

E-storybook

Our discussion will now focus on a resource in the form of a children's e-storybook as an exemplar that explores commemoration and the act of remembering in relation to Australians' involvement with various wars. It also mentions the injustices of the First Australian War. The inclusion of this particular narrative by the non-Indigenous author of the e-storybook allows for a viewpoint from someone who has historically been categorised as an outsider, or 'other' (Abu Moghli & Kadiwal, 2021; Arday et al., 2021; Race, Ayling, et al., 2022). 'Othering' is a legacy of the colonisation of Australia by the British Empire, and the colonisation of the school curriculum as seen by its effects in present times (Abu Moghli & Kadiwal, 2021; Arday et al., 2021; Race, Ayling, et al., 2022). These include the impact on minority student learning outcomes (Abu Moghli & Kadiwal, 2021; Arday et al., 2021).

The e-storybook resource in question is part of a large suite of free, online research-based *Child and Family Resilience Programs* (Rogers, Small et al., 2023) to support children from service (defence, veteran and first responder) families and resources for their educators, support workers and parents (Rogers, Baker et al., 2022; Rogers, Johnson et al., 2021; Rogers, Ul-Haq et al., 2024).

Figure 1: *Child and Family Resilience Programs - Modules* (Rogers, Small et al., 2023). https://ecdefenceprograms.com/modules/ ("... allows you access to our multimedia modules and additional resources")

The e-storybook and interactive eBook in question, *We Remember: Australia's Story* (Rogers, Baker et al., 2022) was written by one of the authors of this article (Figure 2).

Figure 2: *We Remember: Australia's Story* (Rogers, Baker et al., 2022). https://doi.org/10.25952/b0fs-ny56

The e-storybook was designed to support children's understanding of community commemorative days, services and events such as Anzac Day and Remembrance Day. Apart from providing information about the ceremonies, rituals, and symbolism within these services, the book explores the meta-narratives about commemorations more broadly. It asks questions about what our society remembers and why. The Frontier Wars are mentioned as events that have not been remembered and commemorated by non-Indigenous Australians in the past, and how this is unfair. It also explores the roles of Indigenous service personnel in Australia's other wars and their treatment when they returned home after service.

It is important here to explore what commemoration is for and its role in our military and society. Commemoration is an act of remembrance that might occur: (a) at specific times and dates (such as anniversaries of battles or peace treaties); (b) at specific memorial locations (where a military event occurred, or a place designated by the community for remembrance); and (c) involve various rituals, symbolism and acts (performed by representatives of the military, service-connected community, or community members). Rather like military drills, these events are not important strategically for the military (Rohschürmann, 2025). That is, they are not necessary to win battles. Rohschürmann (2025) argues that their importance lies in humans' psychological and biological foundations. For example, military drills involve marching and being in step with others in the group. The biological root of this is our link to the animal kingdom, where we bond with others through physical rhythmic actions that can result in muscle bonding and create a trance-like state. This can be helpful for those going into a potentially dangerous battle at the command of another for the possible benefit of the wider community. In the animal kingdom, this can be seen in hives where the worker bees serve the queen bee for the greater benefit of the whole colony. Military marches with drums and other musical instruments are often part of commemorative events, thus combining the biological bonding activities with the psychological effects of ritual. Commemorative services activate several senses combined with symbols, rituals and narratives in a co-active manner, making them emotionally provocative events (Rohschürmann, 2025). For example, there are:

1. sounds (for example, bugles, marching bands, bagpipes, hymns, speeches, ceremonial gun shots, cheering during marches, prayers and silence);
2. sights (for example, flags, medals, statues and flowers);
3. smells (for example, rosemary, flowers and smoke);
4. symbolism (for example medals, poppies and rosemary);

5. rituals (for example laying wreaths, saying the ode, facing east or west, the catafalque party and silent remembrance); and
6. narratives (for example, service, mateship and sacrifice) (Baber, 2016).

Teaching children about commemorative events aligns with the ACARA (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority) (n.d.) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross curriculum priorities. Each state and territory have their own interpretations of these priorities. For example, the New South Wales (NSW) syllabus for Stage 2, which is aimed at students in Years 3 and 4, is aimed at children in their fourth and fifth years of formal schooling. The history syllabus for this stage has various topics, including *Celebrations and Commemorations* (NSW Department of Education, 2024a) and *Importance of Country and Place* (NSW Department of Education, 2024b). In *Celebrations and Commemorations*, a key enquiry question is posed: 'How and why do people choose to remember significant events of the past?' (p. 3). These two documents have a list of outcomes for student learning relevant to the research-based storybook. These include:

- *Identify celebrations and commemorations of significance in Australia and the world* (Celebrations and Commemorations, Department of Education, 2024a, p. 5)
- *Describe and explain how significant individuals, groups and events contributed to changes in the local community over time* (Importance of Country and Place, Department of Education, 2024b, p. 3)

The storybook attempts to 'identify celebrations and commemorations of significance in Australia and the world' by exploring commemorative days and historical events involving Australian service personnel. The storybook also attempts to 'describe and explain how significant individuals, groups and events contributed to changes in the local community over time' by showing the protests about Indigenous Australians facing racial segregation.

In the same curriculum documents, teachers are given direction regarding content and learning activities.

Content includes:
- The importance of country and place to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who belong to a local area (*Importance of country and place*, NSW Department of Education, 2024b, p. 6).

Students will:
- Identify the special relationship that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples have to country and place. (*Importance of country and place*, NSW Department of Education, 2024b, p. 6)
- Respond to Aboriginal stories told about country presented in texts or by a guest speaker (*Importance of country and place*, NSW Department of Education, 2024b, p. 4).

Engaging the community and building a trusting relationship can see families become more involved in their school, breaking down the 'other' status. Partnering with the

community by inviting First Nations peoples to teach their experiences of historical events is a respectful way to engage and empower. This constitutes a contribution to the decolonisation of the curriculum.

Author's reflexivity

As previously noted, the author of this e-storybook is not Indigenous. Since the author used family photographs of a local Indigenous man who served in the Vietnam War, the family gave permission to use the photo. The family also checked the content of the book and approved it. However, using reflexivity, the author felt uncomfortable writing about something that she felt might have been better expressed by an Indigenous author. Conversely, she felt the other Indigenous content needed to be included in the story. Adding to the challenges, strict funding deadlines and lockdowns due to the Covid-19 pandemic impeded the type of collaboration required for co-authoring sections of the e-storybook that covered Indigenous content. That said, the author felt she was adding to the colonisation of the curriculum by writing these sections alone.

Thus, although including content that addresses the injustices of our history seems worthy, it must be done with care. In instances like this, ensuring Indigenous authorship is crucial in promoting truth-telling, improving trust and relationships, empowering Indigenous storytelling and decolonising curricula. This needs to include the resources we create for teaching children and students.

Need for further research

In writing this discussion paper, the authors recognised the need for more research about the most effective ways to support the decolonisation of the curriculum in writing for children and students about Australian historical events. This should include research on ways to support the processes of decolonising curricula for non-Indigenous policymakers, authors, educators and content writers.

Conclusion

This paper explores the way non-Indigenous authors, educators and content creators can unwittingly contribute to and reinforce a curriculum that is colonised (Kusabs, 2024). Despite trying to represent historical events, by not including Indigenous voices, further marginalisation can occur. Thus, knowledge creation for the curriculum needs to come from the local Indigenous Australian groups and be constructed with them rather than about them (Abu Moghli & Kadiwal, 2021). Abu Moghli and Kadiwal (2021) suggested that 'substantial harm' can arise when this process is subverted, and Indigenous knowledge holders are excluded from the process. Hendrick and Young (2017) argue that unlearning ways of knowing, doing and being and then relearning them with the new worldview and values learnt from Indigenous Australians can ensure that successful partnerships are much more likely. This does not suggest a subversion of the traditional Western understanding of knowing, doing and being but rather the development of a new shared understanding that can bridge both cultures (Hendrick & Young, 2017).

Critically, community leaders and the government need to work with local Indigenous representatives when planning community remembrance events, such as Anzac Day and Remembrance Day. This should assist them to ensure they are respectfully honouring the meeting of people on their lands, the Frontier Wars and the service of Indigenous veterans in various conflicts. Some efforts have been made in this area, but backlash has been experienced at some community events (ABC News, 2025). Encouragingly, Kusabs (2024, p.98) asserted, 'Indigenous engagement with colonial curricula holds a long trajectory, in which decolonial ideas are continuing to develop and apply'. Such endeavours are worth the effort to ensure that Indigenous children, students and communities are empowered.

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UNE Human Research Ethics Committee approval number HE21-027 for the overall project.

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