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Unveiling Country and Improving Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: A Traditional Owner Approach

by

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(Picture taken By Josh Cubillo on Wurundjeri Country)

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ABSTRACT

In Australia, teacher education—and the current teaching profession—is underprepared to adequately teach Indigenous knowledge. Additionally, The National Curriculum and the Australian Professional Teaching Standards offer little guidance and assurance into how this knowledge should be embedded in schools, curriculum and pedagogical practice. This research seeks to increase our understanding of how cultural responsiveness and the embedding of Indigenous knowledges of non-Indigenous educators can be improved through participation in Learning on Country professional development sessions in an urban setting. The professional development sessions were developed with the assistance of Wurundjeri Traditional Owners, who shared their insights into what Country means to them and how teachers can embed these understandings in their classrooms. As teachers progressed through the project, they shared where they believe the opportunities lie to embed Indigenous knowledge in their classrooms and teaching practices despite limited opportunities and mandates from school leadership. Data collection occurred by forming a Traditional Owners focus group, compiling field notes from professional development sites, and asking teachers to participate in three separate interviews. Using a critical lens of land-based and culturally responsive pedagogy shows that professional development guided by Traditional Owners can improve the way non-Indigenous teachers embed Indigenous knowledge into their work. I argue that respectfully embedding Indigenous knowledge and increasing cultural responsiveness in classrooms is reliant on teachers' willingness to regularly reflect on how they contribute to the maintenance of settler colonialism. The research makes an original contribution to Indigenous education in secondary schools by focusing on professional development being delivered by Traditional Owners on Country, which deepens teachers' understanding of the relationship between Eurocentric interpretations of land and its contributions to colonialism. The research demonstrates that Learning on Country initiatives are possible in urbanised areas and that they can disrupt settler colonialism's 'logic of elimination'; such initiatives facilitate teacher participation in opportunities that increase the visibility of Indigenous histories, languages and cultures.

DECLARATION

This thesis comprises only my original work towards a Doctor of Philosophy. It contains no material previously published or written by any other person, except where due acknowledgement and reference has been made in the text. This thesis is fewer than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract *1*

Declaration *2*

Acknowledgements *3*

Chapter 1: Introduction *7*

Learning on Country: Place and Land in Education **10**

The Australian Curriculum **13**

Teacher Education **15**

Rationale **16**

Leading Theoretical Threads **17**

Learning on Country 17

Culturally Responsive Teachers 19

Research Questions **22**

Chapter Outlines **23**

Chapter 2: Pedagogy of Land and Urban Application *26*

Place-Based Education **27**

Land-Based Education **30**

Learning on Country Pedagogy **34**

Learning on Country: History **38**

Learning on Country in Urban Settings **41**

Further Considerations for Improving Indigenous Education **44**

Conclusion **47**

Chapter 3: Culturally Responsive Teaching and Appropriate Professional Development *48*

Culturally Responsive Curriculum, Teaching and Pedagogy **49**

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy History **51**

Multicultural Education 55

Why Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Training Is Needed **59**

Teacher Preparation and Professional Learning 60

Australian Curriculum **61**

The Centrality of Land Curriculum **66**

The Australian Professional Teaching Standards (APST) **70**

Building Teacher Capacity **75**

Professional Development Through a Country Canon **79**

School Leadership **82**

Conclusion **85**

Chapter 4: Methodology ***87***

Theory **87**

Foucault's Work 87

Education and the Power/Knowledge Nexus 93

Issues of Power, Race and Ethics 96

Decolonising Research 100

Indigenist Research and Participation 103

Data Analysis 107

Methods **108**

Foregrounding Australian Indigenous Education Research 108

Recruitment 110

Teacher Participants 111

Traditional Owners 112

Participant Incentives 114

Focus Groups 115

Interviews 118

Risk Management and Potential Risks 119

Validity and Reliability 120

Methods Table 122

Conclusion **122**

Chapter 5: Using Culturally Responsive Ways to Engage Traditional Owners ***124***

Wurundjeri Traditional Owner's Engagement in Education **125**

Traditional Owner's Understanding of Country **128**

Developing and Delivering Professional Development Sessions **136**

University of Melbourne 136

Organ Pipes National Park 142

Teachers: Reflecting on Professional Development and Improving Their Pedagogy **144**

The Expectation of Traditional Owners to Share Knowledge **149**

Conclusion **149**

Chapter 6: Non-Indigenous Teacher's Perceived Barriers to Embedding Indigenous Knowledge ***151***

Non-Indigenous Teacher's Thoughts About Embedding Indigenous Knowledge **151**

Teacher Confidence and Apprehension in Embedding Indigenous Knowledge **155**

Lack of Directive From School Leadership to Teach Indigenous Knowledge **160**

Minimal Capacity-Building Opportunities For Teachers **162**

Lack of Knowledge to Embed Indigenous Knowledge **164**

Teachers Need Help to Make Indigenous Knowledge Relevant **166**

Embedding Indigenous Knowledge Left to a Few Educators **167**

Conclusion **169**

Chapter 7: Practical Ways to Embed Culturally Responsive Education ***171***

Epistemic Reflection on Settler Teacher Beliefs **171**

Connecting Country to Local Issues and Online Learning **174**

The Power of Language and Challenging Deficit Discourse **176**

Visual Representations as Disruption **180**

The Power of Yarning on Country **181**

Advice for Other Settler-Educators **183**

Conclusion **186**

Chapter 8: Conclusion ***187***

Making Sense of the Thesis Chapters **191**

Culturally Responsive Teaching and Appropriate Professional Development **192**

Most Significant Learnings **196**

Limitations **200**

Future Implications **201**

References ***202***

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

(Picture taken by Josh Cubillo on Wadjigan Country)

Several years ago, I connected with Paul, a non-Indigenous teacher who mentored me during my early teaching years in Adelaide. Our friendship grew because of our shared music, sport, and fishing interests. Eventually, I invited Paul to come home to experience my Country. He took this picture during our visit to Wadjigan Country – Bulgul (facing page) in the Northern Territory. In the photo, you can see my cousin Jerome carrying a crab pot with my eldest daughter in the distance. Jerome's son and his cousin, my son, seem to be taking their time to keep up with the task. I remember this moment distinctly because Paul was fascinated by the cultural learning unfolding before him.

The children's learning of our peoples' ways had begun earlier in the day with Jerome preparing the crab pot. The kids retrieved the old fish carcass, which had been saved from the previous day's catch and was meant to be used as bait in the crab pot. While Jerome spoke, he demonstrated the fishing practices and helped the kids prepare their pots. In doing so, they learned about the importance of sustainability and limited food wastage. Using animal carcasses was something I knew about from an early age: on the way to Country, I remember collecting roadkill for bait for the crab pot that we would set on arrival at our destination. Like the kids undertaking cultural learning in this story, my Elders[1] taught me similar intergenerational knowledge when I was young. I am now responsible for passing this knowledge on to younger generations.

Once the pots were prepared, the focus turned to finding the best place to set them during the incoming tide—close to the oyster rocks, where, with the guidance of Jerome, the kids collectively agreed on the location that would achieve the best outcome. From a distance, Paul and I could hear the yarn around the best time of year to source mud crabs, which involved the kids becoming familiar with what is known on this Country as the three Js—January, June and July. These are the times of the year when many kinds of seafood are plentiful because they have had time to rejuvenate.

To Paul, it was evident how engaged the kids were by the way they listened and participated in this traditional or ancestral way of teaching and learning. Cultural knowledge is often passed on through working with older people of the mob—watching, talking, copying—and by following Elders in carrying out well-established practices, whether it be making traps, identifying where the best places are for food gathering, or determining if it is the appropriate time to catch particular foods. When implementing these cultural practices, we aim to care for and connect with traditional lands, maintaining the values of, and obligations to, Country.

[1] Eldership is a title and responsibility earned through reaching a certain age, acquiring significant cultural knowledge, or participating in different ceremonies.

My friend continued to observe, noticing that the informality of the lessons served a greater purpose for acquiring an appreciation for land and animals through sustainable practices. The kids continued to ask many questions, which guided their learning. Paul identified that student-guided learning was a form of pedagogy he thought needed to be added when delivering the curriculum. He further noted that learning from Country in the way demonstrated by Jerome and the kids was something every student could benefit from. During the visit, I recall a discussion with Paul in which he expressed frustration with his school's leadership; he suggested that innovative teaching practices, or the inclusion of other worldviews, are not highly regarded.

Paul's experience was enriching because he had been allowed to connect with Indigenous people, invited to be on Country in the company of Traditional Owners and encouraged to reflect on his cultural competency journey. In my understanding of the Australian education system, Paul's observations speak to the lack of cultural competency in the teacher workforce. He gave me the impression that teachers feel ill-equipped to teach Indigenous knowledges through national- and state-sanctioned curricula. This visit, and Paul's reflections, prompted me to think about my schooling experience and the teachers who helped me progress through the education system. Did my teachers have this cultural knowledge when I went to school? Was it in my curriculum, or did I accept that it was something I learned from my family on Country? What relationships did the school/teachers have with my Aboriginal family? Would an 'on Country' approach have improved my education?

This brief vignette encapsulates some of the main ideas in this thesis. To have a non-Indigenous Australian teacher—whose first 'on Country' experience occurred well into his teaching experience—educating Aboriginal students in South Australia seems like a significant gap in teacher education in this country. Bringing my friend Paul to my people's Country and showing him how we teach Indigenous knowledge associated with Country enabled us to glimpse into each other's teaching worlds and skills. Learning on Country is informed by ancient wisdom passed down from generation to generation and strengthened by the values and lessons that are inherently connected to them.

Thinking about the way Paul has maintained his relationships with Traditional Owners and improved his land-based pedagogical approach, the proposed research will be guided by the following inquiries:

1. Can cultural competency be enacted through a land/s-based approach?
2. Can this be further facilitated through a greater understanding of Country and building stronger relationships with Traditional Owners?

LEARNING ON COUNTRY: PLACE AND LAND IN EDUCATION

The title of this thesis, *Unveiling Country and Improving Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: A Traditional Owner Approach*, is about the centring of place and land in education. It implies people are always 'on Country'—not just on vast open lands but also on lands in Australia's biggest cities. Place is a significant concept within this thesis as I use it to highlight how non-Indigenous and Indigenous ideologies differ and to what extent such doctrines are used (or not used) in the current Australian curriculum. Place features prominently in everyday life and closely connects to how people experience and understand the world. Constructs of place are predominantly developed through human interactions with their natural and cultural surroundings, which help to formulate self-identities, standpoints, and relationships with others (Basso, 1996; Gruenewald, 2003; Keith & Pile, 1993).

In this thesis, the word "Country" (with a capital "C") refers to the place or places where an individual has cultural, spiritual and ancestral connections. For Indigenous communities, Country encompasses various aspects, including place, stories, beliefs, resources, and cultural responsibilities, and represents a familial connection. Maintaining a reciprocal relationship with land and Country is a crucial responsibility for all Indigenous peoples, as emphasized by scholars such as Langton (1997), K. Martin and Mirraboopa (2003), Moreton-Robinson (2013), D. Rose and Robin (2004), and Whitehouse et al. (2014).

Concepts of place have been used to produce and maintain racism, particular ideologies and alternate systems of oppression through power structures. For example, silencing Indigenous voices in historical documents has forced Indigenous knowledges and their innate connections to Country to the margins by excluding this knowledge in the schooling system and other apparatus that propagate power imbalances. In addition, settler-colonial violence has contributed to the false narratives produced by the widely believed and accepted narrative of terra nullius that seeks to render Indigenous people invisible (Hromek, 2020).

Place-based education is a pedagogical approach that helps students connect with their community's local issues and appreciate the environment. In this approach, students are taken outside the classroom to undertake interactive, experiential and meaningful learning activities (Gay, 2010; Gruenewald, 2003). Research by Takako (2006) suggests that place-based approaches enhance significant relations between students and the environment, enriching their identities and societal roles. When students form a strong sense of place, they feel empowered to take the appropriate political action in confronting environmental issues that contribute to their communities' ecological and social wellbeing (Gruenewald & Smith, 2008; Woodhouse & Knapp, 2000). As schools connect students with their local communities, there

is also a concerted effort to improve student engagement and participation (McInerney et al., 2011). Although place-based education can be celebrated for its innovation and ability to connect students to their local communities, the pedagogical approach needs to include embedding Indigenous knowledge and providing the necessary critique to understand the harms of colonisation. Land-based education is well-informed by Indigenous knowledge and extends the workings of place-based education.

Throughout this thesis, I will use Learning on Country to encompass other education pedagogies that include land, such as land-based education, place-based, experiential learning and environmental education because they share similar theoretical and practical underpinnings. This thesis is premised on the concept that Traditional Owners are found in all places (including Narrm and other capital cities). Traditional Owners hold the wisdom and intergenerational knowledge of the place on which they live; they hold innate connections to and, as such, have learned the traditions, knowledges and values of the land on which they live. To access this wisdom and knowledge, educators must understand and build strong relations with Traditional Owners because they are integral to embedding culturally responsive curricula and the inclusion of Indigenous content. The classroom can become more 'Indigenous' by replicating the community outside the school fence. Classrooms like these would include people from the community, including Traditional Owners; they would involve practical activities, and students would work together to fulfill meaningful tasks.

The term 'Traditional Owner' became everyday vocabulary through establishing the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1976* (NT). The Act created a way for Indigenous communities to claim unalienated Crown Land in the Northern Territory because they are the 'traditional owners' of the land. The term Traditional Owner, now written in title case, refers to a local descent group of Aboriginal people who can be described as follows: have common spiritual affiliations to a site on the land, being affiliations that place the group under a primary spiritual responsibility for that site and the land, and, are entitled by Aboriginal tradition to forage as of right over that land (O'Bryan, 2016). The term has since been widely used by Indigenous people when identifying their connection to Country. Notably, though, there are Indigenous people in Australia who prefer the term 'Traditional Custodians' because it better reflects the obligations and different responsibilities associated with caring for the land (Victoria, 2019).

The research conducted with Traditional Owners will be vital because it will provide a culturally appropriate way for non-Indigenous educators to engage with Wurundjeri Traditional Owners and help foster sustaining relationships. Further, the research could offer insights into what non-Indigenous teachers will do once they have acquired this knowledge and whether the embedding of Indigenous knowledge increases. Walking Country and undertaking two professional development sessions in urban locations led by Traditional

Owners could give teachers the confidence to engage with Indigenous knowledge and other associated benefits.

Previously, the concept of place was mentioned, though conceptually and from an educational perspective, the practice differs significantly from land-based pedagogy. Often place-based education and land-based pedagogy are used interchangeably; however, the two are vastly different when epistemologically examined. Place-based education is concerned with connecting students with the local community but, unlike land-based education, critical examination of settler colonialism and its relationality to land is unattended (Calderon, 2014; Schultz et al., 2016).

In Australia, Indigenous lands were invaded by the British Empire for economic exploitation. Societal structures have been developed and maintained so settler-colonial power may persist and manifest within the taught curriculum. Therefore, employing a land-based inquiry to contest how settler colonialism has worked to erase and reshape Indigenous lands, mainly through the Australian Curriculum, is appropriate. In doing so, the research will problematise the lack of opportunities for teachers to improve cultural responsiveness and teach Indigenous knowledges.

The lack of critical thinking about settler colonialism in place-based education demonstrates the uncompleted directive from the colony to render Indigenous people invisible and Western education's relentless attempts to overpower Indigenous knowledges. While there are good intentions for inclusivity in education to embed Indigenous knowledges within the taught curriculum, unless there is a critique of how settler-colonial structures are perpetuated, efforts to embed Indigenous knowledges remain tokenistic.

Dissimilar to place-based education, land-based pedagogy is intentionally reinforced by Indigenous knowledges because the approach situates Indigenous ontological and epistemological accounts of land at the centre of discussion. This means Indigenous understandings of land, Indigenous language about land, and Indigenous critiques of settler colonialism are crucial topics (Tuck et al., 2014).

The theory of land-based pedagogy promotes a harmonious coexistence between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, as well as the natural environment. It recognizes the importance of addressing issues related to land, the environment, and spirituality, which are often neglected in typical cultural and social studies (Gruenewald & Smith, 2008). The main objective of land-based education is to empower Indigenous individuals to steer conversations about education within their communities (a process otherwise referred to as self-determination).

The pedagogical approach of land-based education positions itself to assist all students in appreciating their community while increasing their knowledge of Indigenous ways of knowing

(Arellano et al., 2019). Teachers use land-based approaches to foster student awareness of global environmental and social justice issues. For the context of the thesis, understanding why land-based approaches are essential in embedding Indigenous knowledges is essential. Land-based approaches are culturally responsive practices that necessitate teachers building respectful relationships with community members to help students uncover practical solutions to overcome global environmental and social justice issues. In these learning opportunities, students feel empowered to guide their learning outcomes and have the confidence to speak out against issues affecting their generation. Land-based learning is an integrated educational approach that utilises the local community and environment as a foundation to impart diverse concepts and subjects throughout the entire curriculum (Sobel, 2005); this is similar to the priorities associated with cross-curricula approaches.

Advocates argue that when land-based pedagogy is used to teach lessons concerned with the local community, it improves students' motivation levels and helps them feel better connected to their community. Gruenewald (2003b) suggests that critical pedagogy of place addresses the shortcomings of place-based education when land is used to critique, examine and disrupt colonial thought.

THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

In proposing a foundation of land-based education, it is necessary to examine how a greater understanding of Country might build a culturally competent workforce and contribute to disrupting colonial power systems. However, for a sound inspection to be conducted, an appropriate appraisal of the education system in Australia is needed to interrogate the way teachers are upskilled to teach Indigenous knowledges. The current education system is regulated by the Australian Curriculum syllabus, whereby states and territories retain the autonomy to implement the curriculum by establishing their senior assessment and tertiary entrance systems. Education in Australia is sanctioned for all young people between the ages of six and sixteen through primary and secondary school avenues. The schooling journey involves a 13-year exercise (Kindergarten to Grade 12) divided into three segments: primary school, middle secondary and senior secondary. States and territories use a go-between syllabus in place of the Australian Curriculum. These interpretations, written by state curriculum authorities, repackage the Australian Curriculum. An intermediary document (Victorian Curriculum) in place of the Australian Curriculum can be observed in Victoria, where variations are reviewed by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority to deliver the intended outcomes of the Australian Curriculum (Ross, 2021). This interpretation helps break down the federal Australian Curriculum document so that it is acceptable for Victorian schools.

The Australian Curriculum was established to homogenise Australian schooling and advance the productivity of young people in Australia, leading to 'maintaining Australia's productivity and quality of life' (Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2010, p. 1). In 2008, the Australian Government decided to enact the Australian Curriculum and began its implementation phases in 2011. The Australian Curriculum is comprised of three fundamental ideas: key learning areas (shared standards), general capabilities (skills), and cross-curriculum priorities (CCPs). The primary way to embed Indigenous knowledge is through CCPs. The CCPs are a collective of overarching standards that can be described to create a culturally inclusive curriculum (Parkinson & Jones, 2019).

These priorities are:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures
- Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia
- sustainability (ACARA, 2013, p. 11).

The CCPs state:

> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are strong, rich and diverse. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Identity is central to this priority and is intrinsically linked to living and learning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, deep knowledge traditions and holistic worldview. (ACARA, 2013, p. 11)

The Australian Curriculum and the CCPs were developed in consultation with several expert groups, including an Indigenous Advisory Group (Maxwell, 2014). There needs to be more historical documentation relating to the development of the CCPs. The former Indigenous advisory members have voiced their frustration with the process, citing that developers did not consider the importance of reflective practice when embedding Indigenous knowledges. The Indigenous Advisory Group also highlighted the need to address teacher resistance to embedding Indigenous knowledges within the curriculum and developing Indigenous pedagogical approaches. Significantly, including content related to Indigenous histories and cultures has yet to be firmly proven to improve student learning outcomes (Moreton-Robinson et al., 2012). Subsequently, the precursor to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures CCP materialised in the Curriculum Design Paper as Indigenous perspectives, one of three CCPs (ACARA, 2011). In the final description of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures CCP, there appears to be an emphasis on appreciating the value of Indigenous people and their cultures and acknowledging their historical presence in Australian history.

Although a standardised method was imposed, the approach to Indigenous-specific content is left to the discretion of educators with the need for direction on how to make respectful connections with Tradition Owners and meaningfully embed Indigenous

perspectives (Whitehouse et al., 2014). Notably, as well as there being a lack of accountability to embed the CCPs, the Australian Curriculum is determined and influenced by the credentials, grades and priority courses needed to gain tertiary admission. Teachers must improve their culturally responsive pedagogy to embed Indigenous knowledge well. A critical element of this process requires teachers to undertake an ongoing process of epistemic reflection that disrupts how they understand the world and reinforces how being informed by Indigenous values and perspectives will enrich their existence. Further, I will show that through engagement with professional development sessions designed to build culturally responsive capacity, teachers can enhance their ability to support Indigenous students and teach Indigenous knowledge respectfully.

TEACHER EDUCATION

While the Australian Curriculum summarises what is to be taught, a lack of instruction concerning Indigenous content and relationship building with the local Indigenous community is further compounded by teacher apprehension. Therefore, it is essential that every teacher has a high level of cultural competency and understands how to approach the teaching of Indigenous content respectfully and without reinforcing harmful discourses. A culturally responsive teacher is conscious of their privilege, cultural identity and understanding of difference. Culturally responsive teachers support disenfranchised students through epistemic reflection that challenges their preconceived idea about cultures and race (Khalifa et al., 2016).

Although the Australian Curriculum asks educators to be mindful of the varying differences in how young people learn, the Australian Professional Standards of Teaching (APST) strengthen this ambition by stressing the importance of appreciating students' cultural upbringings in Standard 1: know students and how they learn. The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL, 2020) is a federally run organisation that postulates Australia-wide leadership in endorsing 'excellence' in learning and teaching across the education profession. The AITSL's (2020) key strategy for promoting 'excellence' is the APST, which stipulate the variety of knowledge educators must possess in their development to lead teachers. While this research will not directly impact Indigenous students through data collection, it is essential to be informed by current education policies while considering how the research might influence more significant cultural competency outcomes from non-Indigenous teachers.

RATIONALE

In Australia, teachers continue to experience limited opportunities to interact with Indigenous knowledges, connect with Traditional Owners, and engage with professional development opportunities that improve culturally responsive pedagogy. This approach to pedagogy can be explained as a structure that celebrates the cultural difference of young people within a classroom setting. When educators are familiar with their students' cultural differences, they are challenged to employ pedagogical approaches and success markers that account for the cultural values practised at home (Gay, 2002).

The cultural responsiveness of teachers must be increased so that the current education systems can be disrupted. The current education system in Australia has assumed power through policies of dispossession and assimilation which has subsequently been maintained through institutional conditioning. Prevailing government strategies have been culpable for detaching Indigenous people from their Country which is the foundational and the ongoing source of cultural strength and knowledge. More, the removal of Indigenous people from their land has significantly disrupted the distribution of knowledge delivered by Indigenous people, mainly regarding Indigenous ethics and governance, both of which rely on the intimate connections with Country.

Teachers are becoming increasingly cognisant of the restraints of an education system that is un-inclusive of many worldviews. Pedagogical approaches such as land-based education have been sought by non-Indigenous teachers so that Indigenous knowledges may supplement Western thought. Though, teachers who are driven to disrupt settler-colonial education systems and provide a more holistic approach to their lessons must give their students the opportunities to organically connect with the land (D. Rose & Robin, 2004).

Research conducted by Hart et al. (2012) concluded that Indigenous knowledges are not prevalent in pedagogic and curriculum studies in training teacher education across Australia. The educational outcomes of pre-service teacher training and the strategical leadership excellence outcomes stipulated in the AITSL guidelines are unaligned and, therefore, unprepared to make systemic changes to improve Indigenous education outcomes. To compound the issue of teachers needing greater capacity to teach Indigenous knowledges, a study by Rowan et al. (2017), which interviewed 1,000 early career teachers in Victoria and Queensland, showed teachers felt unprepared to teach diverse learners, including Indigenous students. Opportunities to build the capacity of teachers' knowledge of Indigenous people and culture are needed. Unfortunately, teachers have had little exposure to learning about Indigenous knowledges during their training and prior educational experiences. The inability to teach Indigenous students is a problem because the APST require educators in Australia to

show competencies relating to Indigenous students, their cultures, histories and languages. This is stipulated through Focus Areas 1.4 and 2.4., whereby training teachers need the appropriate capacity development opportunities to achieve those standards. Teachers must be trained to critique and disrupt deficit discourses associated with Indigenous people and their cultures (Rowan et al., 2017). Additionally, when teachers enter the workforce, schools are unwilling to pay for teaching resources or the support of Indigenous experts to teach Indigenous content.

LEADING THEORETICAL THREADS

Thinking about the story I shared earlier concerning Paul and his dismay around why Indigenous knowledge has been predominantly ignored in the Australian education sector, I will employ theoretical concepts to help investigate this occurrence. I will show why settler-colonial theory and Foucault's philosophical notions concerning power/knowledge are needed to critique the Australian Curriculum and understand the lack of visibility about Indigenous knowledges in the Australian education sector. These theories will be used to highlight the power imbalance in the education system, with Western thought given priority.

Settler colonialism (see Tuck & Yang, 2012; Veracini, 2010, 2017; Wolfe, 1999, 2001, 2006) is an ongoing structure that uses education and curricula to maintain the idea that people and land are detached entities. Conversely, this thesis will argue that people are an addition to the land they occupy and must care for Country so that it may be preserved for future generations to enjoy and manage (Gaudet & Chilton, 2018; Scully, 2012). Due to the conflicting ideologies concerning land, there is a discourse in Australia that suggests genuine and authentic Indigenous people live in remote localities, while urbanised Indigenous people are detached from culture and Country. Further investigation is needed to understand what culturally responsive professional development sessions or place-based opportunities are available in urban settings to help dispel the misconception that 'real' Indigenous people only live in remote areas. In doing so, I will identify the literary gap for where Traditional Owners are informing professional development sessions to build the culturally responsive capacity of non-Indigenous teachers.

LEARNING ON COUNTRY

Settler Colonialism and Foucauldian thought will be adopted to problematise the current imbalances and the lack of use of Indigenous knowledges in the Australian Curriculum. In the previous section, the pedagogical practice of land-based education has been observed as a culturally appropriate approach to embedding Indigenous knowledges in the North

American setting. Indigenous knowledges can be described as ongoing observations and learnings specific to a particular First Nation, region or clan, and passed down through the generations. Indigenous knowledge systems are essential for the survival of Indigenous communities, ensuring everyday activities such as harvesting food, conservation, and education practices are easier to undertake while protecting the equilibrium of nature (Govender & Mutendera, 2020).

Learning on Country is a land-based approach that extends the boundaries of the standardised curriculum here in Australia as it aims to embed Indigenous perspectives in education. As a pedagogical approach, land-based education is quite young as an academic/educational theory in Australia. Relying on the academic work of international intellectuals examining relatedly colonised countries such as the United States, New Zealand and Canada, a syllabus of land-based approaches endeavours to disrupt the systems correlated with settlement (Tuck et al., 2014).

Country can be enacted as a culturally responsive pedagogy because it encourages Indigenous students, teachers, peers, families, teachers and schools to immerse themselves in Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing. The Learning on Country pedagogical approach has been built on the essential values informed by Indigenous spirituality, ontologies and epistemologies, care for Indigenous young people engagement, and the understanding that Country is unceded and still maintains its sovereignty. Relationships are at the heart of Indigenous culture and are crucial to Learning on Country pedagogy. Relationships should not be understated because there is much wisdom to be accessed when teachers make respectful connections with the community and Country.

Additionally, Learning on Country pedagogical practice is transformative as it places relationships, Country and culture at the centre of learning rather than as an adjunct to curriculum syllabuses. In this way, students can connect with a greater understanding of Country because educators actively seek ways to improve their connection with Elders, Community members and Traditional Owners. When students have a greater appreciation for Country, they can contextualise and immerse themselves in improving outcomes for their local community while planning ongoing enquiries for prosperous futures. Gruenewald (2003) suggests that place has valuable lessons to teach young people, inevitably shaping the community's identity. This is important for non-Indigenous people on Indigenous lands because it will help them form a strong appreciation of, and connection to, the lands they traverse. Further, the possibilities for non-Indigenous people to learn and embrace the values that Country teaches could have profound results in helping society become more socially, politically and environmentally conscious.

Although Learning on Country initiatives have primarily occurred in rural settings in Australia, the pedagogical practice can be applied to urban education environments as it provides students with learning experiences related to their lives while being informed by Indigenous knowledges. Like the story I shared about Paul, land-based lessons are holistic and take the sustainable expertise passed down through the generations to ensure interaction and caring for Country are mutually bound.

Values of trust, love, respect, curiosity, creativity and reciprocity have sustained Country, Indigenous culture and relationships to help strengthen communities (L. Simpson, 2014). Land facilitates the values and relationships garnered because land is at the heart of all relations. Relationships can only function well with the spiritual element and guiding presence of land (Kermoal & Altamirano-Jiménez, 2016).

Land-based approaches such as Learning on Country are crucial for providing a culturally safe learning environment for Indigenous students to participate in the learning process. Additionally, Learning on Country is essential for creating a space for non-Indigenous students to interact with Indigenous knowledges and form closer connections to place. Learning on Country is central to this thesis as it is a culturally responsive pedagogy primarily used in remote areas of Australia to improve the retention and engagement of Indigenous students. However, the literature must be more evident when locating Learning on Country approaches in urban areas. Additionally, the literature needs to consider how non-Indigenous teachers can employ land-based methods to build culturally responsive classrooms, as well as the role Traditional Owners play in building culturally safe classrooms.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHERS

For non-Indigenous teachers with varying experience levels, embedding Indigenous knowledges is about setting the foundations for, as well as modelling and building, cultural competency so that the learning process can foster lessons for Indigenous students that reflect the knowledge systems used at home. Cultural safety can be explained as a socially, emotionally, spiritually and physically safe setting whereby cultural identity is celebrated and used to create success. Similarly, cultural responsiveness has been used to articulate the practical implications of becoming culturally safe. In Australian schools, being 'culturally responsive' entails the ability to act on Indigenous students' skills, diverse knowledge and cultural identities (Vass, 2017).

Cultural responsiveness in the school setting appreciates that the learning process encompasses many diverse contexts with different characteristics. Educators must understand that each student is different; they must be flexible and disposed to tailoring their approach to

teaching accordingly. Each teacher's journey towards cultural responsiveness will differ: meaning and applicability can be performed in the teaching process, everyday life, and through different exchanges. Teachers must be receptive and open to revisiting the process of critical self-reflection. On review of the literature (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Morrison et al., 2019; Rigney, 2020), culturally responsive pedagogies have the following traits:

- They employ teachers who are not influenced by deficit discourses surrounding Indigenous people and set high expectations for their students.
- They recognise the importance of building respectful relationships with families and the patience required to allow the relationship to grow organically.
- They use cultural knowledge found in the home to build a curriculum that engages students who then feel that their cultural backgrounds are seen and valued.
- They foster an environment that demands a mutual and caring commitment to education within the classroom and school.
- They provide opportunities to critique social and political issues and encourage young people to refine their activism and social justice strategies.

The work of Ladson-Billings (1995) and Gay (1994) will be vital in this thesis as their ideas have disrupted and challenged dominant epistemologies in school education. These writers have helped influence educational thought by shifting the blame of learning inadequacy away from the student and their cultural background and, instead, identifying inequalities that are sustained through educational and social arrangements. The issue of how current education systems and practices perpetuate social and cultural inequalities is brought to light in these discussions. The proposed solution is to adopt alternative teaching methods that prioritise critical hope, transformation, and social justice principles. Educators require the support and guidance of school leadership, Indigenous community members and Traditional Owners to realise the best ways to enact a place-specific curriculum tailored to the needs and backgrounds of Indigenous students.

This research will examine Learning on Country pedagogy as a culturally responsive practice informed by Indigenous epistemological ways of understanding the world. Learning on Country depends on the strengths, connections and relationships formed with Country because these characteristics are familiar to Indigenous people. As well as being culturally appropriate for Indigenous students, Learning on Country is essential for all students because the centring of Country, and related experiential learning, piques curiosity and prompts investigation of place.

Recently, AITSL (2022) released the findings of its Indigenous Cultural Competency Project: *Building a Culturally Responsive Australian Teaching Workforce*. There should have been a mention of working with Traditional Owners in their listed 10 recommendations but unfortunately, the findings neglected to mention the importance of working with Traditional Owners within their listed recommendations. However, under the *Key Findings* section, there is a *Relationships* section advocating the importance of building respectful relationships with the community. Another essential part of the report is the section titled *Sourcing quality resources and professional learning*. The report and the information contained therein are critical because they provide direction as to what cultural competency should look and feel like. I will build on the report's findings to argue that participation in Learning on Country opportunities developed with Traditional Owners will support non-Indigenous cultural responsiveness.

Previously, I acknowledged that Indigenous people highly value standards of trust, respect and reciprocity when establishing relationships; these are crucial values for facilitating self-determination efforts (L. Simpson, 2014). Building respectful relationships is essential to land-based education and culturally competent teaching and contributes to becoming a valued community member. Educators who fail to build trust and make connections with Indigenous families will unmistakably lead to student disengagement (AITSL, 2022). Although the *Building a Culturally Responsive Australian Teaching Workforce* report gives credence to understanding the cultural backgrounds of students and their families, this could be extended to encompass the involvement of Traditional Owner's knowledge through lands-based pedagogical approaches.

Learning on Country mandates Indigenous people, and their knowledges are embedded in the learning process through the act of self-determination whereby Indigenous people voice their aspirations. Seeking the input of Traditional Owners in the co-design of educational approaches that embed their values, beliefs and knowledges is vital; it provides an opportunity for a culturally responsive curriculum to disrupt settler-colonial motives that operate to erase Indigenous people's connection to Country.

I believe the culturally responsive elements closely aligned to the pedagogical outcomes found in Learning on Country initiatives relate to the new pledges of national, state and territory governments that 'encompass shared decision-making on the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs to improve life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people' (Australia, 2020b, p. 2).

The Learning on Country professional development sessions in this thesis will refer to capacity-building opportunities developed with the support and wisdom of Wurundjeri Traditional Owners. The places, yarns and design of the professional development sessions for

non-Indigenous teachers will be determined by the Traditional Owners focus group, which will enact self-determination by giving voice and power to Wurundjeri Traditional Owners.

The Traditional Owners will choose the sites for the sessions with the understanding that even urban environments are Country despite colonisation's best efforts to detach Indigenous people from their homelands. It is envisaged that the professional development sessions will peel back layers of the city landscape to reveal to teachers that the stories, care, knowledge, spirituality, values and connection to Country continue to exist. Teacher participants will actively participate in the experiences. They will be encouraged to practice deep listening, explore their understanding of place, ask critical questions and interact with their peers, Traditional Owners and other Indigenous facilitators.

Traditional Owner engagement is crucial for the thesis outputs because it enables me to get teachers to think about what it means to employ a lands-based approach and the importance of critically reflecting on their practice and epistemic knowledge. Teachers should also think about why building relationships with Traditional Owners is crucial in improving culturally responsive practice, and this should also be done while improving knowledge (appreciation) for Country.

The undertaking of the research project will be guided by the culturally mindful parameters of racially responsive guidelines detailed in important reports including, the *Aboriginal Knowledge and Intellectual Property Protocol Community Guide* (Orr et al., 2012), the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC, 2018) *Ethical Conduct in Research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Communities*, and the Rigney (1999) documents. These documents will provide intellectual, theoretical, and practical guidance for researchers interested in working with Indigenous peoples to develop culturally responsive ways to improve reciprocal research outcomes.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Much has been written about the functionality of land-based pedagogies and the positive implications of embedding culturally responsive pedagogies. I can contribute to this literature because more needs to be written about Traditional Owner offerings to the field of culturally responsive teachers. Further, there needs to be a greater understanding of the cultural competency journeys of non-Indigenous teachers' experience when Traditional Owner knowledges support their professional development in urban settings. Therefore, this research aims to understand whether Traditional Owner concepts of Country can improve the cultural responsiveness and land-based approaches of non-Indigenous teachers in Narrm. I will argue that educators teaching on unceded lands are responsible for disrupting the settler-colonial

mandate and the privileged Western knowledge that continues erasing Indigenous people's connection to Country. Teachers are best prepared to do this work when their cultural responsiveness has been elevated.

The research is necessary and timely given the recent findings of the Cultural Competency Project: *Building a Culturally Responsive Australian Teaching Workforce* document being released (AITSL, 2022). The work in this document problematises many of the issues associated with Indigenous education and has made recommendations to improve the embedding of Indigenous knowledge by building the workforce's cultural responsiveness. I can assist by highlighting the valuable role of land-based approaches and the contributions Traditional Owners can play in improving educators' cultural competency.

Consideration will be given to how the theoretical threads mentioned above fit with the visions of the Traditional Owner participants, who can assist in addressing the guiding questions. This research aims to disrupt the pathologising and deficit discourses relating to Indigenous students and to contribute to building a culturally responsive teaching workforce. Learning on Country pedagogy is a culturally responsive pedagogical approach that helps schools and educators interact with Indigenous cultures, histories and knowledges in ways that best contribute to the self-determining aspirations of Indigenous people.

To address the guiding research questions, consideration must also be given to the types of methodological approaches needed to work in partnership with the Traditional Owners respectfully. This can be achieved by forming a focus group to help Traditional Owners outline their aspirations for the project. The focus groups will also be strategically placed before the two professional development sessions so Traditional Owners can assist in the co-design and embed the knowledges they wish non-Indigenous teachers to learn.

CHAPTER OUTLINES

Chapters 2 and 3 provide a literature review interrogating how land-based pedagogy is used internationally as I investigate how the pedagogical approach can be implemented in the Australian education system. Land-based education is a thread embedded throughout the thesis. This thread will show how Learning on Country pedagogy has evolved over time and how the pedagogical approach can be equally suited for urban localities as it is for remote locations. Further, the chapter explores how Learning on Country and culturally responsive pedagogy are mutually complementary in helping teachers strive towards embedding Indigenous knowledge.

Within Chapter 3, I analyse how professional development in education relates to culturally responsive schooling and Indigenous knowledge accessed in Australia. Undertaking

this analysis entails understanding the history of culturally responsive teaching and how its application to the Australian sector is suitable for sharing Indigenous knowledge and improving the strained relationships Indigenous people have with the education system. An examination of the APST and the Australian curriculum will also occur to illuminate where opportunities lie for non-Indigenous educators to improve their capacity to embed Indigenous knowledge.

The current APST must also extend or encourage educators to become culturally responsive. Therefore, I argue why professional development that includes the innate knowledge Traditional Owners have of Country is essential in improving the culturally responsive practices of non-Indigenous teachers. Concluding the chapter, I demonstrate why it is important for school leadership to support teachers in building their capacity to employ pedagogical approaches of land and embed Indigenous knowledges.

In Chapter 4, I build on arguments that the APST and Australian Curriculum need to be revised to provide opportunities for the teaching workforce to develop their culturally responsive pedagogical approaches. To further critique the lack of opportunities found in the APST and Australian Curriculum, I employ Foucauldian theory to highlight the way power imbalances exist in the education system due to settler colonialism and the project of erasure. I then show how, through the employment of Indigenous research practice, issues of power, race and ethics can be disrupted. Following this, I explain the methods used to collect data and argue why focus groups and interviews complement Indigenous research practices. I rationalise the way the Traditional Owner focus group members were selected and how their interaction was planned to minimise risk and their time and wisdom remunerated. I also describe how teacher participants were recruited, describe the interview stages and professional development in which they will participate. To conclude the chapter, I describe how considerations for validity and reliability have been contemplated.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 detail the delivery of findings. Within Chapter 5, I describe how the project has respectfully engaged with Wurudjeri Traditional Owners. I clearly define the way Traditional Owners were initially engaged in the project, how they were encouraged to participate in the focus group and set the parameters for the knowledge they wanted to be relayed to teachers during the professional development sessions. Traditional Owners shared their intimate knowledge of Country and participated in the delivery of the two professional development sessions. The chapter concludes with teacher participants providing their reflections on the professional development sessions. I also explore the recurring theme of teachers expecting Traditional Owners to share knowledge without the appropriate levels of trust and reciprocity in exchange for such wisdom.

Building on the previous section, Chapter 6 discusses the barriers teacher participants face when improving their cultural responsiveness and endeavouring to embed more

Indigenous knowledge. In this chapter, teachers talk about various issues, including having low confidence, a lack of leadership support, minimal capacity to build opportunities, and a lack of Indigenous knowledge. I then argue how a Learning on Country approach will support teachers' endeavours to enhance their cultural responsiveness and the visibility of Indigenous people in urban locations. This is mostly achievable when teachers are committed to critically reflecting on their epistemic understandings of the world and to continuously working on strengthening their relationships with Traditional Owners and other Indigenous people.

Chapter 7 responds to Chapter 6, whereby teachers reflect on the barriers but also share insights about where the perceived opportunities are to improve their cultural responsiveness and bolster the plight to embed more Indigenous knowledge in the education system. Drawing on these insights, I argue why epistemic reflection is a critical factor in building culturally responsive education and that it is a practice that teachers must be revisited repeatedly during their careers. As teachers offer their insights into opportunities, the most significant part of this chapter lies within their reflection on what it means to connect to Country as they provide advice for other settler-educators looking to build their capacity and cultural responsiveness.

Finally, Chapter 8 presents the conclusions of the thesis and reiterates the aims and guiding questions of the project. I summarise the chapters and the significance and meaning that can be drawn from them. Finally, I identify what I believe to be the limitations of the project. This is followed by a discussion concerning the implications for further research and the education sector.

CHAPTER 2: PEDAGOGY OF LAND AND URBAN APPLICATION

This chapter aims to elucidate how place-based and land-based education is used internationally and in Australia. I will extend these insights and summarise how Learning on Country initiatives have evolved in Australia. Finally, I will postulate whether a deeper understanding of Country could enhance non-Indigenous teachers' cultural responsiveness and ability to embed Indigenous content into their teachings. This thesis aims to strengthen non-Indigenous teachers' concepts of place, as informed by the Wurundjeri Traditional Owners' understanding of Country. By improving non-Indigenous teachers' conceptions of place, the research will document whether teachers feel compelled to question epistemic knowledge and if their improved sense of place will increase their ability to teach Indigenous content. By understanding how non-Indigenous teachers use place to inform their pedagogical practice, the research will determine how Learning on Country could increase the visibility of Indigenous content while disrupting the settler-colonial curriculum (Denzin et al., 2008). Veracini (2010) describes settler colonialism as a structure of imported domination in which Indigenous people are displaced from their land by an outside population from an imperial centre. Further, Veracini (2017, p. 5) stated that settlers steal lands through 'violent act[s] of geography', and turn those lands 'into space and then into place again'. Settlers have created a different narrative to cover up falsehoods that the land is now settled, and the history of their settlement is replaced with lies convenient for (mis) truths that those in power find comfort in (Howitt, 2020).

The present settler education system has been consistently violent towards Indigenous people in Australia by being ignorant of the methods of teaching and learning that have sustained Indigenous communities for a long time (M. Bishop & Vass, 2021). By asking non-Indigenous teachers to question schools as places of power, they will be challenged to reflect on how they are subjected to, but also able to access, the dynamics of power and knowledge distribution. Though this process may cause discomfort, self-reflection and epistemic accountability will allow teachers to think differently about schools, knowledge and power as they respond to a clearer perspective on the dominant Eurocentric curriculum (Apple et al., 2009).

Education informed by land will be helpful for this research because the study seeks to understand non-Indigenous perceptions of Country and whether there is a connection to the extent of Indigenous knowledges they embed. In doing so, the research proposes that when non-Indigenous teachers are open to testing their epistemic understandings, the possibility of disrupting the colonial curriculum becomes imaginable and practicably viable.

Although there are minor differences in terminology where land is the crucial term in papers from the North American continent (Tuck et al., 2014) and Country is the terminology in Australia, the concepts of land and Country hold significant ontological and epistemological variations compared to the underlying principles of place-based education, which are often unnoticed. An essential aim of the thesis is to highlight the usefulness of place-based education; it will illustrate the way Learning on Country pedagogy extends some of the intended purposes of place-based education while showcasing several shortcomings, such as lack of critical engagement with Indigenous knowledges and histories.

PLACE-BASED EDUCATION

Placed-based pedagogy increased in popularity during the 1990s because it was an educational practice that integrated environmental issues and utilised Indigenous and other knowledge systems that mainstream curricula could not fulfil (Webber, 2017). For example, Gruenewald (2003, p. 638) stated that students could not develop an appreciation for the environment or a 'sense of wonder, curiosity and respect' by sitting in the classroom. Additionally, relationships between people and places are developed outside the school, and students need to see or hear 'what places are telling us' (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 645). Gay (2010) advances Gruenewald's thoughts on place-based education by emphasising that teachers and students must activate the outside world to make the learning meaningful and allow student-teacher-environment relations to grow.

A paper by McInerney et al. (2011) explored the theoretical underpinnings of place-based education to contemplate the limitations and merits of current pedagogical approaches in Australia. The authors contend that place-based education has its place in schools but argue that it must be cognisant of, and better-versed in, community and place. Teachers can assist students in developing a profound connection to their surroundings by regularly engaging them in outdoor activities that foster community and environmental relationships. This approach will enhance student participation and engagement (McInerney et al., 2011). Additionally, Sobel (2005, p. 7) argued there is a connection between place-based education and academic achievement, stating:

> Students develop stronger ties to their community, [which] enhances [their] appreciation for the natural world, and creates a heightened commitment to serving as active, contributing. Community vitality and environmental quality are improved through the active engagement of local citizens, community organizations and environmental resources in the life of the school.

The observations offered by Sobel (2005) are essential to improving educational outcomes for Indigenous students because they indicate how students' engagement outcomes can be enhanced when they are strongly connected to their local community and contribute to ecological justice.

Place-based education researcher G. A. Smith (2013) identified the pedagogical practice as an approach suited to participation outside the classroom, including the social and physical surroundings, rather than isolation from the community. Further, Greenwood (2013, p. 93) noted that an education concerned with local issues can add to environmental education 'that is culturally responsive, and committed to caring for land and people, locally and globally'.

Supporters of sustainability argue that it's crucial for students to gain an understanding of ecological patterns, relationship structures, and the long-term impact of human actions on the environment (Woodhouse & Knapp, 2000). Supporters of place-based education contend that this teaching approach equips students with the skills to preserve cultural and ecological authenticity within their immediate surroundings, leading to a stronger connection between learners and their local community (McInerney et al., 2011; G. A. Smith & Sobel, 2014; Woodhouse & Knapp, 2000).

Sustainable education should include an interaction of the emotions and knowledge associated with place when developing a multifaceted understanding of social and ecological justice. Through their positioning on theory and practice, Brennan and Widdop Quinton (2020) conceptualised how curricula can be reinvigorated for sustainability and ecological justice. They suggest that gearing education towards sustainability and environmental justice can be achieved in collaboration with existing curricula because such education opens opportunities for new ways of knowing and knowledge to emerge in connection with existing knowledge bases (Brennan & Widdop Quinton, 2020).

Although place-based education encourages students to be critical of issues in their local communities, it often leaves them with feelings of helplessness as they are unprepared to unlearn the epistemic knowledge taught by a Eurocentric education system. Rather, students should feel empowered to reject the ongoing and structural effects of colonisation as they see fit. An empowered approach to place-based education must entail a combination of respect and understanding concerning societal structures, cultures, and histories of the places students inhabit. Educators who embed a pedagogy of place must challenge their students to interrogate what needs to be protected and conserved and what needs to be transformed (Reid, 2007). Research conducted by McInerney et al. (2011) explored the theoretical underpinnings of place-based education and deliberated on the limitations and merits of recent methodologies with a particular focus on Australian studies. The authors argued that

place-based education is quite accessible in schools but that the curriculum must contain a critical analysis component that considers Indigenous understandings of 'place', 'identity' and 'community'. The implications of pursuing a critical pedagogy of place-based education are discussed regarding pedagogy, capacity-building, and curricula. Additionally, McInerney et al. (2011) cited that teachers are increasingly pressured to teach to a mandated standards-based curriculum, which is problematic for place-based pedagogy. Required nationalised curriculum frameworks with standardised testing regimes and prescribed outcomes need to be aware of local contexts, place-based pedagogy, and community-oriented approaches to learning.

Standards-based curriculum policy does not allow the critical enquiry students need to make the necessary connections between local and global issues such as food security, trade, poverty, police brutality and climate change movements. Moreover, when students are pushed by teachers to question the powerful and controlling structures within their communities, they do so from a disenfranchised viewpoint that is driven by ecological justice rather than individual and economic gain (McInerney et al., 2011).

In its conception, theorisations of place-based education lacked acknowledgements of approaches and methods applied by Indigenous communities that have arisen from deep connections to their lands that, in turn, relied on the premise of social and ecological sustainability (Calderon, 2014). For McKim et al. (2019), place-based education informed the land-based approach, which recognises the desire to centre the community, to critique while strengthening Western systems, and to apply a multidisciplinary methodology that caters for experiential teaching (McInerney et al., 2011).

Eurocentric understandings and practices of place-based learning tend to concentrate on the locale that historically has not prioritised Indigenous constructs of place within the education realm (Styres et al., 2013; Thornton et al., 2020). As a result, attention has been paid to the efforts of problem-solving issues in the local community with little consideration for the understanding that Indigenous people have developed with land and the natural environment, which is materialised and not recognised as a living entity. Nevertheless, pedagogy of place has been very valuable in re-centring students' attention on local community issues and enhancing appreciation of the natural world rather than taking a national approach to the curriculum (Styres et al., 2013).

Young people usually find it challenging to acquire new knowledge in unfamiliar settings because they have been so conditioned to learn within the classroom that working outdoors has become a foreign concept that takes time to adapt to. Students are creatures of habit. They often relate recess to the outdoors. Therefore, students need to reconnect with the outdoors and receive an education that encourages critical thinking about place to better understand the lived experiences, histories and challenges their communities face.

The power of programming students to associate the outdoors with something outside of formal schooling is not only an exclusion of place-based curriculum but also a missed opportunity for Indigenous students to interact, share and learn more through Indigenous worldviews. Bernstein (1964) suggests that socialising (coding) students through standard settings such as education have profound implications for maintaining class systems and controlling and regulating students. Foucault helps explain the colonial curriculum's motive: 'school is meant to be an instrument which acts with precision upon its individual subjects' (Foucault, 1980, p. 40). This instrument appears to be students' compliance with the colonial curriculum's requirements; the schooling process is very regimented, with limited opportunities for self-guided learning. Thus, education concerned with the local environment and community is often dominated by discourses of accountability and the economic progressiveness to which it is connected. As Zandvliet (2010, p. 304) noted:

> place becomes a critical construct to its opponents not because it is in opposition to economic well-being, but because it challenges assumptions about the dominant 'progress' metaphor and its embedded neoconservative values.

Education that seeks to use the environment for learning and engaging students is important because the teacher is no longer the holder of all knowledge and the inquiry is driven by student initiative (Demarest, 2014). According to Johnson (2012), critical pedagogy should aim to contest fictional and normalised constructs of place through understanding Indigenous people's connections to Country and place, along with how the project or erasure has tried to silence them. Understanding and critiquing the process of Indigenous erasure is a crucial feature land-based education, which is what place-based pedagogy seems to lack. Speaking on the significance of Indigenous science, Cajete (2015, p. 46) used the phrase 'land as educator' to convey his understanding of land being 'the first and most essential teacher and community member and the origin of Indigenous cultures'. The term 'land as educator' also is best articulated as land as a classroom.

LAND-BASED EDUCATION

The pedagogical practice of land-based education stresses the importance of critiquing whose Indigenous lands we are currently on and how colonisation has obstructed society's understandings of land and custodianship, which illuminates how authority influences identities of place. Political analysis provides insight into the varying perspectives of Indigenous peoples regarding their connection to land, and sheds light on the settlers' motivation to displace them from their territory (Tuck et al., 2014). Having an awareness of how place is conceived by different groups assists in understanding why it is important for

Indigenous people to connect with land and critique settler intent to repeatedly sever Indigenous connections for their own economic gain. Knowing the diverse understandings of land, land-based pedagogy focuses on disrupting settler colonialism and offering young people a learning environment to appreciate nature, sky, land and water Country through an Indigenous perspective. Settler colonialism is primarily focused on solidifying and excelling Western thought and traditions while diminishing Indigenous knowledges through recourse to correctional institutions.

According to Styres (2011), land-based education becomes highly functional for all students and the local community when education is multifaceted, relies on the relationships created in the community, Indigenous culture is appreciated, and Indigenous knowledges are embedded to enhance Eurocentric epistemic understandings. Land-based education encourages educators and students to think beyond land as associated with remote environments to the reality of land always being present and something that informs everyday processes (Styres et al., 2013). For example, Melbourne (Naarm) [2] is often overlooked as Wurundjeri Country. As such, we are led to believe that Naarm has four annual seasons when Traditional Owners are still guided by six (Jameson, 1996). Understanding local Traditional Owner knowledge is crucial because it informs current educational practice that complements Western knowledge while creating a greater sense of the local communities that students come from. Becoming familiar with local weather patterns encourages students to become more in touch with their regional settings and further appreciate how Country changes to promote new life.

Further, land-based education challenges students to consider the principles and politics of naming land and places of significance and how Indigenous identity and resistance to settler colonialism connect with Indigenous understandings of the world (Calderon et al., 2012). The importance of naming and language is evident across the literature and is thus understood as an essential feature of land-based education (Tuck et al., 2014). 'Naming' in learning is recognised as the 'site at which issues with references between Western and Indigenous epistemologies unfold' (Bang et al., 2014, p. 47). Many researchers working towards understanding the phenomenon associated with Indigenous language and land found they had to interpret and create language and meanings to express these concepts so budding students can learn and understand while also helping others become familiar with that language (Bang et al., 2014). Understanding, reclaiming and using the language of the land is an essential feature of land-based education because it helps students strengthen their

[2] Narrm is the local Woiwurrung word to denote Melbourne.

identities and connections to the land and to disrupt settler epistemologies while contributing to the Indigenous resistance movement.

When Country is used as an educational tool to teach Indigenous knowledges, it generates feelings of belonging for students. A deep understanding of Country, family, kinship and Indigenous language use helps solidify how students connect to the local community (Country et al., 2015). When teachers and students immerse themselves in Country's presence, it inevitably translates into an effective learning environment where the learnings that live within the land inform the law of the land (Burgess, 2019). In learning that considers the law of land, culture, language, and community-consciousness, students and their families stress the importance of collectively informed education so that productive knowledge transcends (Ewing, 2014). Education that reflects the knowledge and cultural nuances Indigenous students see at home and in their communities is engaging because it reflects the world they are from and know well.

For teachers, the theories of land-based pedagogy support an unparalleled investigation of the significance of interacting with nature (Whitehouse et al., 2014). They also mandate that teachers interrogate and identify preconceptions in philosophies and pedagogy that either support settler ideologies of land that work to the detriment of Indigenous peoples or support settler ownership of stolen land (Tuck et al., 2014).

In many ways, place-based education is supportive of learning outcomes that encourages young people to build relationships with the local community and contribute to local needs projects. However, place-based pedagogical approach is deficient in including its overall delivery and the low aspirations to disrupt colonisation despite advocating ecological and cultural sustainability (Calderon et al., 2012).

Furthermore, Tuck et al. (2014) suggested that colonialism, overall, Indigenous sovereignty and human rights are equally not attended to. More, concerns related to the time and relationships between local and global issues are connected are mostly overlooked. These concerns are particularly important because they can help to decipher the sources of problems associated with the environment, society and the economy (Cormack et al., 2008).

It must be said that place-based education sets the foundations land-based education needs to advance the critical work required to fracture and replace settler-colonial structures. Studies comparing student engagement using place and land-based teaching methods indicate that the land-based approaches are more effective in challenging settler-colonial structures and achieving positive outcomes. A study conducted by Friedel (2011) in Canada compared the educational outcomes of place and land-based pedagogies. It was found that Indigenous students' learning in outdoor and environmental education was less effective than that of students who had the opportunity to connect with each other through kinship communities.

Aboriginal kinship is a complex and dynamic social structure that defines how Indigenous people relate to each other, along with their obligations, roles and responsibilities for each other and their communities (Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, 2011). When students learn about their connections, functions and obligations to land, family and community in the classroom, they feel culturally vindicated and valued because their cultural heritage, spirituality and relationships are being harnessed similarly to the learnings at home. Again, research conducted by Dockery (2012) supported claims that solid connections with their families and communities positively influence Indigenous students' development.

Further, Indigenous education should not be confined to the classroom; lessons must include everyday activities that use land as a teaching tool. Activities in this setting are to be observed and repeated so that students can excel in learning (Gaudet & Chilton, 2018; Streit & Mason, 2017). In addition, Indigenous students are strengthened when they participate in everyday activities that support and express their care for family, Country, language acquisition and maintenance of history. Finally, Simpson (2017) asserted that Indigenous people's obligation and care for their kinship groups and cultural maintenance directly result in actions contributing to the Indigenous resurgence movement.

Students and educators who are using specific locations to draw meaning from can gain a lot from land-based education. This type of education helps them to reflect on their connection to the environment as a source of ecological and cultural revitalization and progress (Calderon, 2014). Moreover, Indigenous knowledge that is acquired through extended observation and learning can provide valuable insights to students who are looking for better ways to live sustainably on our planet (Barnhardt, 2005).

Place-based pedagogy is highly regarded for fostering a sense of pride and responsibility towards the local community and enhancing students' educational journeys (Gruenewald, 2003; G. A. Smith, 2002; Sobel, 2004). Emphasizing the connection between the classroom and the cultural and physical surroundings of students is crucial for engaging them effectively. This holds especially true for Indigenous students, whose families have formed close bonds with the land that envelops and sustains them (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 1999; McCarty, 2002; Semken & Morgan, 1997). By integrating Indigenous cultural and scientific knowledge, place-based learning can be enhanced to include a wider range of cross-disciplinary learning priorities (Cajete, 2000). Employing a pedagogical approach that critiques colonisation and encourages students to engage with the community allows them to understand the world through different perspectives. Subsequently, students can adopt and apply this knowledge to increase their understanding of why things come to be the way they are (Barnhardt, 2005). This change in pedagogical approach confronts educational practices

that rely on teachers as the source of power/knowledge and encourages student empowerment by allowing independence in acquiring knowledge (McKim et al., 2019).

Critically, land-based education differs from place-based education. This pedagogical difference will be pivotal in this research as the professional development sessions challenge participant teachers' epistemic understandings of land. To understand whether participant teachers have shifted epistemically, they will be asked how the professional development sessions have informed their practice across three separate interviews throughout the project.

One key difference to note is that land-based education recognises the importance of land (Country) in the context of settler colonialism.(Calderon, 2014). Country acts as a repository system through which people are given and access their health and wellbeing, governance structures, economies, languages and memories. Further, Country provides the laws and regulations for how people should live and behave in upholding the systems Country has put in place for them (Benton-Benai, 1988; Cajete, 2009; Deloria et al., 2001; L. Simpson, 2011; Weber-Pillwax, 2001, 2004). Country provides a complex atmosphere that nourishes the spiritual and environmental needs of Indigenous Australians while fostering social connections. (Moreton-Robinson, 2013).

Learning on Country Pedagogy

Learning on Country, like culturally responsive schooling and land-based education in North America, is a strength-based educational approach that supports Indigenous people's sovereignty and desired educational outcomes. In a framework developed by Burgess et al. (2022), they identified that Learning on Country is a culturally sustaining pedagogy. Building on Alim and Paris' (2017) scholarly work in the United States with black populations, Burgess et al. (2022) were able to strengthen the idea that community voice is paramount to sustaining Indigenous knowledges and cultures as well as helping teachers to disrupt their white privilege and contest Western educational practices. Further, they argued that the effects of community voice position sovereignty fundamentally at the core of Country-centred connections and truth-telling as essential to developing critical engagement with these relationships (Burgess et al., 2022). Truth-telling is a prominent issue in Victoria, given the movement towards treaty negotiations. Teachers could use this issue to embed one of the core tenants of land-based education, which is to think critically about colonisation.

Examples of desired educational outcomes for Indigenous people include contributing to self-determination efforts by embedding Indigenous cultures and histories in the curriculum and being able to determine success indicators rather than those prescribed by prescribed standardised testing markers. In addition, critical strategies for improving educational

outcomes for Indigenous students should encompass schools employing culturally responsive pedagogies, building solid relationships with families and communities, providing individualised personal, social, academic, spiritual and physical support throughout the school journey, and interacting with land-based approaches.

Concepts of Country are best understood through Indigenous relationships to the land, the air and all the waterways, which nurture the spiritual being of geographic places. Additionally, Country cultivates the relationship people share with the spiritual elements of the environment, including the urbanised landscapes, and enacts the way self-determination and sovereignty should be fulfilled. The Dreamtime, history and song lines of Country have shaped the landscape and, even in the densest cities, Indigenous occupation can still be seen, felt and heard (Styres et al., 2013). Whether heavily populated or not, Country is still the prime source for spiritual reconnection and reuniting with traditional culture, practices and language. Therefore, Learning on Country pedagogy for Indigenous students in urbanised places is essential because learning occurs when the connection to their surroundings is strengthened (Bowra et al., 2020).

The decolonisation process fundamental to land-based education requires Indigenous people to reclaim the places stolen from them by reigniting the teachings and learnings of traditional ways (Gardner, 2014). In doing so, Country contains the healing properties necessary to overcome past injustices caused by settler societies (Fellner, 2018). Allowing students to engage with Traditional Owner knowledges caters for an Indigenous epistemic approach to be presented in assisting and engaging all students with Indigenous understandings of their world. As Mick Dodson (1994) reminded us:

> We [Indigenous peoples] have our own unique ways of knowing, teaching and learning which are firmly grounded in the context of our ways of being. And yet we are thrust into the clothes of another system designed for different bodies, and we are fed ideologies which serve the interests of other peoples. (p. 9)

The United Nations Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples document is an important manuscript for Indigenous people as it illustrates the strong connection between Indigenous rights, land custodianship, education and the health of the environment. The document lays the foundations for countries to safeguard the 'survival, dignity and well-being of Indigenous peoples' (United Nations General Assembly, 2007). One of the identified universal rights outlined in the declaration relates directly to education. Specifically, Article 14, which lays out Indigenous self-determination in education and language development is a critical role in forming identity. Despite the push for learning Indigenous languages, education policies have prioritised English literacy over the teaching and acquisition of these languages (McKay, 2011; Truscott & Malcolm, 2010). The privileging of the English language over

Indigenous languages is an example of how Western knowledge systems are given more credence in settler-colonial societies. Official statements on remote or Indigenous education do not address the recognition, maintenance, or utilization of multilingualism that includes both home languages and English. (Disbray, 2016). The lack of discussion around language and Country within education rhetoric is critical to note and a suitable lead-in to considering the importance of Learning on Country pedagogy in advancing Indigenous education. When Indigenous communities contribute to education policy and classroom lessons, schooling becomes a process that elevates the community's status while disrupting the settler-colonial curriculum's mandate (Corson, 1998).

Many believe that education is the solution for future generations to successfully overcome statistical disadvantages and become valuable contributors to society. However, the evidence suggests that Indigenous students in Australia continue to experience subpar academic results in primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions. (Fogarty et al., 2015). Learning on Country has the potential to overcome the narrative of Indigenous disenfranchisement because the pedagogy is engaging, and there are many benefits to being on Country for Indigenous students.

In line with the United Nations Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Parkinson and Jones (2019) argued that Indigenous people are best placed to articulate their aspirations for the schooling of Indigenous students, which is helpful for the arguments in this thesis because self-determination and Indigenous resurgence movements are best supported when Indigenous people can govern their affairs. Further, Indigenous communiteireies can reform education by inserting their educational aspirations into schools. In this way, the community's goals can align with educational delivery. More recently, community-based approaches have dovetailed with biological and environmental science education to produce a renewed interest in the power of experiential learning through local landscapes (Fogarty & Schwab, 2015).

In Australia, land-based education is referred to as Learning on Country and positions itself to disrupt conventional curriculum by making settler colonialism visible (Fogarty & Schwab, 2012; Tuck et al., 2014) through the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge and concepts of place into the learning process (Calderon, 2014). When students acquire knowledge about the way their communities have been impacted by colonisation they cultivate greater relationships with their classroom peers and the regions they belong to.

Learning on Country is well equipped to facilitate these learnings because the pedagogical approach asks teachers and students to learn more about invasion, seizure of Indigenous lands, and local Indigenous knowledges (Gruenewald, 2014; Tuck et al., 2014).

Over the past two decades in Australia, many students have been allowed to strengthen their ties to their communities through programs such as the Learning on Country Program (LoCP). The term Learning on Country has been used by academics such as Schwab and Fogarty (2015), Nicholls and Steen (2017), Christie et al. (2010) and Ford (2010) and derives from the Caring for Country program. The innovative LoC program takes students out of the classroom and onto Country. It involves gathering community members, teachers and Rangers who collectively use Country as an engagement tool (Schwab & Fogarty, 2015). In Australia, the On-Country Learning project was developed to encourage Indigenous students to strengthen their cultural knowledge and connection to Country to solidify their wellbeing and identity (Jackson-Barrett & Lee-Hammond, 2018). Initial investments in coordinating Indigenous Caring for Country initiatives were about supporting, maintaining and conserving flora and fauna. However, research has also supported improvements in Indigenous wellbeing (Altman & Hinkson, 2010).

Indigenous and non-Indigenous ideologies concerning the concept of Country differ significantly, whereby Indigenous people consider land animate and require acts of reciprocal care, gratitude and relations (Country et al., 2016). In Australia, non-Indigenous people have historically considered land a commodity that needs to be cultivated for economic profit and gain. This variance in considerations outlines much of the colonial educational discourse encompassing Indigenous people. Somerville et al.'s (2019) elaboration strengthens the concept of Country:

> For Australia's Indigenous peoples, traditional times were composed of everything that made up Country. This included elements of rock, stone, sand, soil, water, air, and fire; the weather, wind, storms, and the seasons; the contours of the land, hills, valleys, creeks, rivers, and waterways; all living creatures, reptiles, mammals, birds, insects, spiders, fish, amphibians, and so on, ad infinitum. Everything in its totality is Country, including its humans. Country was also a specific place, as well as the relationship between all places. Red, yellow, and white ochre were used with humans for body and ground designs in ceremony, and to transmit messages on sticks from one human clan to another. Sticks and bark were the most accessible mobile forms of inscription and communication. (p. 107)

The Australian Curriculum still teaches colonial ideas about land and its ownership, often emphasizing material possession. These concepts reflect a colonial perspective that prevails in the curriculum. If we acknowledge that these ideas are a component of colonial politics, we can observe how educational institutions and authoritarian teaching methods mirror larger displays of power (M. Rose, 2012; Wang, 2011). The terms "Country" and "place" have distinct meanings. Being on Country refers to the deep connection with the land and the natural

environment through ongoing sustained recipricol relationships. It is a significant responsibility for Indigenous people to protect and pass on this knowledge as it is essential to their purpose of existence. For them, knowledge is not just information, but it is about receiving lessons as rights of passage into adulthood and eldership that further connects them to their Country. Unlike a place of insignificance, Country is a living entity that deserves recognition and acceptance. Knowledge derives from Country and has partnered with Indigenous people since the Dreamtime. Indigenous identity and self-awareness began on Country, so Learning on Country is a self-fulfilling process where wisdom and contentment continually grow.

LEARNING ON COUNTRY: HISTORY

When considering the practicability of Learning on Country pedagogy, consideration must be given to the initiative's 'formal' inception in the Australian setting. I use the term formal to acknowledge that Learning on Country has always occurred in Indigenous Australia, whereby knowledge has been a transgenerational and experiential practice. The introduction of Learning on Country education has been a recent phenomenon in school settings supported by government policy in the 1990s. The Learning on County Program's objectives, as defined by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (2013), set out to:

- increase school attendance, course completion and retention to Year 12 or the equivalent of Indigenous students enrolled in LoCP-based curricula
- increase transition rates to further education, training and employment for Indigenous students completing LoCP-based curricula
- increase intergenerational transmission of Indigenous knowledge and customary practice among Indigenous students enrolled in LoCP-based curricula
- develop a strong partnership between Ranger groups, schools and the local community to deliver a culturally responsive secondary school curriculum that integrates Indigenous knowledge and Western knowledge systems, particularly regarding natural resources and cultural management.

According to Schwab and Fogarty (2015), Learning on Country reconstructs the traditional Indigenous classroom. Students learn from Indigenous people who have cultural obligations to those lands, are keepers of the stories and hold intimate relationships with community members. Learning on County helps students understand who they are and the responsibilities they will inevitably assume (Schwab & Fogarty, 2015). As stated above, Learning on Country requires a collective community approach where schoolteachers play an essential role in

connecting the learning consumed on Country with the teaching in the classroom. As knowledge holders of Country, Elders, community members and Rangers direct the Learning on Country while teachers provide support as they also learn. Learning on Country encourages engagement with learning outside the classroom in a rich and meaningful way, which validates and encourages students as experiential observers in a way that a school cannot facilitate. Upon re-entry to the classroom, the teacher is then supported by the Rangers, Traditional Owners and Elders in the education process (Schwab & Fogarty, 2015).

The LoCP is an example of a locally developed initiative that brings together community stakeholders, Indigenous Rangers and local schools to deliver a program that fits the local communities' capacities, interests and needs (Schwab & Fogarty, 2015). Learning on Country activities incorporate the traditional responsibilities of Indigenous people to manage their Country, which is often the role of Ranger groups. With their land and sea management knowledge and skills, Indigenous Rangers complement the curriculum by using activities Rangers carry out daily, facilitating skill development for employment pathways beyond the local community (Schwab & Fogarty, 2015).

As previously mentioned, the origins of Learning on Country can be attributed to the Caring for Country program and similar initiatives as part of the Caring for Country Unit, which was established by the Northern Land Council (NLC) in 1994 (Schwab & Fogarty, 2015). The NLC is an independent statutory authority of the Commonwealth that assists Indigenous peoples in the Northern Territory in acquiring and managing their traditional lands and seas (NLC, 2006). The Caring for Country Unit set itself the task of supporting Traditional Owners in alleviating the harm done to Country from the introduction of feral animals and weeds as well as fulfilling a desire for a regionally based employment strategy (NLC, 2006). Through participation in these programs, Indigenous individuals have adopted the title of 'Indigenous Rangers' and have begun distinguishing themselves within their Ranger groups by utilizing unique logos and uniforms. That notion of 'caring for country' has its roots in a culturally rich understanding among Indigenous people relating to the mutual responsibility of Country taking care of the people and people caring for Country (Schwab & Fogarty, 2015, p. 6). Caring for the land goes beyond just managing a geographic area and addressing issues related to colonisation. It encompasses a broader scope that includes ensuring the well-being of the environment and its inhabitants, as well as creating employment opportunities. Caring for Country encompasses being spiritually bound to Country through intimate connections with ancestral beings still present in the land and waters. For Indigenous people, taking care of Country involves prioritising the protection of its powerful and sacred places, preserving the values, ceremonies, songs, and stories that define them. Additionally, it encompasses upholding the associated processes of spiritual renewal, connecting with ancestors, providing

food, and maintaining language, law, knowledge systems, and kin relations. (Kerins, 2012). Financially, through the food sought from being on Country, Indigenous people are remunerated for services provided by the Rangers. The removal and maintenance of introduced fauna and flora have significant environmental benefits where Rangers are essentially being paid for the Indigenous knowledge they possess to care for Country (Schwab & Fogarty, 2015).

As well as having political and cultural benefits for Indigenous communities, caring for Country also has positive effects spiritually, which extend and contribute to the community's overall wellbeing (Garnett & Sithole, 2008). Indigenous people's unique relationship with Country is critical in that Country and language provide the foundation for traditional healing, spirituality, and knowledge acquisition. Learning outside of classrooms is an essential aspect of many Indigenous language programs. Many programs have been made possible due to the ongoing work of Ranger groups performed throughout the country (Disbray, 2016). Unfortunately, while the Commonwealth and Northern Territory Governments position Indigenous languages as necessary, there is no set criterion for measuring the importance of language and its contribution towards educational success (Disbray, 2016). Indigenous people can better participate in their health when the community's knowledge and spirituality are developed, revitalised and maintained (Robbins & Dewar, 2011). Country's centrality towards healing, wisdom and spirituality depends on maintaining and renewing the relationships with Country. In order to achieve great healing oitcomes, it's important to acknowledge how one's illness is connected to the laws of the universe and natural law. Maintaining a strong relationship with the land is also crucial, as any disconnection from it can be a significant factor in causing health issues (Robbins & Dewar, 2011).

For Morphy and Morphy (2013), Country, Indigenous identity and learning are intertwined, and these concepts are only sometimes easily translated into Western frameworks for non-Indigenous teachers to understand. Further, learning and understanding Country involves young people becoming adults in Indigenous communities and developing the capacity to move between worlds or code switch (Morphy & Morphy, 2013). Indigenous students can successfully code switch when their culture is visible and a central part of schooling (Gilliland, 1999; Klug & Whitfield, 2012). Those who master the art of code switching are culturally and academically prepared to succeed both in their communities and in mainstream society (Reyhner & Jacobs, 2002) because they are 'strong in their conceptions and manifestations of identity and self' (Schwab & Fogarty, 2015, p. 13). As Bartlett and Holland (2002) have articulated, learning is a rich social activity that helps students become more rounded. When education embeds culturally appropriate practices and curricula, the result is a holistic educational approach that responds to the concerns of Indigenous

communities. Once Indigenous students have successfully navigated the mainstream schooling system, they are more likely to successfully transition into tertiary education, well-versed in Indigenous and Western knowledge, while maintaining a solid connection to their community (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008).

In the *Learning on Country Program: Progress Evaluation Report* (Fogarty et al., 2015), under the key areas that appear to be showing improvement at the early stages, there need to be linkages to how educational and wellbeing outcomes are tied. Similarly, as noted by the recent *Health Benefits for Going on-Country Report* (David et al., 2019), the connection between wellbeing and on Country education experiences needs to be addressed. While understanding the relationships between wellbeing and student engagement is important—and although limited by the scope of this research—there is also merit in understanding how trauma-informed pedagogy and Learning on Country align in their theoretical and practical underpinnings.

LEARNING ON COUNTRY IN URBAN SETTINGS

The Australian literature associated with Learning on Country is highly concerned with the education of Indigenous students in rural Australia, particularly in the Northern Territory (see Christie et al., 2010; Fogarty et al., 2015; Ford, 2010; Nicholls & Steen, 2017; Rostron et al., 2013; Schwab & Fogarty, 2015). The links between Learning on Country and the Northern Territory are prominent for two reasons: first, the concept of Learning on Country has its origins in the Caring for Country program, which was established by the NLC in 1994 to alleviate the harm done to Country (Schwab & Fogarty, 2015); second, in 2014, almost one-third (30%) of people living in the Northern Territory identified as Indigenous (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW], 2019). Additionally, the Northern Territory was the only state and/or territory to have most Indigenous people living in remote areas (79%). With Learning on Country initiatives focusing on keeping Indigenous students in remote Northern Territory communities engaged in education, the pedagogical practice could achieve a more significant impact if the concept was applied to urban and rural settings. According to Australian Bureau of Statistics data (ABS, 2006), 79% of the Indigenous population live in non-remote areas. This can be broken further down to 35% living in major cities and 44% in regional areas. More than half (60%) of the Indigenous population lives in Queensland and New South Wales. To increase Indigenous students' engagement and attainment levels, education systems must embed a curriculum reflective of Indigenous knowledges and experience. In this respect, the Australian Curriculum is deficient and fails Indigenous people. In order to improve learning and engagement in the classroom, Kawagley et al. (1998; Lowe,

2017) advocated including Indigenous knowledges and languages. Learning on Country has the potential to take its learning from remote settings and be applied to regional and urban areas where most of the Indigenous populations live.

Inside the classroom, Country is represented as a concept that builds on students' connections to the environment and knowledge associated with Indigenous culture, relatability and belonging to the land and the obligations that come with being from the land (Harrison & Skrebneva, 2019). Indigenous students' connection with their Country is essential because they do not consider land as a separate entity; instead, it informs everyday consciousness, security and emotions (Harrison et al., 2019). Thus, Cairney et al. (2017) and Rahman (2013) suggested that Indigenous student outcomes are improved when educators have a multifaceted approach encompassing many worldviews, experiences and perspectives.

Learning on Country education is essential because it teaches non-Indigenous students about Indigenous histories, cultures and the environment and helps students understand where they belong (Harrison & Skrebneva, 2019). Learning on Country helps students relate to each other and their kinship groups. It also facilitates knowledge transmission relating to the local seasons and languages that ground students in their local communities (Harrison & Skrebneva, 2019). Providing education that embeds Indigenous knowledges encourages students to raise holistic and reflective questions concerning the cognitive, emotive, physical and spiritual ways students interact with the world.

Such foundations and reflections coexist, adapt, evolve and play an essential role in understanding the way students learn. For example, the student brings their own geographic and cultural understandings of the world, which have been influenced by the lands they inhabited individually, culturally and through family connections. The student's experiences have been shaped by the knowledge, traditions, language, and constructs of place and cultural identity (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007). For Styres et al. (2013), when education in urban contexts employs a pedagogy of land, possibilities of analysis are opened for self-reflection questions. For instance, students question how their epistemic knowledge has been formed with land and whether a more profound acknowledgement of land can contribute to a reconstructed linguistic and cultural diversity within different educational settings. As Haig-Brown and Hodson (2009) stated, 'long before [Country] was disrupted by cities and sprawling suburbs, this land was and continues to be a gathering place of Indigenous peoples with complex histories of dwelling and travelling' (p. 5).

Consequently, although cities have tried to cover up evidence of the past, the landscape is still inscribed with the deep contemporary and historical relationships it has forged with Indigenous people (Styres et al., 2013). Therefore, the characteristics that lend themselves to land-based approaches in remote settings are equally suited to the city

environment (Styres et al.). It is also essential to acknowledge and use Country as a tool for learning engagement. Indigenous students need to see themselves in the curriculum and have opportunities to connect with Country, which will contribute to their success in education and make them feel like they belong (Ganesharajah, 2009). According to Rioux's (2015) study, a sense of belonging is developed when the physical, cognitive, sensory and emotional elements are strengthened and when a student understands they can trust others in the context of colonisation. It is also essential for Country to be embedded in urban school curricula to help Indigenous students confront and disrupt the stresses associated with living as a minority culture (Dockery, 2012). Whether the concept of Country is embedded in remote or urban spaces, Langton (2013) contended that successful educational outcomes are desirable irrespective of locality and should include all Indigenous students regardless of geographical location.

In *Race, Space and the Law: Unmapping a White Settler Society*, women's studies scholar Razack (2002) expressed the way cities are seen as white places:

> The city belongs to the settlers, and the sullying of civilized society through the presence of the racialized Other in white spaces gives rise to a careful management of boundaries within urban space. Planning authorities require larger plots in the suburbs, thereby ensuring that larger homes and wealthier families live there. Projects and Chinatowns are created, cordoning off the racial poor. Such spatial practices, often achieved through law (nuisance laws, zoning laws, and so on) mark off the spaces of the settler and the native both conceptually and materially. The inner city is racialized space, the zone in which all that is not respectable is contained. (p. 129)

Australia's colonial geographies display similar configurations to those explained by Razack. Due to colonisation, there is a distinct pattern of exclusion and the containment of Indigenous peoples to certain parts of the city or outskirts. Understanding how space and place inform teacher practice, and whether this can be influenced through Learning on Country professional development sessions, is essential to the research project. Although Razack's (2002) research concerns places in Canada that have been shaped through colonisation, her findings highlight similarities regarding the use of apparatuses deployed in other settler-colonial states to maintain and preserve power.

Some settlers had anxieties about the presence of Indigenous people within the early development of townships because of the racist views they held. Such apprehensions could only be alleviated by spatial regulations to enforce the containment of Indigenous people on reserves, which meant the removal from the city entirely (Boucher & Russell, 2012; J. Grant & Serle, 1978). In Australia, Indigenous people were segregated and put onto reserves or missions to 'protect and civilise', which involved the process of physically removing people

from Country and causing extensive damage to the economic, social and spiritual base of Indigenous people (Porter et al., 2018). While the project of erasure and the settler-colonial 'logic of elimination' varied across the continent, the manner and execution were similar (Porter, 2017). The discourse surrounding Indigenous matters in Australia is informed by the notion that settler occupation is an unfortunate historical event that should remain an occurrence of the past.

As policy in Australia changed from segregation to assimilation, Indigenous people were again forced to move out of these reserves and into urban areas such as Fitzroy in Melbourne, which became essential for supporting political and social movements (Porter et al., 2018). Today, however, Australian Indigenous people belong to a dystopian narrative and are still regarded as outcasts in city landscapes because cities are viewed as places of development and modernisation. Further, false social reports construct urban Indigenous people as abnormal, tainted by modernism, and deficient in culture because 'authentic' Indigenous people can only be found in remote locations (Porter, 2017).

Further Considerations for Improving Indigenous Education

Although Country is always present, appropriate time must be afforded to attending and learning about the critical relationships produced by Indigenous ontologies, epistemologies and interactions with land. Of course, navigating the National Curriculum, which is heavily reliant on standardised monitoring and assessment procedures, presents barriers to learning and connecting with Country; however, focusing on and developing such relationships must be central in employing a critical place-based pedagogy (Scully, 2018).

Internationally, R. Bishop et al. (2012) observed increased and sustained improvements in the achievement of Māori students when educators developed and adopted a relationship-based pedagogy in their classrooms where the focus on people and connection was a mainstay. Consequently, educators must interact and relate with young Māori people in a different way that is common practice for non-Indigenous students if Māori students' academic success is to transpire—knowledge of the cultural backgrounds, ancestral lands and Traditional knowledges need to be embedded in relationship-based pedagogy. Similarly, for education settings in Australia, Learning on Country pedagogy relies on Indigenous epistemic knowledge; this means educators must use traditions and concepts derived from the land, otherwise the teachings will continue to carry out the settler-colonial mandate (Deloria et al., 2001). Therefore, educators must disrupt colonial curriculum by utilising critical thought, valuing cultural diversity and employing appropriate pedagogical approaches.

Research by Lewthwaite et al. (2017) provided insights into how non-Indigenous teachers thought about their pedagogical approach to teaching Indigenous students. Lewthwaite et al. used interviews to understand further Indigenous students, parents and their non-Indigenous teacher's perceptions about what they deemed to be the qualities and actions of effective teachers in urban area schools. Teachers involved in the research (Lewthwaite et al., 2017) exhibited the diverse and well-developed teaching skills needed to serve the unique needs of Indigenous students. Unfortunately, although teachers spoke about the varied approaches to cater to Indigenous students' needs, they could not articulate how this translates practically and could not give examples of pedagogical approaches used in their classrooms.

Non-Indigenous people must know Australia's history, the subsequent effects policies have had on Indigenous people, and the devastation caused to the systems that have guided Indigenous peoples. Kermoal and Altamirano-Jiménez (2016) stressed the importance of Indigenous knowledges: 'The legitimacy of Indigenous knowledge comes from social relationships and cannot exist without them. These relationships are embodied by human beings and animals, plants, spirits, water and mountains' (p. 8). As well as developing an appreciation for Indigenous knowledges, respectful relationships built on territorial and cultural aspects also prove crucial in the ideology of Learning on Country pedagogy (Battiste, 1998; Donald, 2009; Scully, 2012). Sentiments of respect and appreciation for the more-than-human are strengthened through theorisations of critical place-based education where pedagogy informed by place challenges the harm caused to Indigenous people and their lands in the name of industrial economic development (Bowers, 1993; Gruenewald, 2003). Cajete (2009, p. 183) referred to critical pedagogy informed by place as a 'learning relationship in context'. Improving the education of Indigenous knowledge would enhance the academic performance of Indigenous students, promote justice for Indigenous communities, and foster better cross-cultural comprehension among non-Indigenous learners (den Heyer, 2009; Dion, 2009; Godlewska et al., 2010; Haig-Brown & Hodson, 2009; Kanu, 2005; Schick, 2000; St. Denis, 2007; Tupper, 2012). Moreover, many academics (see Greenwood, 2013; Gruenewald, 2003; McInerney et al., 2011; Sobel, 2005; G. A. Smith & Sobel, 2014; Woodhouse & Knapp, 2000) have argued that non-Indigenous learners care more for the environment and social justice issues when a culturally responsive pedagogy is applied and a critical interaction of land is carried out.

In 2009, den Heyer's research sought to understand social studies teachers thought processes when delivering lessons associated with social justice issues while considering perspectives of citizenship, identity and Aboriginal standpoint. Most teachers in this study expressed anxiety relating to an Indigenous standpoint because they felt ill-equipped and had

limited interaction with Indigenous knowledges. In addition, the teachers were reluctant to reflect on their pedagogical approach to embedding Indigenous knowledge because it challenged their epistemic knowledge and cited that their teaching did not need to change. Including Indigenous perspectives meant the privilege of Indigenous cultures over other cultural groups in the class.

In a 2018 study by Scully, the effectiveness of contesting whiteness through land-based education was examined in Indigenous education in Canadian teacher education. The term 'whiteness' is used to describe the discursive and structural practices of domination, drawing on the work of Moreton-Robinson (2004), who stated: 'whiteness is not just about bodies and skin colour' (p. 78). This investigation highlighted that racism and white privilege could be challenged when land-based approaches are adopted and the prioritising of relationships with local Indigenous communities is central to practice. However, Scully (2018) also contended that teacher educators are often met with responses from training teachers indicating there is a lack of practical resources to help embed Indigenous knowledges in the classroom. Further studies have also established a common theme of teacher unfamiliarity with Indigenous knowledges, which makes teachers apprehensive about teaching content that could be considered disengaging, racist or disrespectful (Dion, 2007, 2009; Madden et al., 2013). This research attempts to overcome non-Indigenous teachers' apprehension of teaching Indigenous knowledges by seeking to understand if greater comprehension of place and a Learning on Country approach affects the way teachers teach Indigenous content.

Non-Indigenous teachers and teacher educators must expand their knowledge of Indigenous people in Australia and strive towards becoming culturally competent and well-versed in delivering education for diverse students. With enhanced perspectives and practices, educators will be able to transform the way, and the amount of, Indigenous knowledges taught, which benefits all students. In summary, land-based education and Learning on Country pedagogical approaches as similar practices despite the initiatives being implemented in different parts of the world. In the Australian context, Learning on Country pedagogy is essential because it has proven to improve Indigenous retention and engagement in rural areas where only 18% of Indigenous people live. The approach has worked because the teachings involve lessons with the local community that pass on knowledge about caring for Country, sustainability and values of social justice. It builds on the lessons learned from place-based education and extends them to include a critique of colonisation and interaction with Indigenous knowledge. Most importantly, students recognise the value of the Learning on Country approach because they can see the practicability of the information and see themselves in the knowledge translation in a way that is culturally responsive to their cultural backgrounds.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have reviewed the theory and literature of place-based and land-based pedagogies from an international perspective. While studying the literature associated with land-based pedagogy, it has become apparent that the pedagogical approach is significant because it demands a critique of colonisation and simultaneously encourages students to become greater advocates for social justice, as well as environmental and Indigenous issues.

In Australia, land-based pedagogy is more commonly known as Learning on Country pedagogy, and its application has been practised historically more in rural and/or remote locations. The work of this chapter is essential for the overall thesis as it highlights how the pedagogy of land has been utilised internationally and in Australia. In doing so, outlining the intricacies of land-based pedagogy has highlighted the mechanisms and future opportunities here in Australia to enact culturally responsive pedagogy.

The research indicates that non-Indigenous teachers can increase their ability to teach Indigenous content by strengthening their relationships with Traditional Owners and deepening their knowledge of Country. As teachers grow their understanding of Country, I will show that this inevitably helps the endeavours to increase Indigenous people's visibility. Increasing the visibility of Indigenous people, history and culture and disrupting colonialism is a large undertaking as the ongoing settler-colonial system has been geared to fulfil the settler-colonial project of Indigenous erasure and, thus, favour Eurocentric processes of power/knowledge.

CHAPTER 3: CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING AND APPROPRIATE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Since the invasion of Australia, the curriculum has been unimaginative and exclusionary of other worldviews. Ideas such as Indigenous concepts of Country have been overlooked and replaced with perceptions of land that regard humans and nature as separate entities. Humans have been regarded as landowners who function for economic gain and industrial development. Ethically, approaches to teaching and learning have solely focused on how humans treat each other without regard for how we connect with the environment (Brennan & Widdop Quinton, 2020). In this chapter, I first explore and review the literature associated with culturally responsive pedagogy. Next, I address how professional teacher development is organised and accessed by educators in Australia, emphasising professional development associated with Indigenous knowledges and land-based approaches. Further, I will uncover professional development opportunities, focusing on how Indigenous education and land-based methods can assist with overcoming issues non-Indigenous teachers face when teaching Indigenous knowledges.

Chapter 3 forms an integral part of the thesis because it strengthens the argument for why Learning on Country professional development is needed to build the cultural responsiveness of non-Indigenous teachers in Australia. Culturally responsive pedagogy is necessary because teachers need help to embed Indigenous knowledge through the Australian curriculum and the APST. I will show that culturally responsive training can amplify the current efforts to teach Indigenous knowledges through CCPs and APST mechanisms. Currently, the education system in Australia wants teachers to be culturally responsive so that educators can deliver the CCPs in a culturally safe way and cater to the diversity in Australian schools. Teachers can build their capacity by seeking appropriate professional development sessions, establishing relationships with Traditional Owners and routinely epistemically reflecting on their values and ways of knowing. Incorporating such measures assists teachers to feel empowered to navigate the mandated Australian Curriculum and embed Indigenous content through the CCPs, even if they encounter a lack of leadership from schools and low levels of enthusiasm from peers.

Additionally, and compounding the difficulties teachers face in embedding Indigenous knowledges through CCPs, the Australian teaching standards ask teachers to meet standards in ways that could be more conducive to culturally responsive teaching. Standards 1.4 and 2.4 state that teachers should understand cultural and linguistic nuances and appreciate Indigenous values. However, the standards need to go further to help teachers achieve this in

practical ways, such as by encouraging participation in capacity-building opportunities or community events. Ultimately, culturally responsive teaching is a fundamental concept for my research process; consequently, this pedagogical approach will be given the authority it needs to foster a greater understanding of how existing measures in the Australian schooling system might be improved.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE CURRICULUM, TEACHING AND PEDAGOGY

Culturally responsive pedagogy is a pedagogical approach to education that uses 'the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively' (Gay, 2002, p. 106). According to Brayboy and Castagno (2009), culturally responsive pedagogy aims to enhance current modes of education. Additionally, multicultural education expert Professor Geneva Gay (2000, 2010) described culturally responsive education as empowering, multifaceted and transformative. She stated that culturally relevant teaching necessitates educators to be well-versed in understanding 'cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frame of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning more relevant to an effective … It teaches to and through the strengths of the students. It is culturally validating and affirming' (Gay, 2000, p. 29).

Culturally responsive pedagogy is an effective way to engage students from culturally diverse backgrounds because it meets the learning needs of the students based on their homelives (Ford, 2010; Gay, 2000, 2010; & Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2017). Culturally relevant pedagogy theorist Professor Gloria Ladson-Billings (2017) has identified the three characteristics she believes typify culturally responsive pedagogy as follows: a focus on student learning, building students' cultural competence, and developing their critical awareness. Many other academics have built on these characteristics. For example, by further examining the literature associated with culturally responsive education, Aronson and Laughter (2016) have succinctly explained the aspects of culturally responsive teachers. They believe culturally responsive teachers empower their students academically and socially by establishing high expectations and a desire to have students succeed. Further, culturally responsive classrooms are multifaceted because they strive to engage the students' cultural experiences, knowledge and perspectives. This is achieved by acknowledging cultural backgrounds, strengthening parent–teacher relations and delivering holistic curricular reflective of other worldviews. Additionally, culturally responsive education uses the existing strengths of its students to drive assessment and curriculum design to teach liberating and emancipatory practices. The term 'culturally responsive' is significant because it suggests educators need active involvement and

responsibility to build relationships with students' families and bring their cultural understandings into the classroom.

In 1981, Erickson and Mohatt undertook research at a predominantly Indigenous classroom in Ontario, Canada. The study sought to understand how the two classroom teachers (one Indigenous and one non-Indigenous) displayed and used cultural congruence with interaction patterns. In their findings, Erickson and Mohatt (1981) proposed that culturally responsive teaching can be regarded as the initial step for bridging the gap between home and school:

> It may well be that by discovering the slight differences in social relations which make a big difference in the interactional ways children engage with the content of the school curriculum, anthropologists can make practical contributions to the improvement of minority children's school achievement and the progress of the everyday school life for such children and their teachers. Making small changes in everyday participation structures may be one of the means by which more culturally responsive pedagogy can be developed. (p. 170)

This quote is important because it suggests that if teachers are willing to provide educational settings that consider the homelives of culturally diverse students, the academic success of students will be improved. In 1995, Ladson-Billings stated that culturally responsive pedagogy must address student success in a way that supports students affirming and accepting their cultural identity while increasing critical viewpoints that disrupt inequities that colonial-settler institutions disseminate. Culturally diverse students are routinely experiencing an uncomfortable predicament because they feel compelled to maintain their cultural integrity while navigating the academic demands of the education system. Consequently, culturally responsive pedagogy must afford students a way to honour their cultural backgrounds while succeeding academically (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Historically, in Australia, schools have only sometimes been culturally safe places for Indigenous young people to flourish. However, teachers and school leaders can make their environments culturally safe for Indigenous students by respectfully and actively being cognisant of pedagogical approaches that have access to Country, community, culture, language and Indigenous concepts of achievement. Like most students, Indigenous students feel inspired when they are a part of the decision-making process and have their knowledges included. Educators must employ culturally responsive pedagogical approaches in the learning process with curriculum content, school governance, school policies and assessments being informed by community members. Assessment that is culturally informed by the local community can be complex, particularly in metropolitan transit cities where many Indigenous language groups occupy the classroom. A holistic approach must be taken to ensure

Indigenous students see themselves reflected in the curriculum in such a way that their cultural backgrounds are valued and respected.

Initiatives such as having murals, displaying cultural objects and using traditional language around the school can provide a vehicle for Indigenous culture to be acknowledged, thus contributing to Indigenous students' cultural safety. However, such initiatives must be carried out in partnership with Traditional Owners to ensure cultural and self-determining protocols are met. Having Indigenous histories, languages and knowledges taught ensures that the learning is relevant, purposeful and meaningful to Indigenous students. The strategy to produce and organise physical spaces that are respectful to Indigenous people is a simple yet effective way to achieve this.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY HISTORY

Culturally responsive pedagogy is associated with many other educational practices and theories of social justice, multicultural teaching, sociocultural teaching, and equity pedagogy (Sleeter, 2011, 2012). Culturally responsive pedagogy is also represented by a range of terms such as culturally congruent, multicultural education, culture compatible, culturally appropriate, culturally responsible, and culturally relevant education (Irvine & Armento, 2001; Morrison et al., 2019). The footings of culturally relevant schooling within a disruptive pedagogy practice can be attributed to the valuable explorations of Freire in Brazil in the 1970s, given his work signalled components such as the role of praxis, emancipatory imagination and critical consciousness (Alim & Paris, 2017).

At the beginning of the 1980s, Moll et al. (1992) conducted research in the United States that sought to develop the 'funds of knowledge' approach. This approach encouraged teachers and schools to improve the success of disenfranchised students by focusing on the community and cultural wealth with which young people walk through the school gates. In the decade to come, educational researchers inspected how education can better reflect and feel like the communities, cultures and homes of disenfranchised students who had not formerly experienced academic success in schools. The term 'culturally appropriate' was first used by Au and Jordan (1981, p. 139) through their research to understand the pedagogy used by teachers in Hawaii who embedded elements of Hawaiian culture into comprehension tasks. By encouraging Hawaiian students to use the standard interaction style of talk-story popular among Indigenous young people, educators could assist students in attaining greater achievement scores on standardised tests than their predicted averages. Similar work was led by Mohatt and Erickson (1981) with Native American students; this entailed observing the participation and interaction structures of teacher–student. They determined that educators

who embedded language interaction patterns that mirrored the student's cultural understandings found greater success in academic output.

Further, student outcomes significantly improved when educators taught using a code switching method encompassing English and a traditional language. The teachers in this research termed the delivery 'mixed forms', and Mohatt and Erickson (1981, p. 110) defined this pedagogical approach as 'culturally congruent'. Coinciding with Mohatt and Erickson's research (1981), Cazden and Leggett (1976) coined the term 'culturally responsive' to explain close language relations of educators with culturally diverse and First Nations students correspondingly. Several years later, Jordan (1985, p. 110) and Vogt et al. (1987, p. 281) assumed that 'culturally compatible' was the terminology used to rationalise the holistic approaches enacted by educators and the educational achievements of Hawaiian students. For example, during Jordan's (1985) research, it was documented that educators could learn the intricacies of Hawaiian young people's culture and homelives and embed these learnings into the classroom. At the end of the decade, Irvine (1989) began to critique the absence of consideration given by educators about the cultural backgrounds of African American students and the resultant damaging effects on academic success.

In the 1990s, Professor Ladson-Billings (1992, 1994, 1995b) elevated her essential work on culturally responsive pedagogy. In her writings, Ladson-Billings was firm in her arguments, suggesting educators needed to reject the deficit discourses surrounding people of colour so that students from culturally diverse backgrounds could have their culture acknowledged and celebrated for its strengths in the classroom. While Ladson-Billings' work is essential because it strengthened previous academic research (see, for example, Au & Jordan, 1981; Cazden & Leggett, 1976; Erickson, 1987), her scholarship of understanding the educational experiences of African American students has been particularly helpful for the application of culturally responsive pedagogy in other settings. In Australia, the underpinnings of culturally responsive pedagogy have mainly focused on recommendations and findings by the AITSL, which recently released a report in June 2022 titled *Exploring Indigenous Cultural Competency in the Australian Teaching Workforce*.

In 2001, Irvine and Armento defined culturally responsive teaching as a pedagogical approach that could influence reimagining curriculum because the method is student-centred and is concerned with building relationships with communities and families and fostering a critical problem-solving element (Irvine & Armento, 2001). Irvine (2002) further explained that the curriculum is transformed with culturally responsive teaching because the subject matter is viewed from multiple perspectives, including the lens of oppressed and disenfranchised groups. Building on her work in 2002, Irvine suggested that educators who employ a culturally responsive approach must do so by embedding elements of the students' culture in their

teaching. Educators in this setting allow the students to share their personal stories and attend to those offerings by developing lessons inside and outside the classroom that build deep connections with the community and the environment (Irvine & Armento, 2001).

In 2010, Geneva Gay emphasised that disenfranchised young people learn differently through linguistic and cultural structures that Western epistemic delivery modes cannot cater for. Such reforms need to be revised because they cannot address issues of deficit discourse, nor can mainstream approaches provide the ethical and cultural safety required to improve students' experiences.

Building on her work from the 1990s, Ladson-Billings' (2014) research with African American students enabled her to refine the culturally responsive pedagogy approach, stressing that intercultural knowledge, fluency, intellectual growth and sociopolitical consciousness were all qualities teachers needed to possess. While the culturally responsive approach has been primarily concerned with pedagogy, in the last decade there has been a surge in understanding the educational system more holistically through other lenses such as policy (Egan et al., 2015), curriculum (Aronson & Laughter, 2016) and leadership (Khalifa et al., 2016), to name a few. Significantly, though, observations from Sleeter (2012), Morrison et al. (2019) and, more recently, M. Bishop and Vass (2021) suggest there is insufficient empirical evidence to support the effectiveness of the culturally responsive pedagogical approach, particularly in Australia with Indigenous students. The preceding discussion provides a brief historical cross-section of important academic contributions to the broad sweeping pedagogical approaches closely linked to the theoretical and practical underpinnings of culturally responsive schooling. Although many related researchers have been omitted, those included have resonated with me and bolstered the arguments presented in this thesis.

The need for most teachers to deepen their knowledge and experience interacting with Indigenous knowledges is a primary concern for the current education sector. Teacher deficiency can be attributed to the historical underpinnings of education delivery in Australia, which needs more input from Indigenous communities. A lack of interaction with Indigenous people means the project of erasure has been able to continue with false narratives such as terra nullius perpetuating the lies at the centre of Australia's history. The ongoing falsification of this country and Indigenous people has meant generations of students cannot appreciate Indigenous knowledges and perspectives. More precisely, I argue that teacher education, and particularly professional development around Country, is crucial in addressing the preparation of educators to ensure they are competent in delivering culturally safe learning environments.

Historically, there has been a lack of awareness and resources afforded to teachers to build their capacity to embed Indigenous knowledges within curricula (Peña-López, 2017). The absence of resources and appropriate professional development opportunities—combined

with undesirable past and present experiences of Indigenous families—means obtaining a high school certificate becomes difficult (AITSL, 2020). Although educators are becoming more aware of the need to better understand Indigenous students' home lives, teachers have acknowledged that this has been difficult due to the demands already placed on them. Further research support teacher claims by suggesting that many educators can promote and prepare culturally diverse settings for Indigenous students. To promote and practice cultural diversity in the classroom, school leaders and educators should understand how cultural identity plays in respectfully engaging Indigenous students, families and their communities (AITSL, 2020).

Dramatic changes are needed to improve how Indigenous students are taught and the ways in which Indigenous knowledges are embedded into the curriculum. Further, improving educators' cultural awareness, understanding and competency is crucial to helping ensure Indigenous students stay at school. As the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy* highlighted:

> Aboriginal people generally seek education that is more responsive to the diversity of [their] circumstances and needs and which recognises and values the cultural backgrounds of students. (Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1989, p. 9)

Culturally appropriate educators are eager to engage Indigenous parents and students in the education process respectfully. Current policies regarding Indigenous education necessitate schools to develop partnerships with local Indigenous communities and maintain these relationships through ongoing engagement and respectful dialogue (Education Council, 2015, 2019). Encouragement of schools to connect with local Indigenous communities is also prevalent in the APST, where educators are mandated to engage and interact with parents (Focus Areas 7.3 & 7.4, AITSL, 2014). Yet, the literature suggests educators are cautious about engaging with Indigenous knowledges, dreading failure and/or that their attempts will be viewed as tokenistic (AITSL, 2020).

To build a teaching workforce that is culturally competent, strong and visionary leaders are needed to prescribe the time required for educators to undertake professional development and build respectful relationships with Indigenous communities and their families. In doing so, educators can develop and co-design experiential learning opportunities and culturally responsive pedagogies appropriate for Indigenous students (AITSL, 2020).

Understanding the perspectives of Indigenous people will support and promote the positions of Indigenous peoples in Australia and encourage people to empathise with individuals from various cultural backgrounds and embrace diversity (Osborne, 2001a). Further, empathising and relating to other people's perspectives assists with understanding

how culture, society and personal experiences shape individual beliefs and attitudes that do not capture the complete picture (Booth, 2014).

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

Bintz (1995) argued that multicultural education settings are beneficial for students because they provide an opportunity for students and educators to hear, think and see things from a different perspective. In addition, listening and being open to the views and voices of others enables people to hear their own better. Further, Bintz (1995) theorised that the classroom should be based on the diversity model when delivering education rather than the outdated consensus model; this is because the diversity model values, supports and recognises individual differences. Culturally responsive pedagogy is sometimes used interchangeably with multicultural education (Sleeter, 2011). The two concepts are distinct in their approach, although they share historical underpinnings. Multicultural education preceded culturally responsive pedagogy, originating from the civil rights movement in the 1960s. Over the following decades, multicultural education was positioned as a self-determining approach contributing to social and educational justice. Unfortunately, multicultural education has primarily been tokenistic, with simplistic mythology and celebrations of cultural clothing, food and holidays (Kim & Slapac, 2015).

In comparison, culturally responsive pedagogy has an unapologetic and forceful political element (Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2008; Sleeter, 2012) that works to disrupt colonial structures. Employing a diverse education model would not only support the aspirations of Indigenous people but also help to ensure Australia's large multicultural communities feel supported because such a model encourages empathy and acceptance of differences between people. An education system that does not cater to and/or celebrate Indigenous knowledges and multicultural strengths incubates further separation between white and disenfranchised communities (MacNaughton & Davis, 2001). In a study that explored young people's understandings of Indigenous Australians and their cultures, MacNaughton and Davis (2001, p. 88) found that 'not one child shared any information that suggested that Aboriginal Australians and Anglo-Australians have anything in common or that there were differences in how Aboriginal Australians lived their lives.' MacNaughton and Davis' (2001) research further suggested that othering was prevalent in Australia's curriculum, educational practices, and educational resources employed by educators to teach Indigenous knowledge. As a result, teachers displayed a superficial understanding of Indigenous peoples.

It is increasingly essential for educators to be culturally competent because of the multicultural aspect of society, which demands that teachers are aware and apply an approach

that is palatable to many cultures. Gower and Byrne (2012) define cultural competency simplistically:

> To develop an informed position based on an understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal issues, culture and way of life that enables confident and effective interaction with Aboriginal people and the wider society. (p. 380)

Educators who fail to understand disenfranchised people's values, situations and aspirations will maintain dominant societies' ill-informed opinions of people from other cultural backgrounds (Booth, 2014). Colonial values heavily influence the Commonwealth of Australia, so educators must take action to confront this. Teaching Indigenous content creates a situation that 'may help to eliminate the widespread racism that persists in society' (Partington, 1998, pp. 20–21). To confront this undertaking, educators must have and be willing to improve their cultural competency.

According to the AITSL (2020), one-third of the Indigenous population is school-aged. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2019) also reported that the age median for individuals who identify as Indigenous is 23 years old; 34% of the Indigenous community is comprised of individuals under the age of 15; nearly 6% of the overall student population consists of Indigenous students.

Additionally, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016, 2017) has clearly outlined the differences in academic achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students such as: in 2019, only 58.7% of Indigenous students were able to advance from Year 7 to Year 12; in 2014-15, only 25% of individuals who identified as Indigenous and were 15 years or older had obtained a Year 12 or equivalent qualification; Indigenous students tend to drop out of school at a higher rate before finishing Year 12; between 2008 and 2018, there was a decline in the percentage of Indigenous students who met or exceeded the national minimum standard in reading and numeracy across all year levels.

To ensure that safe classroom and teacher–student relationships benefit both parties, educators must be culturally responsive to their students' needs and critique their expectations and epistemic biases (Macdonald et al., 2016). To ensure efforts by non-Indigenous teachers are culturally sustaining (McCarty & Lee, 2014), relationships must be built between teacher and student, as well as educators, Indigenous communities and families. Hattie (2003) uncovered that teachers are influential and make a difference in student achievement for several reasons. The two most significant influences on student education are what the young person brings to the school and what educators 'know, do and care about, which is very powerful in this learning equation' (Hattie, 2003, p. 2). Educators must build relationships with their Indigenous students by embedding pedagogy that encompasses familiar experiences at home so students can connect what they are learning and how they

apply it to natural life settings (Donovan & TCM, 2016). When teachers can build strong relationships with students and make the learnings relevant, they can build on these activities to advance their students' educational journeys. An effective student–teacher relationship entails teachers positioning students' heritage, identity and culture at the centre of the learning so positive learning experiences can be harnessed.

The curriculum plays a vital role in influencing the success of Indigenous students. One important aspect is incorporating authentic and respectful Indigenous perspectives and learning methods into the curriculum. This allows both teachers and students to acknowledge and respect the histories and cultures of Indigenous peoples, thereby enhancing their cultural competence (AITSL, 2020). Indigenous parents understand the importance of education, but ensuring their children are strong in their identity is also imperative. As schools start to grapple with producing an environment that is culturally safe for Indigenous students, teachers will need to seek parent input about the education they see fit for their children (NSW Board of Studies, 1997).

When Indigenous students are positioned to keep their home life and schooling separate, they navigate and make decisions at what Nakata (2002) identified as the 'cultural interface'. The cultural interface occurs when Indigenous young people are required to leave the care of their culturally safe homes and communities and venture into wider Australian society. The culturally safe environment changes from setting to setting and from the numerous understandings and experiences Indigenous students and educators present to each other. Nakata (2002) added that educational settings can be unfamiliar to young Indigenous people. Schools must be willing to allow Indigenous students to retain their cultural identity while participating in standardised settings. Educators who situate and understand Indigenous students' viewpoints are well placed on educating all students about Indigenous knowledges, beginning with local tradition knowledge and how it relates to the local community (Donovan, 2011).

In their essay, Battiste et al. (2005) highlighted the importance of relationships when educating young people. This paper sought to clarify Indigenous declarations in different contexts and illustrate how they assist in reclaiming education as Indigenous pedagogies and knowledges. Battiste et al. (2005) recognised the power of images to illicit negative or positive discourses. When educators endeavour to understand Indigenous students' backgrounds, they can empathise and tailor their pedagogy to cater for students who might encounter more hurdles to academic success. However, for educators to empathise with students, they must engage with an Indigenous culture beyond the superficial attempts of reading a storybook or drawing dots on paper. An effective way educators can extend their practice in a meaningful way is to reach out to local Traditional Owners, where equal relationships can be developed to

teach students about the rich knowledges Indigenous people possess, particularly about Country (Battiste et al., 2005; Donovan, 2007; Kanu, 2007; NSW Board of Studies, 2008).

In their empirical study, Lewthwaite et al. (2015) sought to understand the teaching practices that influence Indigenous student engagement and learning by holding conversations with Indigenous students and community members. Moreover, the study sought to amplify Indigenous community and student educational success when using a culturally responsive pedagogy, with emphasis on the content and delivery of what should be taught. As well as amplifying Indigenous voices in education, the study indicated participants were aware of how low expectations and deficit thinking further disenfranchises Indigenous people at community and school levels. Additionally, according to Harrison (2020, p. 154), investigations have suggested that teachers 'can bring about change by adjusting their practices' and develop a good understanding of the students and communities they represent.

Educators are effective in their approach when they reflect on and acknowledge their essential role in advancing change. Through meaningful relationships with Indigenous students and their families, educators can negotiate an educational setting employing a pedagogy recognising students' cultural capital and the culture of schools the young people are trying to navigate. (Lewthwaite et al., 2015). When educators revise their epistemic knowledge and appreciate Indigenous culture as a pathway of strength, rather than a hurdle, towards educational success, teachers are then able to respond and build relationships with students in positive ways (Lewthwaite et al., 2015). A culturally responsive teacher appreciates that young people come to school with a collection of beliefs, practices, understandings and skills shaped by their interactions in their environment.

A culturally responsive teacher should be aware of what students bring with them in their virtual school bag (Ladson-Billings, 1992) and factor these considerations into classroom learnings (Lewthwaite et al., 2015; Lewthwaite & McMillan, 2010; Mollet al., 1992).

Educators who employ a culturally responsive pedagogy are in tune with how the classroom functions and efficiently use different pedagogical practices, so they can assist students in navigating the nuances of settler-dominant education settings (Lewthwaite & McMillan, 2010). A critical characteristic of a culturally responsive teacher is the ability to re-evaluate embedding practices that cater for social equity and to reimagine the educational success of disenfranchised students by supporting self-determination efforts (Lewthwaite et al., 2017). Educators have also indicated that they want a process for self-assessment to understand where they are situated on their cultural competence journey and ascertain approaches to progressing their development (AITSL, 2020). Culturally conscious educators employ pedagogical practices that move beyond the content taught in the classroom to consider the why, how and possibilities of educational settings that cater to disenfranchised

students (Lewthwaite et al., 2015). Although the above claims are not clearly defined in the APST, there is a sense that possessing a culturally responsive pedagogy is a vague requirement of the standards (Lewthwaite et al., 2017).

WHY CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY TRAINING IS NEEDED

The different variations of culturally responsive pedagogy are united in their visions to improve the educational experience and success of disenfranchised, multicultural and Indigenous students. Crucially, mainstream schooling is viewed as detrimental to young people of such backgrounds. Many Indigenous students feel the effects of racism and systemic discrimination in Australian schools daily, with research conducted by Lampert (2012, p. 89) revealing it is 'teachers who are often mentioned as a primary reason' Indigenous students leave school.

Supporters of culturally responsive schooling are attentive to disrupting how power is used in the educational system and how this reproduces cultural and racial hierarchies. culturally responsive schooling has been defined as an approach that involves self-motivation to learn the many facets of culture. It is a practice that requires a shift in the type of political thought unable to respond to schooling practices that have not evolved according to the changing contextual and contemporary student demographic (Alim & Paris, 2017). Given that culturally responsive education is characteristically political (Bissonnette, 2016; Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017), teachers need to be culturally responsive in their approach to progress 'a political endeavour directed toward equity and justice' (Sleeter, 2011, p. 19). For this to occur, the application will involve 'a teacher's deep understanding of how teaching is a sociopolitical act and how the classroom can serve as a place for equity, justice and opportunity' (Durden et al., 2015, p. 224).

Currently, educators need to be more forthcoming when discussing or acting on issues relating to race that assist in maintaining the Eurocentric dominance in education. Although teachers do not intend to be racist by avoiding conversations about race, their silence strengthens the current standards, which rely solely on Western knowledges being the truth (Biesta, 2015; M. Bishop & Vass, 2021; Ladson-Billings, 1992).

As Brayboy and Castagno (2009) advised, 'teachers need to realise that they are inherently and consistently engaged in cultural production and reproduction' (p. 37). The silence of non-Indigenous teachers can be witnessed when discussions of race are held and often observed in safe territories such as the staffroom, where subtle microaggressive racial slurs operate as 'white microaffirmations' (Vass, 2018). When educators look the other way and ignore negative comments made about Indigenous students and their culture, this has

implications for the rapport that needs to be built between students and educators. The correspondence necessary for successful relationships is heavily affected and the knowledge produced and authorised will also be hampered (Walton, 2018).

Suppose the efforts by educators to overturn conversations that contribute to deficit discourse genuinely and critically contribute to the cultural backgrounds of the Indigenous students being taught at the school. The role of educators is essential in achieving cultural diversity in the education system as their attitudes, practices, dispositions and behaviours are fundamental in inhibiting or promoting culturally responsive principles in the classroom.

Teacher Preparation and Professional Learning

Experienced and training teachers need to be prepared to practise culturally responsive pedagogy so that deficit views and Eurocentric understandings of Indigenous students and their communities are meaningfully disrupted (Vass, 2017). Though, according to Morrison et al. (2019), who conducted a literature review of the culturally responsive curriculum in Australia, the concerning reality is that there must be more high-quality and consistent professional development opportunities relating to Indigenous knowledge and culturally responsive pedagogy.

Given the lack of Indigenous representation in Australian society and the teaching workforce, Australians know very little about Indigenous people's cultures, histories and knowledges (Harrison & Greenfield, 2011). Equally worrying is the possibility that training and established teachers may not have met an Indigenous person before entering the classroom (Craven et al., 2014). It must be highlighted that given current teacher training programs are starting to give prominence to building the capacity of educators to teach Indigenous knowledges and students—due to the introduction of the APST and Australian Curriculum CCPs—many teacher training programs lack relevant content (Craven et al., 2014); nor is the embedding of Indigenous knowledge a core component of the programs they offer (Moreton-Robinson et al., 2012).

In their research of teacher training programs offered at universities in Australia, Moreton-Robinson et al. (2012) learned that courses linked to Indigenous education were attentive to the transfer of knowledge instead of learning about different pedagogical approaches. The research stated that 'a focus on "race", racism and anti-racism and the innovative pedagogies' would tend to see 'a positive and lasting impact upon Indigenous education outcomes' (Moreton-Robinson et al., 2012, p. 25). Therefore, conclusions such as an emphasis on strength-based learning, such as Learning on Country and culturally responsive pedagogy, are greatly needed in Australian teacher training programs. Considering the current

teacher workforce and associated building capacity, a survey conducted in 2013 of more than 15,000 educators found insufficient professional development opportunities relating to pedagogical approaches suited to Indigenous students. As with previous studies (Craven et al., 2014) that tried to understand the implications of the introduction of the Australian Curriculum and the APST for Indigenous education, more teachers are realising 'how little they know about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, how to teach them' (J. Rogers, 2018, p. 30). Therefore, in line with the objectives of this research project, teachers must improve their culturally responsive pedagogy to enhance their capacity to embed Indigenous knowledges. While teaching standards and CCPs advocate this process, they do not map it out for educators.

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

A framework that structures Indigenous knowledges and Western thought as conflicting rather than complementary ideologies produces a 'construction of distance between "us and them" which allows for or justifies unequal treatment' (Waldorf, 2014, p. 77). Additionally, Salter and Maxwell (2016) stressed that 'the optional nature of the priorities leaves their inclusion at the discretion of teachers' (p. 309). Pedagogical practices that misappropriate Indigenous knowledges (due to a lack of understanding) reinforce tendencies to view Indigenous people through a deficit lens and further enshrine a dichotomy of the powerful versus the disenfranchised that extends back to the employment of terra nullius (Bacalja & Bliss, 2019; Langton, 1993). For Leane (2010), 'such representations are more accurately seen as a manifestation of white consciousness of Aboriginal Australians, rather than of Aboriginal Australians' (p. 33). In the construction of Australia, the British seized the land and strategies designed to remove and erase Indigenous people's connections to Country were implemented. One of the strategies employed to embed settler colonialism and control the narrative of Australia's colonisation was that of education. To address this, recent education policy documents have recommended that schools embed Indigenous knowledges, histories and cultures.

For Indigenous people, the Australian curriculum is a reminder that there is no 'post' settler colonialism; instead, it is a mercurial structure (Blatman-Thomas & Porter, 2019) that evolves to keep those working to diversify curriculum in a position of powerlessness. An example of this mercurial design can be observed through the CCPs of the Australian Curriculum. The inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures was added to the curriculum in 2011 (ACARA, 2020) but only through the apparatus of the non-compulsory CCPs. Including Indigenous knowledges as an add-on leaves little accountability or

agency to embed Indigenous knowledges, thus leaving a Eurocentric curriculum in a position of dominance. Blatman-Thomas and Porter (2019) identified the dangers associated with teaching minimal Indigenous knowledges through the curriculum, whereby settler colonialism is consistently hostile and ready to impose itself on society's political subjectivity and consciousness.

In Australia, settler colonialism and the logic of elimination are reflected in the lack of accountability faced by teachers to embed Indigenous content into their teachings. Currently, the only way to teach Indigenous content in the Australian context is through CCPs. The Australian Curriculum (version 5.1) (ACARA, 2020) includes three significant CCPs during the first 11 years of schooling. Australian Curriculum developers have established three Priorities that they believe are essential for student engagement and understanding the world they live in. These Priorities are focused on Australia's engagement with Asia, Sustainability, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. The aim of these CCPs is to equip students with the necessary knowledge and language skills to better comprehend and interact with their surroundings. Additionally, curriculum designers set out to establish a conducive setting that fosters dialogues among educators, pupils and the greater community (Whitehouse et al., 2014). Nevertheless, it is not obligatory to integrate CCPs. Instead, educators may incorporate them in any school lesson as they deem fit.

Brennan and Widdop Quinton (2020, p. 105) have defined discretionary add-ons as 'back mapping', describing how the CCPs are used as a complementary tool for discipline-specific subjects. As such, the CCPs do not appropriately account for multidisciplinary knowledges, approaches to learning new knowledge, or critiquing localised issues (Brennan & Widdop Quinton, 2020). Indigenous people's holistic perspective of their surroundings, and their inherent spiritual relationships with the waterways, sky, land and winds are equally occluded and separate from sustainable education (Whitehouse et al., 2014).

The broad descriptors around 'history', 'culture' and 'language' in the CCPs suggest minimal teaching accountability and assessment of Indigenous content in the classroom. The CCPs are overarching standards that can be viewed as a way of creating a culturally inclusive curriculum (Parkinson & Jones, 2019). Yet, without the appropriate mechanism to hold teachers accountable for teaching Indigenous knowledges, the research must explore teachers' perceptions of places and whether an improved understanding of place would encourage teachers to adopt a pedagogy of land. The strategic assignment of the CCPs suggests that programs or units of work designed for sustainable education are short-lived because the load is left to educators with invested interests to drive the process. Without support from school leadership and education policies, programs developed to embed CCPs

tend to struggle or have limited sustained success. For Paige et al. (2019), if innovative learning afforded the appropriate resources and a more conscious and shared effort to realise sustainability, programs that fit the CCP approach would be more viable and durable. However, even during unprecedented times of the COVID-19 global pandemic, which call for innovation, settler colonialism can keep its stronghold on disenfranchised minority groups while remaining invisible in its approach. With the curriculum already being stretched to include Indigenous perspectives of land/Country through the CCPs, teachers are struggling to develop innovative teaching strategies, including land-based approaches for delivering holistic education to their students. Instead, despite the global pandemic, weight, credibility and preference are still accredited to standardised procedures and ranking systems.

When Australia was declared terra nullius and void of occupancy, the educational system was geared to erase Indigenous people from society through a settler-colonial mandate. Therefore, weak frameworks such as those within the CCPs or APST cannot be expected to transform the way we interact with Indigenous knowledges and improve Indigenous education (Guenther et al., 2020). Alternatively, Pimentel (2017) suggested that teachers who are culturally competent and well-versed in their ethical, pedagogical practice cannon exist or be understood outside the boundaries of discriminatory power structures that express the sociopolitical realm of education and 'unless we understand how we construct and shape knowledge, we risk reifying the status quo instead of promoting social justice' (Davis & Harrison, 2013, p. 2).

As stated above, the APST, particularly 1.4 and 2.4, directly relate to how Indigenous peoples and their knowledge are considered and taught. Similarly, the CCPs provide an opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges to be introduced. For example, the CCPs and APST both articulate a desire for reconciliation and set out to create an environment that encourages conversations between teachers, students and learning areas, and the wider community (Whitehouse et al., 2014). However, both policies seem to lack the necessary accountability and specific direction in meeting the guidelines.

Further examination of the CCPs unveils that the most significant exposure to Indigenous perspectives is Making a Nation, taught in Year 9. Topics such as the Stolen Generations and settlement are included. Similarly, Australia and Asia are also elective units taught through the CCPs. With the educator's apprehension about teaching Indigenous knowledges and Australia's economic ties to Asia, the Australia and Asia unit may be given priority. World War I is also a topic delivered in the Year 9 Society and Environment as a mandatory unit within the curriculum. A minor World War I topic segment is allocated to 'exploring the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples during the war'

(ACARA, 2020, p. 30). Conclusively, it is very likely that World War I is the only teaching area dedicated to the Indigenous curriculum content in Year 9 (Booth, 2014).

Adding to the complexities of using the CCPs to embed Indigenous knowledges, Booth (2014) suggested Indigenous curriculum content was in contention for space over Asian studies as more components of Asian history and culture are visible and prioritised. Notwithstanding consecutive changes expressed in the Australian Curriculum and the APST, the teaching and learning of Indigenous young people, and the instruction of Indigenous content, endure small advances, regardless of the virtuous intents set by those wanting to collaborate with Indigenous communities and people. This would indicate that a multifaceted method is needed to achieve the objectives in curriculum documents pertaining to Indigenous education (Vass, 2013).

A multifaceted approach must thoroughly examine land and demonstrate a critical understanding of Country across the education sector so that reconciliation and resurgence efforts can improve Indigenous education in Australia.

To support such bold claims concerning the need to strengthen Indigenous education efforts in urbanised places, this thesis must elucidate whether improvements in teacher comprehension of Country improve the way Indigenous knowledges are taught in schools. An improved knowledge base that enhances the way students think about and interact with Country—one that goes beyond ownership—involves a critical view of place that delivers understandings for all students relating to Indigenous connections to Country (Gruenewald, 2003b). Unfortunately, teachers restrict students' cognitive development by remaining inside the classroom; consequently, curiosity, imagination and respect for the outdoors are hampered. The introduction of the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008), a set of strategies developed and signed by all Australian Education Ministers in a bid to improve the overall schooling experience for young people, stipulated:

> As a nation, Australia values the central role of education in building a democratic, equitable and just society – a society that is prosperous, cohesive and culturally diverse, and that values Australia's Indigenous cultures as a key part of the nation's history, present and future. (p. 4)

The strategies indicated that if young people are to develop into active and informed citizens, they must comprehend and appreciate Indigenous knowledges, resilience, history, culture and spirituality. The methods by which teachers scaffold such learning and foster growth must be readily available to all students. The promotion of knowledge and growth development has also been made apparent in the latest revised Australian Curriculum document (ACARA, 2019),

which directs CCPs connected with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. The Australian Curriculum necessitates that the CCPs be embedded in all subject areas, stressing the significance of cultivating an appreciation, respect and awareness for Indigenous knowledges. Relatedly, Bacalja and Bliss (2019) analysed trends in Victoria's senior secondary English text lists concerning how the CCPs facilitate engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. They analysed 360 books on the Victorian senior English curriculum text lists between 2010 and 2019 and identified gaps between policy aims and text selection trends. Within the study, specific attention was directed towards Indigenous and Australian history representation. Bacalja and Bliss argued that the strategy to embed multiculturalism directly affected the sovereignty of Indigenous nations and communities in Australia.

The ignorance and unwillingness of educational authorities to comprehend the significance of Indigenous sovereignty by conceptualising Indigenous histories and cultures as a homogenous experience feed the core objective of settler colonialism to silence and erase Indigenous peoples (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013; Tuck & Yang, 2012; Veracini, 2011; Wolfe, 2006). Sociology and history research has also critiqued the way settler colonialism has continued to erase Indigenous communities and their connection to Country through the humanities curriculum (Calderón, 2014; Journell, 2009; Keenan, 2019; Rogers Stanton, 2014; Sabzalian, 2019; Shear, 2015; Shear et al., 2015). However, the current curriculum's obsession and persistence with regard to making students better citizens has yet to shine a light on the negative impacts settler colonialism inflicts on students; it also neglects to acknowledge how a greater understanding and appreciation for Indigenous knowledges and sovereignty may improve the overall education experience for all students (Sabzalian, 2019).

Through shallow attempts to increase Indigenous knowledges in the curriculum, the cultural resurgence efforts of Indigenous people intended to carve out space for their sovereignty are delegitimised: Indigenous content needs to be given the same credibility as Eurocentric knowledges. Instead, cultural diversity and multicultural initiatives are framed as cultural pluralism. They are 'aimed at facilitating assimilation to a singular idea of citizenship, leaving little to no room for discussions of tribes' desires for measured separatism' (Calderón, 2009, p. 70). Settler societies are fixated on multicultural education geared towards erasing Indigenous sovereignty and nationhood; such an approach is shaped by the misconception that Indigenous people have a shared aspiration for assimilation. In line with sociologist theorists, Calderon's (2009) critique supports Indigenous study's assessments of multiculturalism (Grande, 2015; Kauanui, 2008; St. Denis, 2011; Tuck & Yang, 2012), which contend that multiculturalist discussions blend issues of Indigenous identity, race and social justice with struggles related to self-determination and sovereignty.

Settler-colonial education was established to enact its favoured political subjectivities and ways of viewing society. Any effort to contest such methods is met with aggression, particularly when attempting to embed Indigenous knowledges (Blatman-Thomas & Porter, 2019). Thus, the project of erasure is carried out through the absence of accountability and opportunities to teach Indigenous histories and cultures where the only access point to teach such knowledges is through CCPs. Although minimal, the CCPs provide the sector with the opportunity to teach Indigenous knowledges, which—with the help of Learning on Country professional development—will enhance teacher capacity to teach Indigenous knowledges effectively. A greater understanding of Country and local knowledges through established relationships with Traditional Owner groups is the catalyst for lessons enriched by Indigenous worldviews.

In Delpit's 1988 paper, she used the phrase 'culture of power' to explain the set of beliefs, values, and ways of being and acting that, for ethical purposes, disproportionately advance factions of people—mainly white heterosexual males from middle and upper-class societies. Advancements are made to sites where these people gain influence, money and social capital far more significant than people from other cultural backgrounds. The distinction of racial lines through these illogical indicators evidences a hierarchical society where established systems and political positions mean those not part of the culture of power become disenfranchised. These obstructions are a creation of human design. However, they are sanctioned by a class-stratified society and are often accepted as typical. For Delpit (1988), the culture of power is a concept that needs to be applied to the classroom so that students can critique and access the hidden codes that reinforce access to that power.

Young people from disenfranchised communities need educators who can assist them to 'understand the value of the code they already possess as well as to understand the power realities in process, otherwise, they will be unable to work to change these realities' (Delpit, 1988, p. 293). Culturally responsive schooling affords a structure that reacts to standardised education systems that disrupt Eurocentric domination and redistributes knowledge and power production between teacher and student. For M. Bishop and Vass (2021), using culturally responsive schooling as a disruption tool is arguably more pointedly warranted and needed when teaching Indigenous peoples than any other minority group in Australia.

The Centrality of Land Curriculum

A closer examination of settler colonialism reveals that the settler state's intent and ultimate goal is to eradicate Indigenous people and obtain their traditional lands (Tuck &

McKenzie, 2015; Tuck & Yang, 2014). Hixson (2013), while reflecting on settler colonialism in the United States, suggested:

> What primarily distinguishes settler colonialism from colonialism proper is that the settlers came not to exploit the Indigenous populations for economic gain, but rather to remove them from colonial space. (p. 4)

Indigenous people existence hindered settlers' access to land, so their removal was imminent (Wolfe, 2006) for the colony to prosper. Settler colonialism was created by stealing Indigenous people's land, ignoring Indigenous sovereignty, and forming a scientifically inaccurate social discourse to govern society. Wolfe (2006, p. 386) is notably known for coining the phrase 'the logic of elimination', which describes the settler's modus operandum for removing Indigenous people from settler societies because their presence challenged the settler's access to land.

As a political tool, Indigenous erasure 'renders some persons or activities or sociolinguistic phenomena invisible' (Irvine & Gal, 2000, p. 38). It is an oppressive structure embedded throughout the world in different settler-colonial states due to nationalist and neoliberal belief systems. In settler-colonial states 'facts that are inconsistent with the ideological scheme may go unnoticed or get explained away … [and] elements of that do not fit its interpretive structure—that cannot be seen to fit—must either be ignored or be transformed' (Irvine & Gal, 2000, p. 38). Erasure occurs implicitly and explicitly in education policies and practices that are fixated on the citizenship mandate in settler-colonial states. As a result, the relevance of Indigenous cultures, histories and languages is disregarded (Phyak, 2021).

The development of cities in Australia has constantly relied on the removal of Indigenous existence from Country and the elimination of the ways they engaged and connected with the land. Settler-colonial structures have always the belief that Indigenous interactions with land are inferior, nomadic and uncivilised, providing the premise for dispossession (Bhandar, 2018). The way land is cultivated and improved for economic gain has always been the undeniable argument concerning the right to land in settler societies (Bhandar, 2018; D. Rogers, 2017). Further, settlers are obsessed with landowners controlling ownership parameters in a gendered and racialised way, defining what can be owned, who can own it, and how things should be owned (Seawright, 2014). The notion of terra nullius, which justified the invasion of Australia, vindicated the lie that the land was empty and unowned by civilised peoples (Pateman et al., 2007). Further, the notion of 'frontier' in Australia's geography and history complements the concept terra nullius. Coulthard (2014, p. 175) explained that the term frontier is loaded with racist falsehoods that affirm the notion that Indigenous people were 'primitive' and did not own the land or possess sovereignty.

Gunditjmara academic Mayr (2012, p. 6) has explained the sustained refusal to embed Indigenous content as 'tantamount to a silent apartheid enacted in Australian classrooms from the sandpit to the sandstone ever since the Western education system began in Australia'. Consequently, Indigenous worldviews have been mistreated, suppressed and refused the chance to be established in the curriculum without prejudice, which has resulted in many Australians not being given the opportunity to learn about Indigenous people and the knowledges they have advanced over many generations —knowledge that is still presently understood and practice (M. Rose, 2012).

Throughout the development of education in Australia settler colonialism has cultivated its power and prominence, and it is only through a multifaceted delivery of education that embraces Indigenous and Western perspectives that gratitude for Indigenous knowledges can flourish (Lowe & Yunkaporta, 2013).

An additional method settler colonialism has used to silence the visibility of Indigenous content in education is through language. Oppressing Indigenous people by outlawing them to learn or speak through an Indigenous language is a deliberate attempt of the colony to rid Indigenous peoples of their land, culture and language (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013). An annex of this matter is a shortage of opportunities to assess the colonial names of places. As Rasmussen and Akulukjuk (2009, p. 279) detailed, for Indigenous communities 'language is not something developed in isolation in human brains, but in relationship to land and water'. Over thousands of years, land and waterways have developed and harvested Indigenous languages. Linguistic expression reflects the ways people interact with their surroundings, animals, plants, and weather patterns.

Hunt (2013) recognised the power of Indigenous languages in stating that Indigenous naming practices are much more than an identification process; they embody multifaceted relationships that inform enduring, political, legal, spiritual, cultural and ceremonial processes. When Indigenous students are taught in a colonial language, they are denied intergenerational transmission of language and cultural identity (Bennett et al., 2005).

Nettle and Romaine (2000) suggested that the failure of Indigenous students to interact and use their ancestral languages will result in the loss of important cultural information about relationships between people, Country, their histories and the management of resources. Further, Forrest (2018) researched the factors associated with successful language transmission between parents and children and found more success when parents were more educated in the Western system. Evidence suggests Indigenous students who learn to speak in their traditional language develop a healthier cognitive brain function, which has

positive outcomes for improved memory and attention and overall education engagement and achievement (Adesope et al., 2010; Commonwealth of Australia, 2015).

Settler-Colonialism asserts its power and influence through systemic structures that are reaffirmed and repeated every day of occupation (Wolfe, 2006). The education system is a prime example where settler-colonialism maintains its stronghold over society's consciousness. The way the curriculum in Australia uses language to control certain narratives is a further example of this. An added example of settler-colonial education using its power and influence is regarding Indigenous knowledge as mythical or folklore (Vásquez-Fernández, 2020). Debates over the years have discussed why Indigenous perspectives related to sustainability and land management should be given equivalent authority to contemporary Western scientific methods. Many scholars and experts explain Indigenous ecological knowledges in Australia are meticulous and thorough, substantiated and located in personal interactions and contemplations (Cajete, 2000).

Veracini (2017) emphasised that settler colonialism behaves with 'the continuing operation of an unchanged set of unequal relations' (p. 2). Lahti (2017) added that settler colonialism transcends place and time and desires 'conquest, elimination of Natives, replacement, and far-settlement' (p. 9).

Colonial occupation and violent acts on Indigenous lands were instigated through the theft of sovereign states, and continual efforts are made to disguise and legitimise the aggressive intrusion (Blatman-Thomas & Porter, 2019; Chang, 2011; Nichols, 2018). The inhabiting and regulation of Indigenous land by colonisers essentially signalled the lack of respect for Indigenous people, and the process of eradication by the colony epitomised the underlying logic. By having a physical and expansive presence, settlement attempts to erase Indigenous land discursively and physically. Tuck and Yang (2012) noted:

> For the settlers, Indigenous peoples are in the way and, in the destruction of Indigenous peoples, Indigenous communities, and over time and through law and policy, Indigenous people's claims to land under settler regimes, land is recast as property and as a resource. Indigenous peoples must be erased, must be made into ghosts. (p. 6)

Tuck and Yang's observation is helpful because it highlights how conflicting ideologies concerning Indigenous issues are rife within the colony. Settler colonialism uses differing ideologies to its advantage, particularly when misleading the public to maintain power and knowledge production. Another example worth exploring is the claim that 'reconciliation' efforts by Indigenous people have not been met by non-Indigenous people. Current responses and strides towards the reconciliation movement are restricted by the lack of understanding of what a reconciled Australia looks like and what actions are needed to strengthen the

relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Compounded by the narratives of equality and diversity, much tension and confusion have seeped into mainstream Australia's ill-informed mindset/s with suggestions that Indigenous peoples are given more resources than they need (Darlaston-Jones et al., 2014). If mainstream Australia's understandings of Indigenous people are overshadowed by deficit discourses, it is important more than ever for teachers to adopt the CCPs and the APST and to improve their culturally responsive pedagogy. Employing such strategies not only helps teachers to embed Indigenous knowledge respectfully but also assists students in disrupting settler narratives that work to portray negative stereotypes and erase Indigenous people from Country.

THE AUSTRALIAN PROFESSIONAL TEACHING STANDARDS (APST)

The APST was erected, shadowing the *Action Now: Classroom Ready Teachers* report prepared by the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group for the Australian Government Minister of Education in 2014. Responsibility to manage the standards for all current educators has been given to the AITSL to ensure all training teachers attain these standards as they complete their training (AITSL, 2011). The APST were established due to education research that looked at effective teaching and educators' impact related to advocating for social responsibility and preparing students to become good citizens and live productive lives. The teaching standards are intended to encourage students to achieve the targets of direct learning, wellbeing and overall engagement.

Generally, the APST were created to improve the quality of education and guarantee that education in Australia is competitive with other international education systems. The standards explain fundamental elements of what quality teaching should entail. The APST also articulate the knowledge educators should possess and the amount of competence that should be achieved across the four recognised career progressions: graduate, proficient, highly accomplished, and lead teacher. The seven teaching standards are targeted towards enhancing the quality of teaching and pedagogical practices so student outcomes may be improved. However, it can be argued that the standards read more like government rhetoric than practical attempts to improve education and pedagogical practices (Ladwig & Gore, 2009; Tuinamuana, 2011). The standards do not provide practical guidance for teachers to reflect on engaging young people. Instead, the standards are complete with comments or reflections on the seven standards across three teaching areas. Crucially, the teaching standards do not provide a rubric to evaluate an educator's productivity or a framework to measure the effectiveness of the criteria in elevating student success. Instead, the guidelines are vague

because they do not provide specific instruction or strategies for embedding pedagogical approaches that resonate with Australia's Indigenous peoples.

According to Timperley (2015), the professional standards for educators in Australia are supported by a perspective that the teaching profession must extend itself beyond the boundaries of practical competencies. Further, the teaching profession must encourage educators to be individually driven to embed an ethical and balanced education promoting young thinkers' learning, critical engagement and wellbeing.

The APTS are also seen as a set of guidelines designed to keep teachers accountable in their professional learning and engagement so that the quality of teaching maintains its integrity while contributing positively to the ethical and community standards of the profession (AITSL, 2014). The professional standards articulate what educators are expected to know and what professional guidelines they must adhere to. Two professional teaching standards directly concern how Indigenous peoples and their knowledges are considered. Standards 1.4 outlines the knowledge graduate teachers should possess regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Standard 2.4 suggests teachers should understand, relate and empathise with Indigenous people to promote reconciliation efforts in Australia (AITSL, 2014). The APST are quite broad in their meaning (AITSL, 2011) and are therefore not well understood; nor do they provide the necessary instructions to disrupt settler-colonial curricula (Ma Rhea & Anderson, 2011; Ma Rhea et al., 2012; Moodie & Patrick, 2017).

The Australian professional standards 1.4 and 2.4 and how they relate to the CCPs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures are problematic because of their general approach and lack of accountability. Consider Standard 2.4: the wording necessitates educators to 'Understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians' (AITSL, 2014, p. 11). Moreton-Robinson et al. (2012, p. 8) emphasised Standard 2.4 as being built on 'a muted pedagogical imperative that through "knowing" the "other", either through more effective teaching strategies or better cultural understandings, entrenched educational disadvantage can be ameliorated'. In their critique of Standard 2.4, Moreton-Robinson et al. (2012; Oakes, 2013; Suissa, 2018) noted the policy relies on teacher's willingness to improve Indigenous education through increasing awareness of social inequity, understanding democracy that is informed by diverse knowledges and reflective practice to disrupt one's relationality to structures of oppression, privilege and power. Additionally, Suissa (2018) cautions educators trying to diversify their pedagogy that teachers must be particularly cognisant of how power is maintained and operated. A failure to understand power dynamics in the classroom will unavoidably preserve the power structures and their social inequalities.

The APST detail that educators should exhibit comprehensive 'knowledge and understanding of the impact of culture, cultural identity and linguistic background on the education of students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds' (AITSL, 2014, 1.4) and express 'broad knowledge of, understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and languages' (AITSL, 2014, 2.4). However, the operationality and accountability of the above standards lack the imagination and desire to improve Indigenous education outcomes. For the standards to truly work, educators must understand their role in adhering to the settler-colonial mandate while trying to upskill and become more proficient in the knowledge associated with our histories and social justice issues (Guenther et al., 2020).

Non-Indigenous teachers resist teaching Indigenous knowledges because it involves challenging their epistemic experience and identifying what gaps need to be bridged or why they refuse to extend the knowledge base related to Indigenous content (Dion, 2009). Further, society is most uncomfortable confronting issues concerning Indigenous people because it evokes regret due to past and ongoing injustices (Sarra, 2011). Additionally, educators are more likely to repeat what they have taught before and will not teach Indigenous content because they need to gain extensive knowledge and will opt to teach content they are familiar with (Booth, 2014). Teaching to Standard 2 requires educators to know the content and how to teach it (AITSL, 201), which supports the expectation that educators must be adept regarding knowledge. If they need to improve their capability, they may feel inadequate. Building teacher capacity to teach Indigenous knowledges can be provided through cultural competency training and other professional development opportunities (Booth, 2014).

Further, Dion (2009) suggests that, when teaching about inequitable social systems, non-Indigenous educators are comfortable with acknowledging discriminatory practices provided they can detach themselves from personal responsibility and separate themselves from oppressive systems. When non-Indigenous educators detach themselves from social justice responsibility, they administer what Dion (2016, p. 470) termed the 'perfect stranger syndrome'. Non-Indigenous teachers enact the perfect stranger syndrome when they absolve and distance themselves from civic responsibilities regarding reconciliation and Indigenous resistance movements (Brant-Birioukova et al., 2020). Those Non-Indigenous educators who feel compelled to disrupt systemic discrimination through the curriculum must interrogate how settler colonialism has privileged and maintained such structures. Brant-Birioukova et al. (2020) have proposed that deconstructing settler-colonial discourse is a profoundly reflective, personal and demanding process that demands a continual commitment to disrupt the Western educational system, which supports morally conscious and civically engaged students (Battiste, 2019).

While changing the imbalances of power in society should not be solely left to teachers, they must consider the information and biases they draw on in their pedagogical practices. In the classroom, teachers can reflect on how they contribute to how dominant powers interact with Indigenous knowledges and how Indigenous students participate in education (R. Bishop et al., 2012). Non-Indigenous teachers' commitment to becoming successful educators in Indigenous knowledges and teaching Indigenous students relies on their knowledge of Indigenous histories and the connections established between this historical knowledge and cross-cultural awareness (Tripcony, 2004). Even when teachers are well-versed in Indigenous education, Moodie and Patrick (2017) maintained that:

> Despite the increasing availability of high-quality curriculum resources and the indicative positive shift in policy, we suggest that the focus on culture in the AITSL Standards reinvests in the colonial representation of 'authentic' Indigeneity as a static, historical artefact (and) marginalises engagement with the political dimensions of Indigenous experiences in the colonial settler state. (p. 40)

Standard 1.4 maintains a settler-colonial curriculum when teachers use their Western teacher training to privilege the pedagogy they deem appropriate for Indigenous students, which usually views Indigenous students through a deficit lens and as a problem that needs to be fixed (Nakata, 2007). Moreover, a critical view of Standard 2.4 could be read as 'let's treat Indigenous people nicely' rather than actioning genuine reconciliation efforts. As argued consistently throughout this thesis, an authentic act of reconciliation is understanding the devastating effects settler colonialism has had on Indigenous people and their connections to land.

It is undoubtedly optimistic to imagine an education system in which all teachers are expected to embed Indigenous knowledges and contribute to social justice issues. However, for Walton et al. (2013), such ambitions must be matched with transformative approaches whereby community and school participation is required to disrupt the Eurocentric and standardised curriculum. Today's system relies on colonial and liberal ideas that seek to reduce the importance of cultural inclusion and relationality (Sleeter, 2012). This is particularly evident in how educators are heavily mandated to adopt a standardisation approach to education at the expense of building meaningful student relationships (Holmes & Gonzalez, 2017). The standardisation approach does not allow students to follow their curiosities or intuitions. Instead, they become a mechanism in the construction and assemblage of good citizens as defined by the settler society (M. Bishop & Vass, 2021).

As the Professor of Sociology of Education Youdell (2010) suggested, those concerned with education maintain the power to 'predict and explain what students can and cannot do, how they will or will not behave, the futures that are or are not open to them' (p. 9). Learning

on Country pedagogy provides the structure to contest mandated standardised curricula; this unsettles dominant societies' control and shifts knowledge and power production towards being guided by students and teachers. For M. Bishop and Vass (2021), a learning environment that is equally led and values the relationship between student and teacher is possibly the most significant element for working effectively with Indigenous young people in Australia.

Indigenous students view the current education system as a culturally unsafe place because there is a lack of recognition of their culture in the classroom. As proposed by Langton (1993), 'a culture is "felt" as normative, not deviant. It is European culture, which is different for an Aboriginal person' (p. 36). The issue of othering Indigenous culture and knowledges can be found across many contexts but is firmly maintained through the education system. Still, by partnering with local Traditional Owners, there is an opportunity to contest curricula that are set to erase the visibility of Indigenous people. Mutual partnerships are beneficial in extracting traditional knowledges to the advantage of all students. While the partnership needs to be mutually rewarding, the focus should be on improving the Indigenous community's educational experiences and advancing self-determination efforts (Donovan, 2011).

Teacher professional development also significantly contributes to producing social justice outcomes and allowing teachers to contest their epistemic knowledges. According to Guenther et al. (2020), transformative educational reform must be understood in its entirety so that the disruption of Western education structures can be further realised. When educators understand their role in remaining complicit in the settler-colonial narrative, they disrupt the systems they are a part of.

Contrastingly, educators are voicing their confidence and deficiencies in embedding the CCPs and Focus Areas 1.4 and 2.4; they need to seek appropriate capacity-building opportunities relating to Indigenous knowledge, or there are scarce capacity-building opportunities made available (Buxton, 2017). Notwithstanding the commencement of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and the associated expectancies of educators about Indigenous education, Ma Rhea et al. (2012) establish that capacity-building to support educators in adhering to the expectations of cultural responsiveness was difficult locally, nationally and systemically. Santoro (2013, p. 317) states, 'The professional standards are complex. There are no prescribed capacity-building opportunities for educators to improve their culturally responsive approaches; instead, schools are 'strongly recommended' to engage and source suitable capacity-building courses.'

Building Teacher Capacity

As defined by AITSL (2014), a quality educator can be described as 'an effective teacher [who] is able to integrate and apply knowledge, practice and professional engagement as outlined in the descriptors to create teaching environments in which learning is valued' (p. 6). Unfortunately, educators often struggle with employing multiple pedagogical approaches because they have had limited experience with multiple educational delivery approaches during their teacher training and throughout their education journeys (Osborne, 2001). As a result, most educators, 'at best, poorly conceptualize as they start working in cross-cultural or multi-ethnic schools' (Osborne, p. 71). Poor understandings of multicultural education delivery then become a part of a cycle of maintenance of the settler-colonial education system.

Presently, there is little research to evidence that educator's epistemic knowledges are being disrupted through professional development that aspires to improve the academic success of Indigenous young people in Australia (Vass et al., 2019). According to Booth (2014), settler education can be contested through quality and subsequent professional development monitored and reinforced for a positive impact that disrupts one-dimensional education systems. To disrupt settler-colonial education, a culture of cultural discomfort must be addressed more broadly in the education system and community. Educators must know that they have a crucial role in contesting settler values. This can be increased by improving their understanding of Indigenous people and cultures (Booth, 2014).

Timperley (2010) stated that previous training and approaches of many educators' pedagogical practices did not involve interpreting educational evidence. There was a stronger emphasis on grouping and labelling students rather than focusing on the directive and guiding teaching practice. For teachers to shift their mindsets towards focusing on pedagogy that allows for order and driving teaching practices, educators need to question what skills and knowledge are essential in addressing individual needs. Once teachers concentrate on improving their pedagogical approach, they must contextualise these considerations within their teaching environments. To successfully embed educational best practices, educators need to be across new curriculum concepts so that meaning can be drawn from the classroom and reasonable adjustments made to the original theoretical approach. This approach demands teachers are familiar with the latest thoughts in education; this dovetails with the interpretation offered by Bransford et al. (2005) of educators as adaptive experts. According to Bransford et al. (2005), educators should be adaptable in their approach to recovering, arranging and employing knowledge and applying this to unique situations that necessitate innovative thought processes.

Although many educators are respectful in their approach, a lack of understanding of Indigenous cultural nuances, priorities and protocols can hurt positive outcomes for Indigenous students. In addition, this can lead to a fear of insulting Indigenous communities, which represses the teaching of Indigenous knowledges. Even for educators who are unquestionably enthusiastic about embedding culturally responsive practices, a few still find it risky and hesitate when engaging with different cultural understanding. Similar concerns have been voiced by teachers who have anxieties about causing offence or infringing Indigenous protocols when engaging Indigenous students and their cultures (Morrison et al., 2019).

The anxieties teachers feel have not subsided despite introducing the Australian Curriculum's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures CCPs and Focus Areas 1.4 and 2.4 of the APST (Baynes, 2016; Booth, 2014; Ma Rhea et al. 2012). Additionally, when discussing the embedding of Indigenous knowledges into curricula, Buxton (2017) noted that 'teachers who have the willingness to do the right thing but are afraid of getting it wrong, take an easier option' (p. 205). M. Rose (2012) added that morally adept educators are more disposed to eluding interaction with Indigenous knowledge or people for dread of being perceived as 'politically incorrect or racist' (p. 71).

Finally, Yunkaporta (2009) recognised numerous aspects that constrained educators from embedding Indigenous knowledges into student learning and involved 'fears of mainstream backlash, loss of credibility/centrality/privilege/expert status, the unfamiliar or other, giving offence or violating Aboriginal protocol, and failure to meet education/workload requirements'. He further stated that these anxieties 'are a root cause of the trivialisation of Aboriginal knowledge in curriculum' (Yunkaporta, 2009, p. 162).

Additionally, although there are many teacher resources to support embedding Indigenous knowledges, educators often need help distinguishing quality resources. Educators are also hesitant to teach Indigenous knowledges because they find it hard to connect with local Traditional Owners or are unsure how to approach the community (AITSL, 2020).

Calderon et al. (2021) asserted that Indigenous educators, communities and researchers can work with non-Indigenous educators to disrupt settler-colonial education that continues erasing Indigenous peoples. By embedding Indigenous frameworks and land-based approaches in professional development sessions for non-Indigenous teachers, there is an opening to disrupt the epistemic knowledge settler-teachers possess (Bang et al., 2014; Calderon et al., 2021; Deloria et al., 2001; L. Simpson, 2011; G. A. Smith, 2013). Incorporating Indigenous content throughout Preschool to Grade 12 requires unsettling settler-teachers' sense of place and moving them towards an Indigenised framework of relationality, making it crucial for teacher education and professional development work (G. A. Smith, 2013, & Davidson, 2018).

Jackson et al. (2016) provided lessons from the South African context that highlight the similarities to Australia's settler-colonial educational system, where educators want to embed Indigenous knowledges but find it difficult. In their research, the development of science teachers was examined during and after professional development intervention regarding Indigenous knowledges was conducted at North-West University. Through the use of questionnaires, one-on-one teacher interviews, and observations during the intervention, the aim of the research paper was to gain insight into the attitudes, values, and beliefs of teachers regarding Indigenous knowledges, as well as the role of intervention in providing teachers with a more comprehensive understanding of the nature and benefits of such knowledge. Research by Jackson et al. (2016) found that teachers achieve outcomes of increased appreciation and motivation for Indigenous knowledges when they undertake professional development in Indigenous education. However, professional development must be supported by a community of practice. The difficulties of embedding Indigenous knowledges into the settler-colonial setting occur because mainstream schooling does not 'provide teachers with sufficient content knowledge or skills of Indigenous knowledge topics which they are expected to teach'(Jackson et al., 2016, p. 495). Bang et al. (2014) and Jackson et al. (2016) asserted that the lack of professional development for embedding Indigenous knowledges significantly impacts how Indigenous content is taught and engaged with. Further, Jackson et al. (2016) stated that 'teachers do not have the necessary pedagogical content knowledge to pay justice to the teaching of Indigenous knowledge in the science classroom' (p. 495).

Non-Indigenous (and Indigenous) teachers cannot embed Indigenous knowledge respectfully because of the settler epistemic understandings ingrained into their psyche. Non-Indigenous teachers are expected to maintain settler structures 'assumptions, privileges, and the benefits that accompany the status of being white' (Bang et al., 2014, p. 303). Garcia and Shirley (2012) proclaim that teacher educators, workers and researchers are obligated to own the responsibility of bridging the gap between Indigenous and Western knowledges so that Indigenous families and communities are sheltered from settler violence.

In a study by Calderon et al. (2021), non-Indigenous teachers were interviewed about understanding how they might partner with Indigenous communities to embed Indigenous knowledges in the Coast Salish regions of British Columbia. The research suggested that most non-Indigenous teachers participating in professional development relating to diversity and inclusive pedagogy want an experience where they can come away with a framework or kit with direct instructions to teach in a manner that checks boxes. This project entailed running non-Indigenous teachers through two professional development sessions related to Learning on Country pedagogy and encouraging, fostering and embracing relationship building, as well as sharing lessons and knowledge with Traditional Owners.

Non-Indigenous teachers must have access to professional development opportunities and be well-versed in Indigenous knowledges because, in the teaching profession, only 1% of the teacher population is Indigenous (MATSITI, 2014). In her research, Woodroffe (2019) interviewed eight urban-based Indigenous teachers to gain insights into improving the education system by embedding Indigenous knowledges into teaching practice. The thesis confirmed the significance of incorporating Indigenous knowledges in teacher professional development by expressing what should be embedded to guarantee that educators learn significant concepts and develop understandings of teaching Indigenous learners and Indigenous knowledges (Woodroffe, 2019)

Significant attention is needed to effectively educate non-Indigenous teachers on Indigenous histories and knowledges in ways that encourage critical reflection on how settler ideologies are maintained and reproduced (Craven et al., 2014). Critical thinking on behalf of settler-teachers is needed especially given the time teachers spend with young people and their opportunities for influence (M. Bishop & Vass, 2021). Although teacher training provides a significant opportunity to build the capacity and readiness of non-Indigenous teachers to embed Indigenous knowledges and employ culturally responsive practices, schools and their leaders must also necessitate change (M. Bishop & Vass, 2021). Additionally, research has indicated that many teachers complete their training with insufficient knowledge and confidence to successfully engage Indigenous students and their families (Moreton-Robinson et al., 2012).

Through their research, Hammerness et al. (2005) asserted that 'the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for optimal teaching are not something that can be fully developed in preservice education programs' (p. 358). Given that teacher training programs cannot adequately skill students in embedding Indigenous knowledges and developing their cultural competency, a case could be put forward for the need for professional learning in these areas. In addition, in-service teachers can challenge power structures within the school by engaging with school leadership and advocating for professional learning that encourages growth with place-based learning and a culturally responsive curriculum.

In their paper, F. Martin et al. (2017) argued that teachers must be familiar with decolonisation practices so culturally responsive pedagogy can reach its full potential. They suggest that 'raising awareness of whiteness has to be the starting point from which to disrupt the colonial socialized teacher ontology' (F. Martin et al., 2017, p. 251). Consequently, to advance how Indigenous students engage with the education system, teachers need to actively participate in professional development that encourages them to question their epistemic knowledge and what kind of effect this has on embedding Indigenous knowledges (M. Bishop & Durksen, 2020).

Ma Rhea et al. (2012) also conducted a literature review to observe the current and future provision of teacher professional development in Indigenous education and the effectiveness of Focus Areas 1.4 and 2.4 of the APST. They concluded that 'many non-Indigenous teachers consider it their choice whether to focus on developing their formal professional knowledge in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education' (Ma Rhea et al., 2012, p. 11). Even when teachers try to increase their capacities to embed Indigenous knowledge and build culturally safe environments, many educators have insufficient 'awareness and understanding of Indigenous cultures, histories, and political issues' (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008, p. 972).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH A COUNTRY CANON

Culturally responsive education stems from a pedagogical approach that builds on nurturing relationships that address school and home cultures, social exchanges and standards for learning, helping develop community confidence that knowledge is collectively erected and everchanging (Gay, 2000). Fundamental principles of culturally responsive pedagogy contain consideration for the success of young people who have been disenfranchised, erecting curriculum and instructional exercises in methods that encompass the histories, knowledge and communicative styles of many cultures so that young people can develop their abilities to affect social change (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2001).

Gay (2010) added that most educators lack the tools to carry out culturally appropriate pedagogy because they do not have access to sufficient professional development. As a result, despite the professional teaching standards, graduate teachers enter the education system without the required knowledge and skills to effectively relate to and educate Indigenous students (Moreton-Robinson et al., 2012). Similar sentiments were echoed through research conducted by Craven et al. (2014), with most respondents reflecting on their inadequate training for engaging with Indigenous students and their families. Embedding Learning on Country pedagogy forms a solid base that allows educators to think beyond the constraints of a one-knowledge system and allows students from all backgrounds to thrive because the pedagogy allows Western and Indigenous knowledges to complement each other through the curriculum (McKnight, 2016).

According to Vass (2012), educators undertaking professional development must be receptive to understanding how Indigenous people have been positioned and placed in the hierarchy within the education system. Unfortunately, a consensus for best practices in teaching and improving Indigenous education has yet to be reached. Still, Lowe et al. (2020) conceded that quality can be enhanced through teacher professional development. In line with

Lowe et al. (2020), improving Indigenous education through teacher professional development concerning Country is a vital objective of this thesis. For Gray and Beresford (2008), educators interacting with Indigenous knowledges, cultures and histories, it is well established that teachers must understand Indigenous people's cultural and social backgrounds. One measure to help teachers increase their awareness of building safe environments for Indigenous students is undertaking professional development opportunities (Denzin et al., 2008; Kaomeo, 2005; Seawright, 2014)..

A study undertaken by Ma Rhea et al. (2012, p. 58) that investigated teachers' apprehensions about embedding teaching standards 1.4 and 2.4 found 'that professional development opportunities are patchy, ad hoc, and lacking in cohesiveness'. Teachers believed their anxieties were alleviated when senior leadership were explicit about the cultural changes that needed to occur. However, without the mandate from the leadership team 'a lack of consensus for teachers to do this work, and the lack of dedicated resources to do so, will also mean that teacher professional education providers will have little motivation to develop programs that support this work' (Ma Rhea et al., 2012, p. 53). Given the failure to have adequate professional development that respectfully interacts with Indigenous knowledges, the Australian Curriculum is most likely the only document to help guide educators in delivering these standards (Booth, 2014).

Other barriers teachers face in embedding Indigenous knowledges include a lack of evaluation and planning of professional development, inconsistent offerings and resourcing, and a lack of commitment to Indigenous social justice issues. Disturbingly, educators who participated in this research rationalised that desktop searches were deemed as effective as official professional development opportunities for knowledge of teaching Indigenous learners. However, Ma Rhea et al. (2012, p. 55) stated, 'this has significant implication[s] for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners who are the subjects of this trial and error approach' because the internet is full of incorrect and unvalidated information.

While education is mainly concerned with preparing young people for the workforce and becoming functioning citizens, 'more fundamentally still, education is a process of forming a culture' (Connell, 2009, p. 225). Connell (2009) articulated the focus of settler-colonial education through the visions dominant society sets it, stating:

> Questions about the goals of education are questions about the direction in which we want a social order to move, given that societies cannot avoid changing. This is where questions of privilege and social justice in education arise; they are fundamental to the project, not add-ons. (p. 225)

Therefore, as the classroom moulds our young people, the values Australia celebrates as part of our national identity need to be inclusive of Indigenous cultures and reflected in the

curriculum so an appreciation and respect for Indigenous people can be harvested (Civic Expert Group, 1994). Even with the advancement of programs to reinforce the critical roles teachers play in young people's lives, such as the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), the Australian Government Quality Teaching Program (AGQTP), the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), and the Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA), teachers still have the power to decide what they teach and how they will deliver it (Dinham, 2013).

Gruenewald (2003) contended that students must learn to be in tune with their senses to understand 'what places are telling us' (p. 645). If we observe closely, Country always provides the learning and information needed to live harmoniously in a more-than-human environment. More-than-human elements can be explained as the domains of the different existences that inhabit our realms comprising and exceeding human relationships and interactions (Souza Júnior, 2021).

Country encourages students to interact holistically with the learning process, an element of teaching lost or overlooked in the current education system (Burgess, 2019). Country is a culturally appropriate teaching tool in helping teachers relate their teachings to Indigenous knowledges (McKnight, 2016) and can be attributed to greater student success in literacy and numeracy subjects (Ewing, 2012). Further, when Country is used as an educational tool to teach Indigenous knowledges, it generates feelings of belonging for students. A deep understanding of Country, family, kinship and use of Indigenous languages helps solidify how students connect to the local community (Country et al., 2015). For students to feel like they belong, they must be linked individually and collectively through their emotions, bodies, minds and senses (Whitehouse et al., 2014). Country as pedagogy is a unique practice because students are taught repetitiously and leverage on pre-established relationships utilised. Learning on Country is an ongoing and continuous process that is not reliant on a teacher, or a classroom setting, to dictate the lesson or transmit knowledge (Harrison et al., 2019).

The ability to immerse yourself in Country's presence will inevitably translate into an effective learning environment because the learnings are contained within the land and inform the law of the land (Burgess, 2019). Learning that considers the law of the land, culture, language, community-consciousness, students and their families necessitates that education is collectively informed into 'productive knowledge in order to be meaningful' (Ewing, 2014, p. 8). Since knowledge is collectively distributed and exchanged rather than conducted in isolation or separated from everyday experiences, educators must make the opportunities to connect with parents of the school community to further their knowledge base and expand their resources for teaching (Lowe et al., 2020).

Alarmingly, and possibly most importantly for this thesis, studies have shown that teachers are the most cited reason Indigenous students leave school (Lampert, 2012). However, evidence suggests limited suitable teacher training opportunities (M. Bishop et al., 2021), and professional development lacks the practical examples to demonstrate best practices for engaging in meaningful interactions with Indigenous knowledges and communities (Lowe et al., 2020). To combat teachers' lack of experience with Indigenous knowledges, Marom and Rattray (2019) argued it is essential for educators to have meaningful interactions with Indigenous cultures so that they can reflect on those experiences and use them in their pedagogy.

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Educators need school leaders who are willing to invest in enabling teachers to educate and reach a broader and more diverse audience. In addition, according to Timperley (2010), school leaders must encourage educators to understand current evidence of best practices to improve their pedagogy. Similarly, school leaders must keep abreast of related literature and evidence to enhance and inform their leadership practices. Further, leadership must take current evidence and embed such practices systematically to build on knowledge and skill acquisition.

When school leaders activate the ongoing process of utilising up-to-date evidence to drive decision-making, it is referred to as an inquiry habit of the mind (Earl & Kratz, 2006). Although the evidence does not always provide definitive answers about how to embed systematic change across the school, the evidence should provide enough insight to allow leaders to make informed decisions about how schools can adopt emerging practices. Additionally, evidence linked to student outcomes should inform the way educators teach instead of merely indicating student capabilities or rankings, as is the case with the current standardised curriculum.

If educators are well-versed in emerging educational theories, as Coburn (2001) has suggested, educators will likely accept new concepts as suitable or impractical for their pedagogical practice. Engaging educators established constructs means considering how those thoughts contrast with relevant philosophies and gauging the impact emerging pedagogical practices might have on their lessons (Timperley, 2010). Current studies indicate that it is educators who have the most influence in affecting student results (Bransford et al., 2005; Nye et al., 2004; Scheerens et al., 1989); this reality has necessitated an improved effort to encourage teacher professional development opportunities that improve practice. Educators,

with the support of school leadership, can improve the learning environment by adopting evidence into their practice (Timperley, 2010).

In a systematic review conducted by Robinson et al. (2008), school leadership was also found to be influential in terms of increasing student success, as administration can provide the necessary resources for teacher participation in professional development. Teachers supported by school leaders must embed the evidence from professional development opportunities into their teaching so students may benefit and the school's culture may advance. Through a whole-school approach, R. Bishop et al. (2003) established an Effective Teaching Profile (ETP) that contested the deficit discourses surrounding Māori academic performance. The ETP encourages teachers to enhance their capacity and awareness about building empathy, care and relationships in the classroom setting. The ETP approach is most effective when supported by school leadership, where systematic change can occur throughout the school and local community. The schooling experiences of Māori young people improve noticeably when the ETP is promoted, and markers such as engagement, participation, achievement and retention all show positive gains compared to other groups of schools (R. Bishop et al., 2012; Meyer et al., 2010).

Culturally responsive education is an all-school approach that should encompass teachers, principals, curriculum leaders and senior teachers (Fraise & Brooks, 2015; Khalifaet al., 2016; Lopez, 2016; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012; Magno & Schiff, 2010; L. Morgan, 2017). Further, Khalifa et al. (2016) contended that culturally responsive school leaders are morally obligated to unravel the oppression disenfranchised students feel.

Essential to the ETP process is educators' understanding and desire to contest deficit discourses for explaining the low educational attainment of Māori students and playing an active role in improving their practice while also contributing to the aspirations and success of Māori students. A professional development session was established to help educators reflect and alter their approaches. In this session, teachers were allowed to evaluate and critique their positionality when reflecting on their principles, images and techniques; they were also encouraged to reflect on how their viewpoints differ when considering Māori students in the classroom. Educators are then given continuing opportunities through follow-up sessions to reflect on their capacity to deliver holistic education inclusive of Māori perspectives (R. Bishop et al., 2012).

In a conference paper delivered at the Australian Council for Educational Research conference, Hattie (2003) stated that although socio-economic status is an indicator of Māori educational success, he also asserted that 'the evidence is pointing more to the relationships between teachers and Maori students as the major issue – it is a matter of cultural relationships, not socio-economic resources – as these differences occur at all levels of socio-

economic status' (p. 7). Consequently, school leadership must provide appropriate capacity-building opportunities for teachers that support pedagogical practice and contribute to systemic change. For Hattie (2003), a teacher's effectiveness is undoubtedly the most efficient way to effect systemic change. The educational setting becomes the most valuable place for delivering professional learning that seeks to alter the entrenched culture of a school and contest the persistent inequalities in academic achievement. It is clear from the research conducted by R. Bishop et al. (2012) and Meyer et al. (2016) that the student achievement patterns of Māori students were sustained because of continual professional development opportunities focused on teacher pedagogy.

Still, school leadership must fully support professional development that aims to improve teacher pedagogy for systemic change to occur. As Fullan (2001) and McLaughlin (1990) validate in their respective research, how outcomes from professional development sessions are embedded will be reflected in student achievement. Moreover, professional development supportive of school leadership—and leadership that takes ownership of educational disparities—will produce immediate results in line with the school's goals, visions, diversity, inclusion, and evidence-based outcomes.

Research by Timperley (2015) involved analysing educators' professional and critical conversations to table dialogue and views that promote professional growth. As a result of the data collected, Timperley established that adaptive expertise is needed to steer the continuous technological and societal advances in Australian educational contexts. Adaptive expertise are specified by school leaders and educators striving to improve their educational practice; such expertise contest the idea that capacity and competence are established through repetition.

Employing the characteristics of adaptive expertise means educators are motivated to increase the values students hold dearly. Teachers who use adaptive expertise actively seek opportunities to build their cultural responsive capacity and create an environment that allows them to reflect and contest epistemic knowledge to improve their pedagogy (Timperley, 2015). There is growing emphasis on the need for educators to be across professional and curricula objectives relating to Indigenous students and Indigenous knowledges, yet, there are very few good professional development sessions that address such needs for teachers. Further, it is common for educators to have little to no meaningful interactions with Indigenous peoples, and there needs to be a clear gap in professional development to build the capacity of educators to meet these responsibilities respectfully (Moreton-Robinson et al., 2012). Significantly, a literature review by Lewthwaite et al. (2017) emphasised that empirical research did not validate research concerned with quality teaching practices and disenfranchised students.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have explored literature on culturally responsive education and how this pedagogical approach has been developed. Further, I have investigated the way professional development for teachers is organised and accessed by educators in Australia. As this thesis is concerned with understanding how settler-teachers access professional development opportunities, particular attention has been given to how Indigenous knowledge and land-based approaches to learning opportunities are offered. Finally, professional development supported by school leadership centred on Indigenous concepts of Country helps educators shift epistemically and promotes culturally responsive pedagogy.

By exploring settler constructs of land, this thesis considers the role non-Indigenous teachers can play in increasing Indigenous content taught in the classroom and, thus, contributing to Indigenous resurgence and self-determination efforts in education. Indeed, Indigenous people will need support to disrupt the settler-colonial curriculum, but this work should be culturally responsive to pedagogical principles guided by Indigenous people. Indigenous people have voiced their concerns with non-Indigenous people assisting in Indigenous advocacy because of the risk it poses to self-determination and these issues must be explored further. As the research delves deeper into understanding the role and effects of non-Indigenous educators developing concepts of place, teachers' journeys of responding to the settler-colonial curriculum will be recorded and critiqued at three stages to track their professional development.

I have also argued the case for education that embraces Indigenous perspectives and offers non-Indigenous people the opportunity to learn, respect and grow empathy for Indigenous people's histories and cultures; this approach facilitates an appreciation for cultural diversity. Additionally, settler-educators must experience the reprogramming necessary to disrupt how they have come to know and understand the world, which will enhance their pedagogical approach. In doing so, settler-teachers leave themselves open to being informed by different worldviews that will support their teaching efforts and help them overcome anxieties about embedding Indigenous knowledge. When Indigenous perspectives better inform teachers, they are in an improved situation to disrupt settler-colonial curricula, improve the visibility of Indigenous people and contribute to overall Indigenous resurgence efforts. I have also offered practical solutions that teachers can employ to embed Indigenous content, such as making Country central to the delivery of lessons and using a culturally responsive approach to better understand and empathise with students.

In concluding the chapter, I have explored the possible implications of employing Learning on Country pedagogy through the APTS and the Australian Curriculum. I have also

investigated what culturally responsive teaching and appropriate professional development of Country would mean for educators when embedding Indigenous knowledges, despite the current curriculum being mandated and teachers feeling overburdened.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I will employ Foucault's power/knowledge philosophy to illustrate how settler colonialism has been used as a tool across many apparatuses, including schooling and academia, to maintain Western knowledge's influence over society. I will show the significance of employing an Indigenous research framework to drive the questions and methods inherent to this research project. I have adopted S. Wilson's (2001, 2008) understandings of Indigenous research to help build an argument that supports the need for an Indigenous research, which sets itself the task of centring Indigenous accounts of ontology, research methodologies, epistemology, and axiology so that responsibilities, relationships, perpetuation, and resurgence can be elevated. Additionally, I will demonstrate how employing an Indigenous research paradigm disrupts issues caused by colonisation, such as power imbalance and the maintenance of racial deficit discourses; I will also discuss what this means for ethical research and self-determining outcomes for Indigenous communities. S. Wilson's conceptualisations (2001, 2008) have further assisted in designing the structures of this research that centres land-based education approaches so that non-Indigenous teachers can build their cultural responsiveness and capacity to develop better relationships with Traditional Owners (Morales & Nichols, 2018).

In the latter part of this chapter, I will provide details about the methods used to collect data and why they are best suited to the purposes of this research. The methods selected to collect data include focus groups with Wurundjeri Traditional Owners and interviews with participant teachers. Finally, I will seek to explain the recruitment process for the Wurundjeri Traditional Owners focus group and participant teachers and discuss the potential risks of working with small sample sizes. I will also provide a clear outline of the participation process and the incentives offered to participants. Additionally, I will discuss why the focus group members' selection was carefully considered. For instance, careful consideration was given to appreciating whether Traditional Owners had enough time to commit to the project, had the experience of working in the education sector, and felt comfortable working with other Traditional Owners in the group.

THEORY

FOUCAULT'S WORK

Michel Foucault contended that power influences the way institutions, customs, individuals and culture work. His thoughts on power, particularly the way knowledge is

transferred, has been an important conjectural idea for the critique of settler-colonial theory and scholarship (Blagg & Anthony, 2019; Legg, 2016; Young, 1995), predominantly in highlighting the impacts of invasion. Fundamentally, using Foucault's work as a foundation, settler-colonial theory stresses that the authority settler-colonialism yields is established by making Indigenous people concealed (Wolfe, 2006).

Theorising through an education lens, Ball and Olmedo (2013) contend that the workings and the relationship of Foucault's power/knowledge philosophy has supported Indigenous intellectuals in disrupting the concepts that reinforce the Australian Curriculum. Foucault's power/knowledge philosophy is particularly significant in this context because it encourages people to reflect on how power presents itself through different discourses.

Consequently, the power of settler-colonialism is validated in the Australian Curriculum with Eurocentric perspectives being prioritised throughout the curriculum document. Young (1995) understands discourse as the specific form of language that particular knowledge should coincide with if it is to be measured correct. Luke (2002, p. 99) broadens the description of discourse by adding it is 'an understanding of the centrality of language, text and discourse in the constitution of not just human subjectivity and social relations, but also social control and surveillance'.

Foucault's concept of power/knowledge sheds light on how settler-colonial ideas shape curriculum. According to Foucault, modern power is characterized by a unity of power and knowledge that cannot be separated (Fitzsimons & Smith, 2000). Mainstream education is a clear illustration of the power and its effects. Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernández (2013) state that in colonized nations, schooling has reshaped the national imagination's history through discourses. Symbolic logic is used to justify the theft of Indigenous lands and to frame Indigenous peoples as inferior to the rest of society

Power is often created by the service of discourse, which is realised and engenders itself on individual and collective bodies. An example of a body is the Australian Curriculum whereby regulations and rules function to carry out the settler-colonial authorisation. In this way, power through knowledge is industrialised and stifled. For Ball (1990), schooling becomes a product that reduces its learners to foci of power and establishes them as authoritative beings.

By considering education institutions as sites of power, teachers are confronted to consider how they are subjected to and exercise power and knowledge. While this exercise can cause distress, such revelations grant educators permission to interact with the education system differently as they use power and knowledge production to construct groups of social change agents (Apple et al., 2009). As Foucault (1978) submitted, we should not view power as

negative or positive but as social and interactive. Consequently, obtaining and understanding knowledge regarding its outcomes is fundamental to the dissertation of experiences.

Foucault's philosophy of power/knowledge encourages us to enquiry 'how situations arise in one place and manifest themselves differently in alternative settings' (Foucault, 2016). Interrogating the way systems and structures have been established can restrict and deactivate what is thought to be typical and satisfactory. Critiquing an issue through this perspective acknowledges there are different modes of discerning and contextualising the concern.

Bacchi (2009) has frequently relied on the discourse work of Foucault to assess the equity and inclusiveness of government policies. When attempting to unsettle political, institutional, and social adjustments founded on leading community beliefs and views, society unavoidably re-establish the power structures it intended to dismantle. Eventually, power is solidified by being acknowledged as the reality of the broader population, consenting it to encourage the major socio-political schema (Foucault, 1978). Thus, power, following Foucault's (2007) thought, necessitates being understood as a productive structure that infiltrates the structures and institutions of society. Consequently, examining the way power and knowledge function in the schooling system assists us to interrogate suppositions outlined as self-evident.

Additionally, many contemporary educational academics have been determined to expose the governmental, administrative, and settler-colonial characteristics of the Australian Curriculum. Accordingly, the process of thinking critically about knowledge with the assistance of Foucauldian thought, necessitates a probing into how the information has been classified, questioned, regulated, and analysed to that social control and Eurocentric ideologies can be critically analysed for resistance efforts (Wang, 2011).

With the assistance of Foucault's power examination, policies concerned with education are intrinsically connected to the dominant distribution of values (Ball, 1990). This is useful because it empowers us to perceive which values, ideals and beliefs are authorised through policy documentation and which are being ignored. As stipulated previously with the description of land as economic wealth, settler beliefs and attitudes remain and advise contemporary education documents, practices, and pedagogy (Hickling-Hudson et al., 2004).

The syllabus teaches are mandated to follow helps normalise and affirm the domination of patriotic devotion of the public to ensure there is a united groundswell of support from the population to fulfil national destiny, strengthen national identity, and progress the nation (Seddon, 2001). Syllabus programming reproduces a settler bias and ignorant executive procedure (Hickling-Hudson et al., 2004). The repercussion is that syllabus designs of settler exclusion and inclusion personally instruct what skills and knowledges are imparted (Seddon, 2001).

Michel Foucault's views on how power and knowledge are interconnected offer understanding and direction in identifying the ways settler colonialism is replicated in the Australian Curriculum. As Feder (2011, p. 56)—leveraging on Foucault—stated, 'power works through culture and customs, institutions and individuals'.

While Foucault has certainly not discussed and provided criticism of colonialism, his appraisal of knowledge production and power relations has provided substantial inspiration for robust academic examination of the ongoing devastation caused by the British invasion.

Nevertheless, Foucault's articulation on the way power and knowledge are inextricably connected also empowers Indigenous academics and education specialists to disrupt the concepts that reinforce the Australian Curriculum (Ball & Olmedo, 2013). For example, the idea that land can only be seen as property is a colonial concept that has infiltrated its way into the Australia Curriculum. The directive of the colony since invasion has constantly been to separate and disconnect Indigenous people from the innate connection they have to Country (Wolfe, 2006). The primary and expansive way this has been enacted is through discourse propaganda to reduce Indigenous peoples' relationship to Country by promoting concepts of home and land ownership in education. Indigenous relationships, connections and understandings of Country are not visible throughout the Australian Curriculum. Rather, Western versions of Country/Land dictate dialogues involving the environment.

Land as property is a dominating notion that also holds the authority of innovative pedagogical approaches such as place-based education where it does not push past the realms of current disciplines of the Australian Curriculum (for example, outdoor education, studies of society and environmental education).

Education theorists have employed the use of Foucault's theory because it challenges us think how power might be shifted in the education system. Further, theorists have been able to apply Foucault (1980) theory to additionally understand the well-defined features of systemic and individual arrangements upheld by the authority exerted over councils, bodies, aspirations, militaries and social movements.

Society is heavily influenced by curriculum because the syllabus uses authority to supply the development and realisation of organisational and singular midpoints of power and the restrictions for using such power (Seddon, 2001). When relating Seddon's (2001) thought to the Australian setting, settler colonialism is able to maintain its stronghold over society because political discourse and Western ideas are delivered to reinforce Eurocentric cultural belief systems.

The marginalisation and disadvantage of Indigenous people in Australia can be primarily traced back to their exclusion in the establishment (invasion) of Australia and the methodical rejection of Indigenous content in the curriculum. In contemporary curriculum

design, curriculum developers have done little to improve the visibility of Indigenous histories and cultures in significant documents that would assist all students in building greater empathy and appreciation for Indigenous communities (Rizvi & Crowley, 1993). Following on, the Eurocentric curriculum that students receive is a deliberate undertaking whereby the teachings are a tool that are placed persistently into each individual student (Foucault, 1980). Unfortunately, the extension of this tool is the compliance of the students to accept the mandated curriculum as reliable and true.

Over time, colonial societies have worked diligently to make their civilisations believe Eurocentric knowledges are factual, accurate and superior. This assertion of superiority has had an omnipresent effect around the world that it is largely uncontested by any culture or societies (Foucault, 1980). Though, we are starting to hear counterarguments to the discourse of Western knowledge being superior. Indigenous knowledge has been offered as a complimentary knowledge system and should not be measured in isolation from Western knowledge systems (Battiste, 2002). In fact, Indigenous knowledge becomes particularly useful when Western knowledge seems to be limited in understanding a situation in its entirety.

Further, Indigenous knowledge has the capacity to improve Western information collection methods, interpreting data, and drawing findings. More importantly, Indigenous knowledges are underpinned by sovereignty and self-determining qualities, which refuse the deficit discourse narratives bestowed upon them to restore the resurgent efforts to give prominence to their customs, values, and teaching and learning processes. Decisively, Indigenous knowledge satisfies the interpretation and virtuous limitations of Eurocentric examinations, academic production and approaches to teaching and learning.

Settler colonialism views other worldviews as punitive and limiting. To appreciate the value of other perspectives, Foucault (1980) suggests emancipatory work and epistemic reflection must be done to examine how an individual has come to know and understand the world they live in. Further, mainstream understandings tend to infiltrate the way people observe and assess different situations and this must be overlooked so that attention can be given to understanding the strategies and tactics of power (Foucault, 1980).

In order to disrupt settler-colonial structures, teachers and school leaders need to take ownership of curriculum that respects Western and Indigenous pedagogical, epistemological and knowledge systems so that all students will benefit from a holistic education. In the Australian curriculum, through the CPPs, the general headings of ‘language’, ‘culture’ and ‘history’ insinuate token responsibility for educators to embed Indigenous knowledge in the classroom.

Education that seeks to disrupt the dominant cultures mandated syllabus should not be thought of as an act of pursuing freedom, but rather an undertaking of power reversal

through different interactions (Wang, 2011). Additionally, educators need to continually seek culturally responsive pedagogy capacity-building opportunities so that they can continue to embed teaching practices that disrupt the realisation of powerful subjects (Wang, 2011).

Returning to Foucault and his work on problematisation and power/knowledge, the Australian Curriculum can be critiqued through these leading theories which disrupt and deliver a critical awareness of the truths society takes for granted (Bacchi, 2012).In the 1971 debate between Noam Chomsky and Michel Foucault on justice and power, Foucault's observations (Chomsky & Foucault, 1974) clarified the way education systems maintain the status quo of European societies:

> It is the custom, at least in our European society, to consider that power is in the hands of the government and is exerted through a certain number of particular institutions such as the administration, the police, the army. We know that all these institutions are made to transmit and apply orders and to punish those who don't obey. But I believe that political power also exercises itself through the mediation of a certain number of institutions that seem to have nothing in common with political power and seem independent from it, but actually are not. We know the University and more generally the whole education system, which appears to distribute knowledge, maintains power in the hands of a certain social class to exclude the instruments of power of another social class. (p. 18)

According to Foucault (1995), reversing power relations can only be achieved through resistance. The act of resistance can take on a variety of forms, including violence, deception, or fleeing. Without these forms of resistance, there would be no power relations at all (Foucault, 1995, p. 292). There is a growing call from Indigenous communities, scholars, and activists to work together to resist colonialism on a global scale. Conversations are frequently taking place to contest colonial values and beliefs that have traditionally ignored different standpoints in environmental education, particularly the relationship between Indigenous people and their connection to Country.

Recent efforts to have aimed to illustrate the intersections between caring for the environment and the rights of Indigenous communities. These considerations and activities, which bring together Indigenous peoples from around the world, emphasise the significance of disrupting settler colonialism in local education systems (Tuck et al., 2014). In the following section, connections will be made between the reframing and reconceptualising of land in settler-colonial societies and how these concepts are maintained and strengthened through apparatuses such as education.

Education and the Power/Knowledge Nexus

The longer power ingrains itself into institutions and social structures; it manoeuvres seamlessly within society, neither interrupted nor questioned, because people, organisations and communities are not programmed to think and act in specific ways where knowledge is formatted into a hierarchy. Schools operate similarly, whereby power relies on the ability to be invisible or on the perception that individuals are free to shape themselves or that nature does this inherently. Schools are places of power and knowledge because they can arrange and sort young people in ways that the community, parents and students themselves think is fair and logical (Devine-Eller, 2004).

Contributing to the literature surrounding power/knowledge and the education system, a paper by Sabzalian et al. (2021) sought to critique the way public standards contribute to the ongoing challenges settler colonialism contributes to the project of erasure. They suggest Indigenous erasure is motivated by the settler-colonial desire to remove Indigenous peoples from their land by any means necessary to access resources and socio-economic objectives. The erasure of Indigenous visibility through their histories, cultures and spiritual connections to Country forms a more considerable effort to erase and eliminate Indigenous people from settler-colonial societies (L. Hall, 2008; Wolfe, 2006).

Although scholars such as Berry (1960) wrote historically about Indigenous people declining from settler-colonial societies, Wolfe's (1999, 2001, 2006) academic outputs made apparent the workings of the settler authority to erase the existence of Indigenous peoples.

Social theorists concerned with understanding how current education systems produce better citizens in settler-colonial societies are essentially geared to reject Indigenous traditional ownership while proclaiming their lawful claim to land ownership and sovereignty (Haynes Writer, 2010; Sabzalian, 2019b; Sabzalian & Shear, 2018). Sabzalian (2019b) detailed how education consumed with producing better citizens contributes to the project of Indigenous erasure and a structure that allows settler colonialism to reconfigure and maintain itself. For example, Indigenous sovereignty and custodianship are subtly diminished because they are viewed through a lens or standard of inclusion. In this way, Indigenous people and their cultures are positioned as not being about to evolve with the influences of the twenty-first century; Indigenous knowledges are regarded as old knowledge rather than contemporary, and Indigenous peoples are framed as a homogenous group (Sabzalian et al., 2021). While viewing and understanding Indigenous people from a historical standpoint has its place, it may be problematic, particularly when the history does not account for the contemporary issues and plight Indigenous people are left to navigate. Education standards of civility reproduce the project of Indigenous erasure because they do not account for

Indigenous people's ongoing resistance efforts for greater political, social and economic status (Shear et al., 2015). Education that situates Indigenous people in the past perpetuates the narrative that Indigenous people's connections to culture and Country have been severed, and that only authentic Indigenous people who live in the bush maintain such connections. In contrast, colonial-settlement and terra nullius have been normalised. Civil education values found in education documents repeat and encourage harmful discourses of Indigenous peoples in colonial-settler states.

Students can learn about the richness of Indigenous histories and cultures once teachers are passionate about engaging with Indigenous knowledges. However, the lack of entry points to teach Indigenous knowledges in the Australian Curriculum repeats sedimented and normative beliefs about settler-colonial societies that young people will have to unlearn in the future through epistemic reflection. Indigenous knowledges are not redundant or useless when teaching students the values of civility. Instead, they should be regarded as essential. Unfortunately, teaching Indigenous histories and culture through CCPs implies that Indigenous knowledges are less than or optional compared to Eurocentric world views (Sabzalian et al., 2021).

Importantly, the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives within the education system does not necessarily mean the project of Indigenous erasure is being challenged. For policy concerned with civic education, the visibility of Indigenous histories and cultures can be embedded through interaction with traditional knowledges and an increased understanding of Country. Such interaction encourages students to comprehend Indigenous peoples' ongoing political and civic realities, including the continuing resurgence and resistance efforts to maintain and improve connection to culture and Country.

Place-based education is concerned with equitable and tangible education outcomes for students and their communities. It is also 'about remembering a deeper and wider narrative of living and learning in connection with others and with the land' (Greenwood, 2009, p. 5). Moreover, Greenwood explained that education concerned with interaction with place is 'about resisting the colonizing erasures and enclosures of schooling that make such remembering seem impractical and unnecessary' (2009, p. 5). An awareness of Country also allows students to see and appreciate Indigenous languages' connection to the environment and ecosystems, contributing to Indigenous culture revitalisation and resurgence efforts (Leonard, 2017).

Professor of Sociology Anton Allahar (2005) defined erasure as 'in large part the art of neglecting, looking past, minimizing, ignoring or rendering invisible another' (p. 125). Additionally, L. Hall (2008) suggested the erasure process was borne out of the method of colonisation 'because colonisation relies on forced forgetting and erasure, the need to bring

the past forward into our consciousness is ongoing' (p. 279). Evaluations by Allahar (2005) and L. Hall (2008) offered a theoretical framing that allows us to imagine education policy and practice that embraces diverse perspectives and pedagogical approaches. Their thoughts also promote bringing the past to light, challenging the project of erasure, and embracing the individual knowledge and learning students bring daily to the classroom. However, the impacts of the past are made to exist with a systematically colonised present where strategies of erasure are conceptual, political, racial and spatial. As a result, Indigenous communities are disenfranchised and find it hard to maintain their cultural identity because their connection to Country is constantly under threat as settler societies endeavour to take ownership of land for economic purposes.

Settler-colonial structures rely on removing themselves from and burying the past. Interacting with historical events is needed to alert society's consciousness to the ongoing structures of oppression. Efforts made by Indigenous communities to revitalise traditional customs and memory are a crucial component of Indigenous survivance; unfortunately, due to the rich diversity of Indigenous nations across Australia, there is no one-size-fits-all approach (L. Hall, 2008).

To coincide with revitalisation and resurgence efforts, the rejection of settler-colonial structures is also needed to maintain decolonisation and self-determination efforts within communities (McGranahan, 2016). The colony's power imposes order and relies heavily on repression with minimal regard for consent. One of the main results of setting repression through power was that 'sovereign power, justice, and order in the postcolonial states were from the outset partial, competing, and unsettled' (Hansen & Stepputat, 2005, p. 4).

Foucault (1978, p. 138) explains the systemic regulatory power of society as 'biopower' or 'biopolitics'. Critiquing that the creation of methods to preserve the existence of the state also enacts the erasure of Indigenous people: the colonial machinery and sovereign power basically 'to take life or let live' is replaced by governmentality that accelerates the ability to 'make' live or 'let' die (Foucault, 1978, p. 138).

Further, Foucault (1978, p. 143) suggests that biopower has 'brought life and its mechanisms into explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life'. Biopower is not an asset of one arrangement of administrative establishment; instead, it crosses authoritarian systems and current conservative democracies correspondingly. Foucault (1978) recognises that because biopower contains sovereign power, it makes decisions using colonial apparatuses such as legal, health and education institutions that decide who is silenced or erased. If we apply Foucault's thoughts to the treatment and erasure of Indigenous people in Australia, the oppression is not motivated by hate; it is present to remove Indigenous people from land. This ongoing obsession and vision to remove

Indigenous people from their land were disguised under the pretence of a 'higher aim' (Foucault, 1995, p. 11). Given that the original thought of Indigenous people would die out, the plan had to turn to protection and assimilation.

Issues of Power, Race and Ethics

Power, race and ethics are essential matters that must be carefully considered when conducting research with Indigenous people about Indigenous issues. Far too often, research on Indigenous topics and issues neglects to include the perspectives or input from Indigenous people, which does little to help the self-determination efforts of Indigenous people to improve their socio-economic status. In the design of the research project, it is intended that the Wurundjeri Traditional Owners will guide the research process to disseminate the assumed 'power' that comes with being the lead researcher. A focus group of Wurundjeri Traditional Owners would assist in shifting power dynamics as the members are known to each other, and they could each provide peer support for one another while guiding interview questions and professional development outcomes. Notably, the focus groups are intended to play an active and ongoing role in the research process so that issues such as power, race and ethics are given the credibility they deserve. The groups must also have a say in the research methods used to assist in the type of data they best believe will inform the findings and recommendations produced by the research.

While assembling the Traditional Owners focus group, it is essential for the project and the interviewer to build a strong relationship so that trusted knowledge will be shared in the process. A strong and respectful relationship is needed so Traditional Owners feel comfortable participating in the project and can trust that their knowledge will be used in the intended way. Obtaining trusted knowledge requires particular emphasis because Indigenous people have entrusted essential knowledge to researchers on many occasions, and researchers have not used the knowledge to better the disenfranchisement of Indigenous people. There must be a mutual benefit for the Indigenous community and the researcher. The importance of obtaining trusted knowledge needs particular emphasis because Indigenous people have entrusted essential knowledge to researchers on many occasions, and researchers have not used the knowledge to better the disenfranchisement of Indigenous people. When relating to sensitive issues such as race, general sensitivities, lived experiences and cultural understandings, these examples must underline the framework for asking questions, listening intently, and empathising with the stories about the effects racism has had on people's lives (Dunbar et al., 2002). Racism tends to dictate authority and hold power structures in what Battiste (2019, p. 134) described as 'systemic forms, and intentional acts' that categorise

people based on perceived and real differences in cultural and biological features. The social construct of racism exploits cultural and biological features to privilege groups while marginalising others. For example, Langton's (1993) explanation of the negative stigma attached to the 'drunken Aborigine'. For McWhoter (2005), power is maintained by the networks racism has positioned its subjects and is 'an inherent feature of social, political, [and] economic systems' and subjects are 'always in its [power's] relays' (p. 535). Additionally, settler colonialism places Indigenous people under oppressive conditions by violently reshaping places, destroying pre-established structures and replacing them with rules and regulations. Memmi (1965) delivered a depiction of colonial social conditioning that is forcibly imposed within settler societies:

> A foreigner, having come to a land by the accidents of history, has succeeded not merely in creating a place for himself but also in taking away that of the inhabitant, granting himself astounding privileges to the detriment of those rightfully entitled to them. Moreover, this is not by virtue of local laws, which in a certain way legitimize this inequality by tradition, but by upsetting the established rules and substituting his own. He thus appears doubly unjust. He is a privileged being and an illegitimately privileged one; that is, a usurper. (p. 9)

In 1965, Memmi made an observation that highlights the importance of a successful place-based education strategy. This approach must not only transform theoretical concepts of nature and land but also offer a way to dismantle and rebuild oppressive beliefs about our relationship with the environment (Seawright, 2014). Educators teaching on unceded lands, such as Naarm, are responsible for disrupting the setter-colonial mandate and the privileged Western knowledges that continue to justify the greatest land grab of our time (Boyce, 2011).

Additionally, being objective is a major tenet of most interviewing techniques, but as Dunbar et al. (2002) have argued, this is contradictory when working with Indigenous people. The idea that the interviewer should silence his values, experiences, beliefs and values to continue objectivity does not always serve researchers well in extracting rich interview data. As people from marginalised backgrounds tend to be suspicious of people wanting to interview them for their research, the researcher must disclose information that reveals what type of person they are. This is important in the interviewing process as it allows the subject to identify their common ground with the researcher and acts as the catalyst for forming a new trustworthy relationship (Dunar et al., 2002).

Generally, interviewing participants works towards extracting information from the conversation focusing on uncovering or discovering new knowledge. However, this becomes problematic when the overall importance is given to obtaining information through a singular transaction of the subject to the interviewer. In the instance of solely extracting data from the

participant, the interviewer does little to disclose or exchange anything about the researcher's life, thus maintaining or alleviating the power dynamic between researcher and subject. The researcher fronts the interview with no wanting to learn everything about the issues without disclosing anything about themselves. There is no mutual communication or objectives (Dunbar et al., 2002).

Interviews are complex because the process involves extracting discourse from one social setting and inserting it into various locations. According to Bauman and Briggs (1990), a crucial aspect of achieving social influence through discourse is having the ability to control its recontextualization rights. This involves deciding when, where, how, and by whom it will be utilized in different contexts (Bauman & Briggs, 1990; Briggs & Bauman, 1992). Interviews offer valuable insights into the language ideologies that form the basis of social scientific research. These ideologies may include concepts that are not explicitly addressed in theory but are often preserved within "purely methodological" spheres (Briggs, 2002, p. 915). A researcher must acknowledge the power of the interview process because it will inevitably control how the interview is carried out and determine how the researcher distributes the discourse (Briggs, 2002). Briggs suggested that interviews sustain power relations in our society in various ways that construct invisible representations of our community and are deeply informed by the dominant culture. Power is informed by class and how organisations screen individuals through different apparatuses such as employment, social services, counselling and other data collection practices; the methods of collecting knowledge will position the subjects in relation to institutions (Briggs, 2002). When conducting an interview, it's crucial to take into account the influence that social and historical factors, particularly those related to race, have on the interpretation of questions asked and the responses given (Dunbar et al., 2002).

The researcher must find commonalities and relate to the people being interviewed, as this shows the human side of the interviewer, which is a necessary and subtle tool in building trust between the subject and researcher. When relating to sensitive issues such as race, general sensitivities, lived experiences and cultural understandings, these approaches must underline the framework for asking questions, listening intently, and empathising with stories about the effects racism has had on people's lives (Dunbar et al., 2002).

Understanding the predispositions of racialised groups requires exceptional attention and will be a focus throughout the research process because it is easily taken for granted. Revisiting race reminds the interviewer that race often carries negative historical and social resonances, and vigilance is needed so that the connection between race and identity and self-presentation can be made through silence or assertion (Dunbar et al., 2002). Additionally, when respondents are classified as members of racial groups, researchers can create an all-encompassing logic that suggests an Aboriginal person, for example, is speaking and

representing all Aboriginal Australians, thereby confirming a sense of people of colour as one-sided subjects (Briggs, 2002). Finally, assembling a focus group of Traditional Owners to lead a discussion on place will ensure all voices, though diverse, are amplified and come through the research framework strongly.

The decision to interview non-Indigenous teachers will produce accounts that suggest more needs to be done to embed Indigenous knowledge in the curriculum. These voices will be used to build cases against racially biased policy documents such as the Australian Curriculum. The data collated from interviews relating to racial prejudice can be productive in providing descriptions of discrimination that have been borne out of historical and current educational policies. As a researcher who will employ my feelings and experiences to relate to what participants relay, reciprocally, the interview subjects will be crafted into people who are appreciated rather than trivialised. In this form of active interviewing, Holstein and Gubrium (1995) believe the interviewer empathises with the subject's racialised experience, supporting further discourse disclosure.

Dunbar et al. (2002) suggested that the only ethic that correctly applies in interviewing accords the subject all the humanity they deserve. It is an ethical understanding that researchers should be able to direct their audience to the racialised subject behind the respondent. For example, an interviewer must understand what the respondent is saying or not saying about particular interview topics and how the interviewer might influence the context for openness and the respondent's willingness to speak honestly about their experiences (Dunbar et al., 2002). Standardised methods about people of colour have been criticised because the discussion around race often centres on race as a social construct and how this plays out (Dunbar et al., 2002).

It has been well documented that Indigenous people in Australia have been the victims of exploitative practices by researchers positioned within Western education institutions; this has contributed to the ongoing attempts of erasure (Wolfe, 2006). National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) guideline 2.2.10 stipulates that Indigenous participants, if deemed appropriate, need to be remunerated for their time and involvement. While not the only solution, compensation can be one of many strategies implemented in mediating and addressing the power imbalance between researchers and research participants (Head, 2009). According to Fry et al. (2005), remunerating research participants for their time, travel, inconvenience and knowledge is progressively becoming a standardised practice for institutions concerned with social and medical research. Dickert and Grady (1999) encouraged the preparation of financial remuneration as the best practice for participation in their study. The wage payment model that Dickert and Grady (1999) advocated avoids unwarranted incentives to partake, increases the likelihood of regularity across the research, and bases

payment of participant's inputs where participants are remunerated at an equal rate irrespective of economic status.

Understanding the predispositions of racialised groups requires exceptional attention and will be a focus throughout the research process because it can be quickly taken for granted. Revisiting race reminds the interviewer that race often carries negative historical and social resonances, and vigilance is needed to ensure the connection between race and identity and self-presentation can be made through silence or assertion (Dunbar et al., 2002).

The researcher will use feelings and experiences to relate to what participants relay. Holstein and Gubrium (1995) asserted that in this form of active interviewing, the interviewer empathises with the subject's racialised experience, supporting further discourse disclosure. If psychological distress is experienced by white participants (caused by conversations about race), the researcher will manage the situation by explaining that discomfort is expected due to knowledge disruption and that feelings of uneasiness are a sign of growth. It will be reiterated to teachers that they can stop the interview at any time.

DECOLONISING RESEARCH

Methodological approaches and theoretical frameworks underpinned by place can incorporate a variety of societal views, which assists in critiquing the economic, social and environmental issues typically limited in traditional approaches (Tate, 2008). For instance, Velez and Solórzano (2017) suggested that cross-disciplinary theories cover many understandings of place and permit scholars to use a selection of lenses to understand specific and complex foundations of social and educational problems. Further, Gulson and Symes (2007, p. 2) contended that 'drawing on theories of space contributes in significant and important ways too subtle and more sophisticated understandings of the competing rationalities underlying educational policy change, social inequity, and cultural practices'. T. Cresswell (2015) differentiated space and place in this way:

> Space, then, has been seen in distinction to place as a realm without meaning – as a 'fact of life' which, like time, produces the basic coordinates for human life. When humans invest meaning in a portion of space and then become attached to it in some way (naming is one such way) it becomes a place. (p. 16)

T. Cresswell's (2015) conceptualisation of place is supported by a humanistic lens of geography whereby the general concepts of place are rejected because place relies on the descriptive aspect tying it to specifically in location.

The extent to which education academics and practitioners have taken it upon themselves to assume a critical placed-based approach to improve the social justice outcomes

for disenfranchised communities is under enquiry and an essential motive of the thesis. It is crucial that place-based enquiry progresses past the confines of the settler locale and strives to further understand the Indigenous history of place to avoid what Peña (1998, p. 46) labels 'exoticist placemaking'; this process entails the reshaping of place and associated symbolisms and materials by the 'other'. Without the appropriate interaction and conceptualisation of place, education that sets out to fulfil social justice obligations falls short of its duties because it fails to attend to the complicated cultural history of place. Limited place-based critiques thus reduce valuable place meanings, reinforce systems of domination and oppression, and carry out the settler colonialism mandate of erasure (Tuck & Yang, 2012). For example, Tuck and McKenzie's (2014) articulated how settler-colonial artefacts such as maps are dangerous for Indigenous people: 'places are not always named … do not always appear on maps; do not always have agreed-upon boundaries' (p. 14). Further, maps are constrained by limited knowledges of place as they do not account for the intimacy, connections, relationships and laws that place holds people accountable to.

The most effective strategy for decolonisation ensures that students are educated through frameworks of Indigenous intelligence, which, for Wildcat et al. (2014), must include rekindling students' connection to the environment through a land-based approach. Decolonisation is an enduring struggle faced by Indigenous people; the process acknowledges Indigenous sovereignty and recognises that ways of knowing are centred around land. Further, decolonisation involves an understanding that Indigenous people must drive the process (Denzin et al., 2008). Datta (2018) added that decolonisation is an ongoing process of unlearning, re-learning and becoming, and people of society must assume their responsibilities. Suppose research in the academy does not consider decolonisation as critical and systematic: in that case, it will continue contributing to the displacement, loss of Indigenous knowledge, economic inequality and sustained oppression in Indigenous communities (Datta, 2018). Smith stated that if efforts are concerned with decolonisation research, the outcomes will be significant in reclaiming Indigenous ways of being, knowing and contributing to social justice.

Embracing a decolonising approach to research does not mean a refusal of all Western theories and methods, as they could be modified appropriately to benefit the local community. However, decolonised research should disrupt the barriers between participants and researchers so that developing matters relating to ethics can be dealt with (Denzin, 2007). Zavala (2013) addressed the issue of ethical consideration by adding that decolonisation should allow Indigenous people to voice their opinions rather than simply carrying out methods to collect data. Ethical research must begin with protecting Indigenous knowledge

and advocating for the advancement of ethical research practices with which we are familiar (Datta, 2018).

Tuck and Yang (2014) critiqued coding data because it is often used as an instrument of invasion that works to generate 'settler colonial knowledge and to produce it for the academy' (p. 813). Tyson (2006, p. 46) argued, 'The reward(s) of the academy can deceive us into believing that our work is emancipatory when it is not'. Researchers need to reflect and consistently employ privilege self-examination so that expectations of the academy are fulfilled while the appropriate needs, care and space are afforded to subjects wanting to make changes in a space researchers do not occupy full-time, notably in the classroom (Datta, 2018). Too often, research involving Indigenous people has been inappropriate because it has operated to spread the stronghold of colonial control (Caldwell et al., 2005; Dodson, 1994). To combat the mandate of settler-colonial research, S. Wilson (2008) advocated for alternative research methods to be borrowed appropriately from other paradigms to fit the 'ontology, epistemology, and axiology of the Indigenous paradigm' (p. 12).

Decolonising research through the application of appropriate methods is a practice that places Indigenous epistemologies and voices at the core of the research process (Battiste, 2000; L. Smith, 1999). When Indigenous people are centred in the research process, it censors, challenges and informs the notions that Western ways of knowing and methods are the only objective, actual science (Datta, 2018). During the research process, the main challenge for an investigator is to engage with the subjects meaningfully and trustfully. To overcome such challenges, Tuck and Yang (2012) advised that the research focus must be redirected from the processes of power, which, in turn, decentres narratives of destruction and damage.

While extracting qualitative data, the process entails being representational and constructivist as it uses well-established methodologies such as grounded theory or case studies that gather, arrange and examine information while identifying new knowledge to disrupt the way people have come to know the world (Aghasaleh & St. Pierre, 2014). Qualitative research can render itself valid when critiquing and understanding how the settler-colonial authority presents in data collection. Tuck and Yang (2014) have articulated the rejection of settler-colonial research practice:

> Analytic practices of refusal involve an active resistance to trading in pain and humiliation and supply a rationale for blocking the settler colonial gaze that wants those stories. Refusal can comprise a resistance to making someone or something the subject of research; it is a form of objectless analysis, an analytic practice with nothing and no one to code. (p. 812)

To effectively refuse, researchers go beyond saying no. Refusal occurs through the additional research and data collection stages and is determined to disrupt settler colonialism in the

academy. Refusal means seeing how settler colonialism works to control people and processes through labelling and naming (L. Smith, 1999; Tuck & Yang, 2014). If researchers are genuinely committed to calling out settler colonialism in academia, then there must be a willingness to self-reflect on how research is conducted and to rethink how training has been delivered so that further research takes a multifaceted approach to uncover new knowledge. Applying a multifaceted approach to research means the authority of settler colonialism is constantly questioned in academic spaces (Shear & Krutka, 2018).

INDIGENIST RESEARCH AND PARTICIPATION

Drawing on Indigenous standpoint theory (Moreton-Robinson, 2013) and Indigenous methodologies (Rigney, 1997), the project will employ a co-design format with Traditional Owners to prioritise Indigenous leadership and expertise in determining the most culturally appropriate approach to this research. In addition to the co-design process, I will use data collection activities: focus groups with Traditional Owners to structure the professional development sessions, semistructured interviews with teachers at two-time points to determine their change in understanding of teaching Indigenous content in classes. These will be informed by a synthesis of Foucauldian and settler-colonial theories that set out to understand how power and knowledge development work regarding Indigenous knowledges within secondary school settings.

L. Smith (2005) asserted Indigenous people want to contribute to the design and research process, mainly if it is relevant to empowerment and self-determination efforts associated with their communities. To facilitate empowerment and self-determination efforts through the research process, Indigenous people are best placed to critique and analyse Western knowledge paradigms that have been normalised in the education system. To disrupt Western epistemologies and employ Indigenous ontologies, the research process must contend with how the settler-colonial mandate and constructs of race have impacted Indigenous people and impeded their self-determination and resurgence efforts (Rigney, 1999).

The structure of race throughout history has been used to assemble human groups into a hierarchical structure rather than to distinguish different groups of people from each other (1994; Stepan, 1982). In this modality and structuring of race, Indigenous people were closely compared to animals, thus placing them them on the lowest rung of society. This justified the notion of terra nullius and legitimised systematic oppression. Further, racialising Indigenous people promoted the dissemination of deficit discourses and reinforced colonial power structures (Trask, 1993).

Research ethics and practical approaches towards obtaining new knowledge are grounded in Western epistemological ideologies that fail to include other world views, including Indigenous knowledges. The epistemologies the academy relies on continue to work on behalf of non-Indigenous people while remaining ignorant of Indigenous concepts formed by the laws of the land (R. Bishop, 1998). Changing racist views and attitudes within the academy requires more than adding Indigenous researchers to disrupt the status quo. According to Rigney (1999), for disruption to purposely occur, Indigenous people need to be involved in the design, control and implementation of the research process so that their ontological and epistemological values feel appreciated. Once Indigenous values are respected, they can penetrate the Western approaches to research that the academy heavily relies on.

Indigenous peoples must disrupt and critique methods to reconstruct and reaffirm their epistemic knowledges and cultures. Additionally, Rigney (1999) stated that for Indigenous people to fully realise their aspirations for self-determination, their epistemological values must be represented to facilitate a release from systematic oppression. Therefore, Indigenous research contributes to self-determination efforts that disrupt the effects of colonial power with a clear intention to cause social and political change beneficial to Indigenous people (L. Smith, 2005).

When conducting research involving the Indigenous community, it's important for the researcher to work in partnership with community members. The research approach should be designed collaboratively, with input and approval from the community. This approach leads to greater community engagement and support for the research project. Throughout my PhD studies, I will engage in various discussions with the guidance and support of my supervisors. When analysing data, I will prioritise my Indigeneity and incorporate it into my understanding of my conversations with Traditional Owners. Such positionality is necessary to guarantee that the investigation is thorough and that discussions containing cultural nuances can be recorded accurately for data collection. Recording and interpreting cultural nuances are essential to this research process because they are usually obscure and evident to the casual observer (G. Hall, 1977). To the broader population, such cultural intricacies can only be noticed if there is an awareness of what might be recognised as necessary.

During the thesis drafting process, consideration was also given to whether the data collected would be appropriate for public consumption, particularly the Indigenous-specific content. During the negotiations, I needed to decide whether to segregate the data for the Indigenous community to review separately before sharing it with other non-Indigenous communities. It is crucial for an Indigenous researcher to communicate their knowledge, understanding, and stories with Traditional Owners and their families as a fundamental aspect

of the research process. Such considerations are essential when working within the academy because positioning myself as an Indigenous researcher signifies to the audience that canon interpretations will be drawn on. In doing so, readers can understand the objectivity and position of the arguments that are being presented (Kovach, 2010).

An educational setting that organises a single event celebrating Indigenous culture without involving the local Traditional Owners threatens the likelihood of developing a trustworthy relationship or future partnerships (Donovan, 2016). Through missed opportunities to work collaboratively with Traditional Owners, there are feelings of disappointment and reluctance experienced by Indigenous communities for future dealings, which culminates in a perceived lack of respect from non-Indigenous people within the Indigenous community (Munns & Mcfadden, 2000).

According to K. Martin and Mirraboopa (2003), Indigenous research can be described as a process that caters for flexibility while operating from 'a position of being Aboriginal' (p. 205). As a result, Indigenous intellectuals frequently grapple with how Western academic scholarship requires them to work within distinct parameters while trying to stay true to their cultural foundations (Grieves, 2009; Kovach, 2021).

The past few decades have seen a rise in Indigenous academic output worldwide to consolidate and build on the educational research agenda while advocating for change in research practices. Embedded within the Indigenous peoples' sovereignty movement and enduring struggle to be seen and heard politically, the agenda demands a self-determining space for knowledge that privileges Indigenous voices and thoughts for the benefit of Indigenous people (Rigney, 2006). With Indigenous worldviews in mind, research conducted by Indigenous people is situated differently from the Western research agenda and necessitates several Indigenous research values to be met. Therefore, the discourse surrounding Indigenist and decolonised research has proceeded to regain power and give Indigenous research efforts, knowledge systems and worldviews the prominence they deserve so that when new knowledge is generated, it is valued equally to Western knowledge (K. Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003; Rigney, 2006).

Indigenous research is essential because it is a way for Indigenous scholars to generate new knowledge that reflects Indigenous peoples' interests, values and priorities (Wooltorton et al., 2020). Snow et al. (2016) offered a unified set of values vital to Indigenous research interests and preferences: the indigenous paradigmatic lens, indigenous identity development, power-sharing and reflexivity, critical immersion, and accountability and participation.

Durie (2004) suggested inquiry at the interface of Indigenous and Western research employs 'two sets of values and methods not simply to bridge the benefits that might arise from each, but ultimately to produce gains for indigenous peoples most of whom live at the

interface' (p. 8) Due to the conflicting knowledge systems that come together at the interface, there are many contradictions. Indigenous researchers must contend with this. Martin (2008) interpreted the interface as an opportunity for fresh and innovative concepts about, and connections with, research and knowledge. Following on from this, Martin (2008) encouraged researchers to engage the research interface to reconfigure knowledge production. The process can move away from being a site of resistance to one of transformation and decolonisation.

Bringing Indigenous and Western worldviews together involves understanding how they interact at the confrontation interface. Distinguishing the paradigmatic understanding of Indigenous and Western research is essential to comprehend so that we can begin to understand how they differ but also complement each other at the same time. Giving one paradigm prevalence over another is not the central idea here; instead, positioning at the interface needs to be informed by the origins, congruences, and sensibilities related to the two philosophical research paradigms. Hong et al. (2017) stated that 'research sites are fraught with tension, and it is to the researcher's and participant's advantage to generate complex understandings of those tensions' (p. 23). The undertaking, then, is to use both paradigms to develop a critical Indigenous investigation to commence an Indigenous inquiry outline that positively impacts Indigenous communities while adhering to the ethical responsibilities of Indigenous research.

The ontological, axiological and epistemological traditions of Indigenous and Western knowledge systems uncover numerous meaningful, macro-level differences (Kovach, 2021). Indigenous conceptualisations of knowledge are considered a consequence of relationality, whereas theories belonging to Western research methods often conceptualise knowledge as an object to be harnessed or owned (Kovach, 2010; Tuck & McKenzie, 2014; S. Wilson, 2008). Tuck and McKenzie (2014) categorised Western paradigms as predominantly linear and secular while suggesting Indigenous paradigms emphasise the connections between humans, nature and spiritual elements harnessed through a recurring continuum of time, place and understanding (K. Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003; S. Wilson, 2008). Further, Indigenous research paradigms are developed by interpersonal cultural memory and oral histories (Kovach, 2010; Moreton-Robinson, 2000), inserting knowledge within the community in preference to the individual, thus resisting the individualistic approach of most Western methods of research.

Indigenous analysis and inquiry must start with the interests and concerns of Indigenous people, especially if the work will be assessed on how it has impacted Indigenous communities. Therefore, without misrepresentation or stereotyping, the process needs to represent Indigenous persons honestly while honouring Indigenous knowledges, rituals and customs. Further, Indigenous research should be judged freely from the constraints and

benchmarks of Western colonial paradigms. Moreover, the research and researchers should be held accountable to the Indigenous communities they are researching. Lastly, Indigenous people should be free to easily access the data and research findings before the academy does (Denzin et al., 2008).

DATA ANALYSIS

The qualitative data analysis in this research will be guided by the grounded theory adoption and adaption method, which will aid the analysis and interpretation of focus group and interview data (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). A grounded theory approach entails qualitative data collection through an iterative process where the focus group direction may change in succession. A grounded theory approach also prescribes a method of data analysis that emerges from small-scale qualitative research. To help understand the proposed line of questioning, a qualitative approach has been used to establish a postmodern position of grounded theory. Concepts of postmodernism perceive the world as complex and truth as conditional and unable to be rationalised by metanarratives. Postmodernism is critical of dominant fabrications and works to understand their motives to maintain power and sustain dominant discourses. The search for world truths is authorised by accepting laws, language, policies, society, and discipline boundaries; thus, data collection and interpretation are socially and culturally constructed (Grbich, 2013).

As I have employed interviews to obtain data to understand how teachers comprehend and engage with concepts of Country when teaching Indigenous knowledges, it is appropriate to use postmodern research. This type of research supports individually interpreted mininarratives and descriptions that provide justifications for small-scale conditions within contexts where no pretensions of abstract theory, universality or generalisability are involved. While coding the data, much consideration was given to understanding how the research addresses gaps in the literature and how the study will contribute to existing research. Regarding Learning on Country initiatives, the literary focus has predominately been on how students interact and benefit from on Country learning. This research project wishes to enhance insights into Learning on Country initiatives by understanding how non-Indigenous teachers interact with Country and the implications of this on their teaching.

Data analysis within this framework entails the identification of key themes and categories that emerge through a process of coding. Having identified this approach as relevant thus far, flexibility also exists if a more appropriate method is determined. I will draw on settler-colonial theory and Foucault's power/knowledge theory to code and analyse the

data. By employing Foucauldian and settler-colonial frameworks for analysis, the researcher will understand how power and knowledge production work within the Australian Curriculum while recognising the way Country is or is not thought about.

The Learning on Country pedagogy data in Naarm will be transcribed and put into different categories based on the repetition of key terms that have emerged, the way the data speaks to current Indigenous education policies, and theoretical concepts that have been explored throughout the literature review. It is also important to note that participant behaviours, stories, interpretations, relationships and values have also been critiqued to understand how improved concepts of Country assist teachers in embedding Indigenous knowledges.

METHODS

FOREGROUNDING AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS EDUCATION RESEARCH

Teaching Indigenous knowledges in Australia is commonly viewed as a profoundly controversial social and political practice (Parkinson & Jones, 2019). Current research on the impact of culturally appropriate pedagogy indicates that Indigenous students are better placed for success when they learn about their local environment, community and employment industry (Gruenewald & Smith, 2008; Tuck et al., 2014). Embedding Indigenous knowledges in the curriculum can be used practically to increase student engagement where standardised mainstream curriculum tends to have shortfalls (Lowe, 2017). This approach suggests it is essential to increase non-Indigenous educators' perceptions of Country—as a central concept in Indigenous knowledges—in addressing their classroom practice (Styres, 2011). It is envisaged that this research will provide significant findings on how incorporating Indigenous concepts into an educator's knowledge base can be used as best practice guidelines for embedding Learning on Country pedagogy and disrupting settler power.

Contemporary Australian curricula have attempted to diversify and make the curriculum more inclusive, which has seen some promotion of Indigenous history taught within the secondary setting. However, while developers of the Australian Curriculum see this as advancing Australia's curricula to ensure Indigenous knowledges are showcased, a settler-colonial mandate and the lens through which education design and delivery is viewed remains present (Hickling-Hudson & Ahlquist, 2003; Lowe & Yunkaporta, 2013; Wolfe, 2006).

By examining the research problem of the lack of Indigenous knowledges being taught, this doctoral research will draw on settler-colonial theory to critically examine why and how modern practices of education in Australia are designed to reproduce an imbalance of power

in knowledge production. The thesis will then work towards understanding how the employment of land-based pedagogy in Australia can contribute to a culturally responsive curriculum. Finally, through examining power (Feder, 2011; Young, 1995), the research will observe how Country is understood by non-Indigenous educators and whether such findings about land can be used to dismantle the settler-colonial curriculum.

The lack of teacher accountability, combined with limited classroom resources, implies a continuation of the settler-colonial agenda to exclude Indigenous people from Australia's history, present, and future. Therefore, the intended aims of this research must include understanding how Learning on Country will assist and contribute to the growing movement of an Indigenous resurgence in Australia and resistance to settler colonialism. This research needs to capture educators' responses when they incorporate place in their educational practice. This will provide significant findings on how incorporating Indigenous concepts in an educator's knowledge base can be used as best practice guidelines for building Learning on Country pedagogy. This research is guided by questions that the learning has informed on Country literature and a Wurundjeri Traditional Owners focus group. The Traditional Owners focus group will also articulate what Country means to them and assist the researcher in developing two professional development sessions for non-Indigenous teacher participants. Traditional Owners will play a crucial role in the research as their concepts of Country will help disrupt non-Indigenous teachers' epistemic knowledge of land as they reflect on their current practices and how they embed Indigenous knowledges.

The term 'Traditional Owners' in the Australian context has become synonymous with a generalised and unspecified sense for Indigenous people who belong to specific 'Country' or place/s and have the right to speak for that Country based on their laws and customs (Doohan, 2006). In Victoria, a Traditional Owner is defined in the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* (Vic) as including those recognised by the Attorney-General as Traditional Owners based on their traditional and cultural associations with the land (O'Bryan, 2016). The Victorian Government recognises that Traditional Owners have maintained ongoing links to the past and that they continue cultural practices.

However, Indigenous peoples must be involved in curriculum design to ensure appropriate integration. By undertaking a literature review, this research seeks to further understand Indigenous student engagement, retention and educational self-determination concerning land. In doing so, the findings of this research may identify points of alignment or divergence between the peer-reviewed literature and the knowledge shared by the Traditional Owner's knowledges of Country. The results of a systematic review of literature in this context may also observe the existence of any acknowledgement and practices of Indigenous sovereignty within the education context. When working within Indigenous research methods,

best practice suggests that the research includes an analysis of Naarm Traditional Owners. This will allow the investigation to accurately record Learning on Country pedagogy perceptions through researcher and study group observations.

Indigenous education scholars argue that literature published about Learning on Country focuses heavily on rural and remote perspectives, particularly the Northern Territory (see Christie et al., 2010; Ford, 2010; Nicholls & Steen, 2017; Rostron et al., 2013; Schwab & Fogarty, 2015). The links between Learning on Country and the Northern Territory are prominent for two reasons: first, the concept of Learning on Country has its origins in the Caring for Country program, which was established by the NLC in 1994 to alleviate the harm done to Country (Schwab & Fogarty, 2015, p. 6); and, second, in 2014, almost one-third (30%) of people living in the Northern Territory were Indigenous (AIHW, 2019), and it was the only state or territory with a majority of Indigenous people living in remote areas (79%)(AIHW, 2019).

With Learning on Country initiatives focusing on keeping Indigenous students in remote Northern Territory communities engaged in education, there is reason to believe the pedagogical practice could have a far greater reach when applied to urban and rural settings. According to data produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2011), 79% of the Indigenous population nationally live in non-remote areas, comprising 35% in major cities and 44% in regional areas. More than half (60%) of the Indigenous population lives in Queensland New South Wales. If Indigenous students' engagement and attainment levels are to be increased, the curriculum needs to reflect Indigenous knowledges and experiences.

RECRUITMENT

This research project has recruited a focus group of four Wurundjeri Traditional Owners and a cohort of four non-Indigenous teachers to participate in various data collection activities. Data has been collected using two qualitative methods: interviews and background field notes from focus groups and professional development sessions.

Ethical consideration was essential to the project because the research contained human subjects. Mason (2002) suggested 'qualitative researchers should be as concerned to produce a moral or ethical research design as we are to produce an intellectually coherent and compelling one' (p. 41). Therefore, ethics approval was sought from the University of Naarm as part of the research process. In addition, plain language statements and consent documents were signed by teachers and Traditional Owners of the Wurundjeri Clan. Having participants sign consent forms indicated an understanding of the research being conducted and a willingness to participate.

Four non-Indigenous teachers have been interviewed three times to document their knowledge of Country. During the project, two professional development sessions were provided for teachers to enhance their concepts of Country. Specifically, the interviews have assisted the researcher in understanding the efficacy of the professional development sessions. In particular, the researcher sought to understand the relationship between on Country professional development sessions and teachers' engagement with embedding Indigenous knowledge.

Additionally, the international and Australian literature related to land-based education have assisted with details associated with on Country learning. Schools and teachers must develop and harness their relationships with local Indigenous communities for Learning on Country pedagogy to be effective. Teacher and Traditional Owner participants are known to the researcher professionally but needed to be closer contacts. As a result, the researcher determined there were limited risks for bias or skewed data responses, and participants were less likely to provide answers based on what they thought the researcher wanted to hear. To overcome skewed responses, the researcher reiterated that there were no right or wrong answers and that the best way to participate is to give accurate and truthful answers.

TEACHER PARTICIPANTS

Four non-Indigenous teachers were recruited through the researcher's networks due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Conversations with school leaders about recruiting teachers to participate were unsuccessful due to the enactment of state-sanctioned pandemic restrictions. School leaders felt the regulations might put their teachers under added stress due to the overwhelming pressure to produce curricula suited to an online format. Consequently, teachers were known to the lead researcher and selected based on the following criteria:

- identify as a non-Indigenous Australian (white, settler, or immigrant)
- middle and secondary school teachers
- have experience teaching in the Sciences, Geography or Outdoor Education
- currently employed in Naarm-related schools
- presently employed in different schools from other participants.

The researcher recorded the interviews through the Zoom video conferencing platform so that social distancing regulations were followed. The discussions were transcribed using the Otter.ai program that captured the conversation for the researcher to review for mistakes, themes, and follow-up questions. The recordings and subsequent transcriptions are stored in electronic form in a secure password-protected folder on a university-managed drive and

backed up on a secure external hard drive. These locations are only accessible by the researcher. In addition, handwritten notes were also stored as above.

Teachers also participated in two Learning on Country professional development sessions that coincided with the three interviews. The interviews were semi structured and open-ended which lasted approximately 60 minutes. They were conducted in the following order:

- interview 1
- professional development session 1
- interview 2
- professional development session 2
- interview 3.

TRADITIONAL OWNERS

Wurundjeri people have been selected through a purposive sampling strategy (Suri, 2011) that involved an email invitation to determine the most culturally appropriate mechanism to support Traditional Owner's participation. Given that participation was through Zoom, a culturally relevant environment entailed getting a sense of whether the Traditional Owners felt comfortable with other group members and how willing they were to participate in this setting. The recruitment of Wurundjeri Traditional Owners was made possible through the researcher's professional networks developed through work and social settings. The pre-established relationships between the researcher and Traditional Owners allowed collaboration based on trust, which assisted in creating a culturally safe environment for Traditional Owners to provide honest feedback. It is also important to note that I held a certain amount of privilege being an Indigenous person, which accelerated the conversations I was able to have. I do not believe a non-Indigenous researcher would be able to yield the same results as I have, given the short research timeline.

The Traditional Owners were also selected because they have a wealth of knowledge, experience, and interest in the current education system. The focus group sessions informed the study by collectively defining Country and how this definition juxtaposes with ideologies of land, particularly within the Australian Curriculum. Traditional Owners discussed professional development and offered the opportunity to participate in the two sessions. In collaboration with the Tradition Owners focus group, two Learning on Country professional development sessions were developed and held to assist teachers in developing their understanding of Country.

There is much benefit in establishing a focus group of four Wurundjeri Traditional Owners. In this instance, they were able to inform and determine what Country means to them and what they believe Learning on Country pedagogy would look like in Naarm. Firstly, it is essential to understand Traditional Owners' points of view because the research needed to be informed by those with intimate knowledge of Naarm as this project worked towards interviewing teachers. Secondly, there is value in comparing the international and Australian literature on land-based education with the understanding of Country held by Traditional Owners. Lastly, to have authentic Learning on Country pedagogy, schools and teachers must develop relationships with their local communities, so it is essential to have Traditional Owners embedded in the local community. This research was co-designed with Traditional Owners to disrupt the Eurocentric curriculum and challenge how the education system erodes and silences Indigenous people. The project also emphasises addressing the narrative that suggests Indigenous people only exist in remote parts of Australia.

Professor Elizabeth McKinley (2005) argued that including Indigenous knowledges and languages in the classroom is the most effective way to improve engagement, motivation, learning and visibility. In this paper, McKinley (2005) explored how research has addressed the global phenomenon that has seen a failure to embed local Indigenous knowledges in science education while also suggesting solutions to overcome this issue, namely through a refocusing on local languages and knowledges, which form fundamental tenants of Learning on Country pedagogy.

Learning on Country pedagogy has the potential to take what researchers have known from remote settings and be applied to regional and urban areas where many Indigenous populations live. In shifting the paradigm of Indigenous people existing only in rural or remote landscapes, this research aims to understand how a pedagogy of place is understood from regional and urban perspectives. A good starting place to shift the perspective that Indigenous people only inhabit remote areas is to liaise with Traditional Owners of Naarm so they can accurately portray what it means to be Indigenous and living in an urban environment. Traditional Owners have also informed the type of knowledge they wanted to see embedded in the curriculum as the research worked with teachers to grow their understanding of place.

To render Wurundjeri people visible in the urban landscapes of Naarm, the focus group collectively expressed what Country meant to them. The researcher then was able to write and develop the professional development sessions. The focus group then assisted in delivering two Learning on Country professional development sessions, so non-Indigenous teachers could build their capacity to teach more Indigenous content. Lastly, the researcher drafted the questions intended for participant interviews and sought final feedback from Traditional Owners. Consideration was given to engaging Wurundjeri Elders but, given how

overburdened they are with their many commitments, and to avoid contracting COVID-19, I opted to engage a younger cohort of focus group members who are embedded and recognised within the community.

Table 1

Traditional Owner's Timeline

Session	Time Commitment	Date
Initial conversation (& defining Country) with Traditional Owners	1hr	August 2021
Designing Professional Development session 1	1hr	September 2021
Attend Professional Development session 1	2hr	October 2021
Designing Professional Development session 2	1 hr	November 2021
Attend Professional Development session 2	2hr	December 2021

Table 1 shows the importance of engaging in the focus group sessions as full involvement from the Traditional Owner participants equated to seven hours each over the project's life. Consent was sought for recording the focus group discussion both in audio recording and through handwritten field notes taken by the researcher. Traditional Owners were encouraged to participate as much or as little as they would like to and to inform what each professional development session would look like, including the types of questions that would be asked during the teacher participant interviews.

PARTICIPANT INCENTIVES

Traditional Owners were compensated for their time because they had to take time away from their daily jobs to participate and share cultural knowledge gained throughout their lives from their Elders and lived experiences. With the help of the *Aboriginal Knowledge and Intellectual Property Protocol Community Guide* (Orr et al., 2012), the research took onboard their recommendations concerning the need to remunerate Traditional Owners. Traditional Owner participants were paid for their efforts, where remuneration for participation in research was calculated based on the rates provided for Indigenous Community Researchers. As of 2019, Ninti One recommends that participants be paid for their interview participation at the hourly rate of Expert Cultural Mediator/Cultural Knowledge Expert, which is equivalent to $55.00 per hour. The researcher does not believe the establishment of incentives pressured focus group members to consent to participate or that it affected the results obtained.

In their research, Fry et al. (2005) examined current research payment practices to better inform more precise guidelines for researchers and ethics committees when working with Indigenous communities. They observed that mainly targeted research groups, including Indigenous participants, are more likely to be compensated at lesser rates for participation, suggesting the prevalence of payment methods based on a deficit understanding of cohort vulnerability and contribution. Nevertheless, continuing from a strengths-based approach, the level of remuneration stipulated by the *Aboriginal Knowledge and Intellectual Property Protocol Community Guide* (Orr et al., 2012) nominated above is necessary because it is based on Indigenous people's expertise rather than vulnerability. In addition, compensation for time and knowledge Traditional Owners invest has been given much consideration because it is likely that their daily occupations rely on the wisdom they will be sharing during the project.

The researcher is also informed by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC, 2018); the council's *Ethical Conduct in Research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Communities* document stated that the benefit for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities research contributions may take several forms (e.g., better services, training, funding, and sharing of knowledge.

Teachers were not renumerated for their time because they were able to participate in the project without having their wages disrupted or their lessons unsettled. Traditional Owners were compensated because they left their daily jobs to participate and share cultural knowledge, which has taken much time to learn and access from their Elders. In addition, teachers derived value from participating in professional development activities because they were able to draw on the expertise and knowledge of Traditional Owners when embedding Indigenous content into their future classroom lessons.

Focus Groups

According to Tierney and Dilley (2002), the focus group approach is a compelling interview format used widely by researchers but has only recently gained significance as an educational research tool. More than a generation ago, focus groups became particularly popular among marketing researchers. Still, in recent times, the approach gained traction in the educational sphere as the approach allowed researchers to interview larger numbers of individuals rather than individual serial interviews (Tierney & Dilley, 2002). Researchers conducting interviews have often referred to the work of Morgan (1996) as it has aided in comprehending the focus group interview procedure. This approach has been proven to be a dependable, effective, and cost-efficient method for researchers to gather data for the wider audience (Krop et al., 1998; Throgmorton, 1999).

The successes of the proposed project and ongoing collaborations hinge on the relationships developed between the Tradition Owners and the teachers interviewed during this research. The relationships developed will enhance the qualitative data being collected. Traditional Owners will also feel confident in relaying to the teachers what they would like students to know about Country and Indigenous knowledges if solid connections have been made.

The landscape of racialised familiarities provides the background in which the interview subject is understood and constituted as the researcher endeavours to obtain an authentic version of the interviewee's story (Dunbar et al., 2002). By instinctively engaging and including a racialised subject (with whom I share an appreciation for what it means to be an Aboriginal person), the interview will provide empirical grounds for elaborating on the respondent's story and vision (Dunbar et al., 2002). Subjects who have something to contribute often need more trust to hide behind their reserved responses. As Dunbar et al. (2002) have suggested, researchers must look past the silence and understand that people of colour are less likely to be forthcoming with their responses because of racial sensitivities. Researchers must be cognisant of what potential subjects may or may not share when interviewed. The researcher's experiences outside the interview will define what they might hear or understand. Importantly, interviewers understand and draw on the broader social meanings of silence and topics reliant on race (Dunbar et al., 2002).

Data collection focussed on four teachers with backgrounds in Science, Geography or Outdoor Education from four different schools so that there is a variety of data for the research. The teachers interviewed were people I had come to know during my time as a teacher and through sports participation. Research with teachers was extracted through interviews and professional development (observations).

The focus group interview is an approach to data gathering where the researcher interviews a small group of people with a specific community of interest. The method is used to understand complex and layered accounts of the variety and richness of community attitudes, values and beliefs (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). In this instance, the researcher wishes to understand the perspectives of the Traditional Owners focus group relating to the education system and the embedding of Indigenous knowledges. An understanding of these insights would be achieved through conversations in which Traditional Owners outlined their ideas while also reacting and responding to the views of other community or group members (Willis et al., 2005). The presence of other Traditional Owners allowed for the re-creation of the social, cultural and political environment of the 'community of interest' (A. McGregor, 2004). The opportunity for conversation between group members on the issue under investigation also allows for clarification and reflection on shared values and attitudes and

provides evidence of a divergence of views. According to Straw and M. Smith (1995), the focus group method is ideal for assessing community aspirations or evaluating essential service delivery. In focus groups, differences of opinion may emerge during interview sessions, and this can provide an opportunity for further clarification, resolution of the issue, or confirmation of continuing conflict.

However, I agree with A. McGregor's (2004) claim that marginal views gain little air space during focus group discussions. Despite this, and while one-to-one interviews might have generated more in-depth discussions, the full range of community views is more readily displayed in focus group sessions, and an opportunity exists for these views to be explored by the group. In presenting the findings, researchers are therefore not restricted to portrayals of opposing positions.

The value of focus group interviews in the Aboriginal context can be supported on cultural and political grounds. Focus groups allow researchers to gather information that reflects a range of community attitudes and values, going some way towards overcoming the danger of presenting an Aboriginal viewpoint that assumes homogeneity. Conversely, from a cultural perspective, it preserves the group focus. It allows for the public control and display of knowledge, analogous to an open community council meeting where those who speak do so from positions of authority and ownership of learning.

In some situations, focus group interviews act as catalysts for mobilising community action since they provide the venue that brings researchers and community members together to discuss important issues. In such cases, transformative knowledge and group action can be achieved (Cameron, 2001). In addition, the potential for change built into the focus group approach goes some way to overcoming the time problem. Indigenous communities are not culturally static; values and beliefs change because of interactions with each other and the wider society. The focus group approach provides one venue for exchanging ideas that is part of the processes of the ebb and flow of discussion that facilitates problem-solving and change.

The usual process for focus groups is for one research team member, the facilitator or moderator, to direct the interview. In contrast, another team member may handle the microphones and tapes, take notes or make observations. Ordinarily, the facilitator will have questions related to the topic under discussion. Still, the research project has tried to include Traditional Owners in every step of the research process, including developing questions, to coincide with self-determination values.

INTERVIEWS

Interviews were used to collect data because they were conducted with a smaller sample size to reflect and be representative of larger populations (Tierney & Dilley, 2002). As the intended groups (each comprised of four individuals) were interviewed on three separate occasions, this resulted in a significantly smaller sample size than projected but delivered deeper insights into what a collective group of teachers might have to say about a Learning on Country approach. The individual interview process was the most used format during data collection. The participant's answers were recorded through an electronic device so that conversations could be scribed, and data was then coded and extracted. Questions were asked to gather information systematically and, thus, make the results generalisable to the broader population (Warren, 2004). As the primary researcher, emphasis was given to the amount of access to the respondent, the emotional and financial costs of conducting the study, and the time afforded to complete the research (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). For Warren (2004), emotional costs are crucial in qualitative interviewing because it entails asking exploratory, open questions, which uncover the greater meaning of experiences. However, this can also be quite stressful for participants.

Teachers were be interviewed pre-project, during-project and post-project, so their interpretations of Country could be documented at progressive stages. During the project and the different interviewing stages, teachers were be provided with professional development to enhance their concepts of Country. Specifically, the interviews aimed to understand if the professional development sessions helped teachers grow and embed their understanding of Country into teachings. Interviewing teachers at three stages helped map the effectiveness of the professional development sessions and obtain rich data regarding the teachers' journeys.

Due to COVID-19 protocols, interviews were held virtually through Zoom conferencing at times convenient to the focus group members and teacher participants. Data was collected electronically through Zoom recordings and discussions were transcribed through Otter.ai software. Once data was transcribed into Word documents, they were revised for errors before being shared with the focus group members and teacher participants, where they were given ample time for feedback. Transcripts from the Traditional Owners focus groups assisted in ongoing dialogue for clarity in developing professional development sessions that accurately reflected the focus group's aspirations.

Risk Management and Potential Risks

The main risk to the project was participant withdrawal. The sample size was small, which increased the risk that, if any participants withdrew, sufficient data would not be attained to draw meaningful conclusions. However, it was essential to reiterate to the teachers involved that they are learning new information. Although they found some information confronting, this is part of the journey of disrupting settler powers. The researcher took the appropriate steps to make themselves readily available for professional teaching and curriculum support and provide practical teaching resources for teacher participants.

Regarding non-physical risks to the researcher, the researcher found it challenging to collect data promptly due to the unpredictable nature of COVID-19. To mitigate risk, the researcher employed a flexible approach that catered for remote learning and reduced face-to-face interactions. Regarding anonymity concerns for Traditional Owners, the researcher identified minimal harm opportunities. If Traditional Owners are questioned (by others in the community) about their participation, they were encouraged to justify their involvement by stating they had been selected based on their relationship with the researcher and educational interests. Selection has not been based on seniority within the Wurundjeri clan, only on status as a Traditional Owner (of which Eldership is non-commensurate). The above justifications provided to Traditional Owners alleviated any potential political or psychological stress caused by limited anonymity or commentary from the wider community.

In addressing the possibility of primary participant withdrawal, the researcher employed mitigation strategies to ensure participants remained comfortable participating in the project. Techniques such as interviewing teachers at convenient times at school and where they feel comfortable were used. Teacher participants were also encouraged to end the interview or withdraw their data at any time before publication if they felt uncomfortable. Further, the researcher adopted an interview context that catered for unpredictable events such as COVID-19 restrictions and provided suitable alternative arrangements. Finally, the researcher also provided the opportunity for participants to debrief at a convenient time after the interview.

It was determined that the above risks would not physically harm the research participants or the researcher. Non-Indigenous teachers agreed to participate in the research project because they saw the benefit of interacting with Indigenous knowledges. In the unlikely event that a situation arose, the researcher notified their supervisory panel before and after each interview and/or professional development session, citing concerns and possible ways of progressing. The researcher took the following actions to maintain the confidentiality of participants: (1) using a unique numerical identifier and pseudonym to refer to participants

in handwritten notes and transcribed interviews, (2) maintaining these identifiers in the final published thesis, (3) omit or alter (in consultation with participants) reference to any individuals or organisations—government or non-government. Only the researcher and their supervisors have access to data collected from key participants, which have been stored securely in a password-protected folder on the researcher's university networked-drive profile.

As the researcher has used interviews and relied on honest responses from participants to draw meaningful conclusions, there was a risk of participants responding to make themselves appear favourable (Johnson & Fendrich, 2005). According to Huang et al. (1998), participants in all interview situations tend to carry self-deception because there is a need to avoid scepticism, gain social approval or conform to socially accepted values. Due to the sensitive nature of the interviews and conversations around race and identity, King and Bruner (2000) believe socially desirable responses are likely to be given. As such, the researcher has considered the impact of socially desirable bias on the validity of participant results. The implementation of a socially desirable scale may reduce biased responses during the project and the different interviews (Van de Mortel, 2008). Additionally, if participants felt uneasy about their participation, they were reminded of their right to withdraw at any time, free of judgement, as stated in the plain language statement and consent forms.

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Approaches to increase validity and reliability are fundamental to the research process because they address 'the truth status of a research report' (Punch, 2009, p. 360) and 'the dependability of the data' (Punch, 2009, p. 359). The diversity of data collected from Traditional Owners and teachers is also essential to the research as it 'ensures that the study will be accurate because the information draws on multiple sources of information, individuals, or processes' (Creswell, 2012, p. 259). A range of data is also essential because it allows strong themes to emerge. When conducting undertakings associated with research, interrogation of validity and generalisability of results must be studied. The variety of methods used was qualitative, and Maxwell's (1992) considerations in advocating for the methodological process and interpretation were used in validating the arguments. Maxwell (1992) argued that validity in qualitative approaches can be quite limited as the process does not always test a hypothesis, which is a typical component of quantitative studies (Maxwell, 1992). However, studies that employ qualitative approaches have multiple opportunities for examination and interpretation to understand phenomena and lived experiences.

Validity in qualitative research does not rely on absolute truths. Instead, there is an acknowledgement of the many ways to interpret data that is inclusive and considers

associated aspects of the data. When quantitative and qualitative practices are stacked against each other, I support Atkinson and Hammersley (1983), who suggested that 'data in themselves cannot be valid or invalid; what is at issue are the inferences drawn from them' (p. 191) The research process should be understood through the environment of the activities and the researcher critiquing these activities so that validity can always be relative to the researcher's standpoint.

Exercising Maxwell's (1992) understanding of qualitative validity, the current research has theoretical validity. The study has theoretical validity because the work has been interpreted through Traditional Owners' understandings of Country that go further than an interpretive and descriptive understanding of phenomena related to Western constructs of land. Similarly, non-Indigenous teachers' activities that go beyond an interpretive and explanatory understanding of quality professional development sessions have also been accounted for. Such observations are constructed by incorporating Traditional Owner's concepts of Country and non-Indigenous teachers' experiences into explaining the phenomena associated with professional development related to Indigenous knowledge.

Traditional Owners' understandings of Country are compared to the international literature on land pedagogy so that experiences can be extended beyond interpretive or descriptive observations. Such observations match Maxwell's (1992) explanation of academic validity. He stated that 'what counts as theoretical validity depends on whether there is consensus within the community concerned with the research about the terms used to characterize the phenomena' (Maxwell, 1992, p. 292). As emphasised in the literature review, international culturally responsive pedagogical practices tied to Indigenous understandings of land are desirable when lifting Indigenous students' engagement and building non-Indigenous teachers capacity to embed Indigenous knowledges.

Approaches to land-based education were considered in the design of the research project, particularly the professional development sessions advocating that teachers connect with local Indigenous peoples to teach Indigenous knowledge. The justification to liaise with the community was further encouraged through the implementation of the AITSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research, and reflections on Australian literature associated with embedding Indigenous knowledges.

METHODS TABLE

Method	Who	Sample size (N=)	Where?
Interviews	Teachers x four at pre-, during- and post-project intervals to measure effectiveness.	Interviews to occur at four sites, with an estimated three interviews at each site. Total of 12 interviews.	Via Zoom to cater for COVID-19 protocols.
Focus Group	To be conducted at three to four separate occasions in Naarm. Locations where Traditional Owners feel most comfortable will be decided on.	Four Traditional Owners on three to four different occasions.	Via Zoom to cater for COVID-19 protocols.
Professional Development	To be run by the researcher and a Traditional Owner	Two sessions x four participants.	Two x Learning on Country experiences.
Background field Notes	To be taken by the researcher during the professional development sessions.		

CONCLUSION

To ensure that I am not further contributing to the settler-colonial mandate of Indigenous erasure, I have employed an Indigenist research approach. Through this approach, I have contended how Western methodologies could impact the research project findings. Deliberation has also been given as to how an Indigenous co-design format could enhance Indigenous leadership, expertise and self-determination through culturally appropriate methods. An Indigenist research paradigm also means data analysis is met with the same rigour and standards used to carry out the research project.

An Indigenous research paradigm is essential for the outcomes and design of this project because it has relevance to the empowerment and self-determination efforts associated with the Wurundjeri community. Finally, to strengthen the arguments of this thesis, settler colonialism and Foucault's power/knowledge work have been used to mount a case as to why professional development sessions informed by Indigenous people are needed. The following questions informed this chapter on methodology and theory:

- To what extent does centring Country in professional development sessions improve the cultural responsiveness of non-Indigenous teachers in Australia?
- How does the visibility of Indigenous people and their cultures improve in urbanised places when professional development of Country is used to build the capacity of non-Indigenous teachers to embed Indigenous knowledge?

In this chapter, I have detailed how Wurundjeri Traditional Owners and participant teachers were recruited for the project and considered the potential risks of having a small sample size. Further, I have outlined what participation would involve and how participants would be renumerated.

As previously mentioned, four Wurundjeri Traditional Owners will make up the focus group, where they will outline what Country means to them and assist with developing two Learning on Country professional development sessions for educators. It is vital to understand Traditional Owners' points of view because the research needs to be assisted by the self-determining efforts of those with intimate knowledge of Naarm. There is also value in understanding the literature associated with land-based education and comparing this with the understandings shared by Traditional Owners. Lastly, as Traditional Owners share knowledge, it is crucial to identify the learnings and relationship opportunities they would like to establish with schools and teachers in their local communities. As well as identifying suitable Traditional Owner participants, it is also essential to use criteria to recruit settler-teachers. Criteria for participants included that they are non-Indigenous middle and/or secondary educators teaching subjects in humanity. Teacher participants also had to be interested in embedding Indigenous knowledge to build on an understanding of the epistemic work (reflection) needed to teach Indigenous content. In the next section, I will discuss the data collection methods used and the considerations involved when making related decisions.

This chapter outlines the data collection activities employed for this research project and deliberates on the potential risks to participants and the overall research objectives. In addition, I have offered my thoughts on issues related to validity and reliability and how participants can safeguard the accuracy of the research being conducted. Finally, I have drafted a methods table to illustrate how data will be collected before closing the chapter by providing an overview of data analysis.

CHAPTER 5: USING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE WAYS TO ENGAGE TRADITIONAL OWNERS

The ongoing impacts of colonialism are persistent and require a constant commitment, acts of resistance, and various pedagogical approaches to contest how Eurocentric power structures are maintained in education (Windchief et al., 2015). The answers to settler-colonial curriculum education lie in the interaction of our Indigenous knowledge systems and embedding Learning on Country pedagogy (L. Simpson, 2014). Crucially, embedding Indigenous content relies mainly on teachers willing to improve their cultural responsiveness and practise the required internal reflection to contest colonial curricula and invest in pedagogical approaches grounded in sovereignty and self-determination (Garcia et al., 2021). In Australia, Indigenous education has been widely problematised by many academics who have offered different ways to correct how Indigenous knowledges are taught and how the system caters for Indigenous learners. Solutions have been developed by governments and offered through policy development; these include increasing the Indigenous education workforce and improving the availability of relevant teaching resources.

This research project has taken the approach of building the capacity of non-Indigenous educators to teach and embed Indigenous knowledges by providing two Learning on Country professional development sessions. The project seeks to understand whether non-Indigenous teachers' cultural responsiveness can be improved via an increased understanding of Country and engagement with Traditional Owners. It follows that questions must be asked about professional development approaches designed to centre Country and their capacity to mitigate barriers participant teachers face when teaching Indigenous knowledge. Again, to understand these questions, it is essential to build a relationship with the Traditional Owners so that they feel comfortable and empowered to discuss how education can improve its cultural responsiveness to serve the needs of Indigenous students.

Therefore, it is necessary to outline how the Wurundjeri Traditional Owners focus group was formed and how they informed and helped deliver the Learning on Country professional development sessions. It is also essential to hear from Traditional Owners about what they would like teachers to take away from the professional development sessions and respectfully embed these insights within their teachings. In preparation for the first professional development session, the learnings from the initial focus group conversations were collated and grouped into six themes. This chapter presents directly quoted observations related to these themes. The quotations have been footnoted to show how Traditional

Owners' wisdom has informed each step of the first and second professional development sessions.

Currently, there is a need for on Country professional development sessions because, as the project will highlight, the possibility of teachers progressing through secondary and tertiary education with zero engagement with Indigenous knowledges is a worrying reality. Due to the lack of opportunity to interact with Indigenous history or cultures during formal and teacher education, Learning on Country professional development is needed to build the capacity of the current teacher workforce. It is also essential to reassert the realities of Indigenous peoples living and prospering in urban locales like those in rural or remote areas (Fredericks, 2013) so that teachers can understand the diversity of the Indigenous experience.

This chapter will conclude by providing teacher participants' thoughts on how the session progressed. These views will set the foundations for the next chapter and assist in understanding their perceived barriers to embedding Indigenous knowledge. Additionally, there is an apparent expectation of Traditional Owners to share their cultural knowledge willingly. The supposition teachers held to easily acquire such knowledge without investing the required work prompted a revisit on why it is essential for educators to epistemically reflect on the way they have come to know and understand the world.

WURUNDJERI TRADITIONAL OWNER'S ENGAGEMENT IN EDUCATION

This research project engaged four Traditional Owners who have worked and strived to improve how Indigenous knowledge is used and embedded in the Australian Curriculum. The project strongly emphasised a need to address the narrative that suggests Indigenous people only exist in remote and rural parts of Australia. To render Wurundjeri people visible in the urban landscapes of Naarm, the focus group collectively expressed the significance of Country. Embracing those understandings, I developed two professional development sessions based on the following guidance:

> When we're teaching about Country and the importance of Country, sometimes we focus too much on the bush itself. While that's amazing, and I connect better in the bush than I do in the city, it's important to recognise that just because there are concrete buildings, it doesn't mean that country has disappeared, nor our connection to it. (Traditional Owners, focus group 1)

The above quotation is significant because it speaks to one of the objectives of this research project, which is to contribute to the narrative that the city is Country just as much as the bush is Country, and the connection is never severed. The Traditional Owner's words reaffirm the idea of the city being Country, supporting my understanding of what constitutes Country and,

therefore, where Learning on Country initiatives can occur. However, it is vital to note that Learning on Country lessons cannot happen without the appropriate relationships with Traditional Owner groups. Therefore, it was crucial to have the Traditional Owners focus group assist in constructing and delivering two Learning on Country professional development sessions.

Tradition Owners want settler-teachers to teach concepts of Country respectfully and in a culturally safe manner. Country is a term frequently relied on that encapsulates the ocean, sky, waterways and land to which they are related. Country captures complex ideas and nuances about cultural identity, practice, place, language, customs, spirituality, food and family. Harrison and Skrebneva (2020) suggested that Indigenous students feel safe when Country and its associated attributes are used in the classroom. The willingness of the focus group to participate in the project was also an indication that Traditional Owners remain committed to seeing the aims met so non-Indigenous teachers can teach Country.

I worked collaboratively with the Traditional Owners focus group to describe and document their understanding of Country and co-design the two Learning on Country professional development sessions for participant teachers. The research was co-designed with Traditional Owners so that their knowledge could help participant teachers reflect on their practice and critically think about the delivery of current curricula. Additionally, this research project allowed non-Indigenous teachers to interact with Indigenous knowledge holders in a safe and meaningful way.

> I hope to affirm what we're doing at our school and that we are on the right journey. Affirm what I have been trying to develop, and to be able to pass this sense of importance about people understanding Indigenous people is not just a compartmental thing that we do, that it should infuse everything we do with our school. And that we are on a journey here which is about making meaningful connections with people and maintaining those because it's not for us. Let's go shopping and find somebody to serve a purpose for a particular time. Once we have a connection, we maintain that connection. And we keep bringing these people back so they're part of our community. (Mary, Interview 1)

Mary's response, provided before the first professional development session, echoes the teacher participants' sentiments, willingness and aspirations to be involved in this research project. Mary's words also show that she aspires to build her capacity to embed Indigenous knowledge.

It was necessary to engage with Traditional Owners at different intervals of the project so that the focus group members experienced autonomy with determining the information they felt needed to be delivered in the Learning on Country professional development

sessions. Additionally, staggering the focus group discussions meant that Traditional Owners had time to think about how their involvement would contribute to the aspirations of self-determination for Wurundjeri, how their epistemological values were met, and how concepts of Country could be used to disrupt colonialisation.

> I think teacher education needs to have an element of Indigenous content to prepare them for the classroom. If they understand Aboriginal history and culture, then there's a positive flow-on effect. (Traditional Owners, focus group 1)[3]

Addressing the deficit discourse surrounding Indigenous people is something the Wurundjeri Traditional Owners wanted to address by informing this research project's professional development sessions. Traditional Owners recognise the importance and perceived benefit of teachers being well-versed in Indigenous knowledge; this is highlighted through their participation in the focus group sessions and generosity in informing how the two professional development sessions should be run. The Traditional Owners also showed their enthusiasm for the project by attending the sessions to give feedback on how the professional development sessions went and what general observations were made. I am grateful for the time and responsibility the focus group gave me in delivering the sessions. I am equally appreciative of the trust they had to share their stories about navigating the education system and their thoughts on why change is needed.

> I made a conscious effort to enrol my daughter into a school with a bigger Aboriginal population because I knew she would get a better educational experience compared to a school with low representation of Aboriginal students. (Traditional Owners, focus group 1)[4]

This information was important to share because it reflected the focus group's belief that the education setting must be culturally appropriate for their families. In addition, the above quotation encapsulates the focus group members' desire for their families to feel a sense of cultural safety and belonging at school. The way to achieve that was to send their children to a school with more extensive Indigenous representations.

The current education system contributes to Indigenous erasure because its purpose is to miseducate all students and teachers. As a result, education 'threatens [the feeling of] belonging and limits opportunities to elaborate possible images of oneself in the future' for Indigenous students (Fryberg & Stephens, 2010, p. 118). Unfortunately, the deficit discourse of Indigenous people is permitted to maintain its stronghold in society. By incorporating Indigenous knowledges and understandings of Country for students, educators can help

[3] Stop 1—History Theme.

[4] Stop 3—Belonging Theme.

critique the ongoing process and damage of settler colonisation. With an interaction of different knowledge systems, teachers are better poised to encourage Indigenous students to interact in lessons because they understand their students' cultural backgrounds. According to Sabzalian (2019), students are aware of the efforts teachers make and respond accordingly through their engagement and ongoing participation. By providing two Learning on Country professional development sessions that include Traditional Owners and people with the knowledge who live on the land, teachers will be encouraged to see the value in interacting with different worldviews and the positive impacts this may have on their students.

> If students had a bit more knowledge around the cultural aspect, racial incidents are not going to happen because students are going to be a little bit more critical of their own actions before doing stuff like that … if they understand the severity of the things they're doing, it doesn't balloon into adolescence and adult life because they're better educated and understand empathy. (Traditional Owners, focus group 1)[5]

The above observation is laden with meaning. There is a sense of conviction that Traditional Owners believe teachers should perform in their role, particularly concerning students understanding racism and its impacts on Indigenous students. The above quotation suggests if teachers educate their students on such matters at an earlier age, it will positively affect Indigenous students and lead to fewer racial incidents in the future. Traditional Owners want teachers to embed Indigenous knowledges and have conversations about racism so that it helps non-Indigenous students understand the value and importance of empathy for Indigenous people. This is important because, with an improved capacity for empathy, students are challenged to critique their thoughts and actions, which could help future conversations relating to racism with friends and families.

TRADITIONAL OWNER'S UNDERSTANDING OF COUNTRY

This section will further uncover why a greater understanding of Country is needed for teachers to be better equipped to teach Indigenous knowledges; it also explains why professional development around Country is necessary through a critique of teacher responses from their three interviews. Finally, a critique of the dialogue with teachers will occur so that a judgement can be made regarding the extent to which teachers' knowledge of Country has improved and to what extent this helps teachers embed Indigenous knowledges in a culturally responsive way.

Below is a summary of the themes that have emerged from discussions and participation of Traditional Owners in this study. More detail is provided in Table 2 on page

[5] Stop 4—Critical Thinking Theme.

139. While conversing with Traditional Owners, six themes emerged - history, respect, belonging, critical thinking, culture, and responsibility. These themes helped to deliver the first professional development sessions and have also been woven throughout the finding's chapters.

Participating in the professional development sessions meant non-Indigenous teachers could build their culturally responsive capacity to teach Indigenous content, establish relationships with Indigenous knowledge holders, and gain an appreciation for the way Traditional Owners connect with their Country. Equally as necessary, the researcher, using the feedback session with the Traditional Owners, refined questions the participants would go on to answer through their interviews. For example, when asked what role non-Indigenous teachers played in teaching Country, Traditional Owners (focus group 1) suggested:

> Absolutely, they [non-Indigenous teachers] can teach Country … I feel like it's difficult with non-Indigenous people to get the full feeling and message across because they don't have that innate connection that we do with the land and to the things that are on the land. But I think that it's possible to teach the importance of that connection and the importance of nurturing that connection, and making sure that the land survives, so that the connection continues for generations.

One of the Traditional Owners made the above statement during the first focus group session, which symbolised the project's importance for Traditional Owners. I am drawn to the word 'innate' in the above quotation because having an innate connection to Country is central to Indigenous culture. From an Indigenous perspective, an innate connection to land is an interesting concept because it is instinctively attached at birth, strengthening our ties to culture, spirituality and family and forming our identity (Redvers et al., 2020). When discussing identity, we are often consumed with notions that immersion, or teachings of cultural knowledges and obligations, can develop identity. In the quotation above, Traditional Owners are happy for teachers to students to create an innate connection through a custodian and obligatory role to care for their environment.

> that role of doing Welcome to Country and smoking ceremonies, has been passed down to all of my brothers and sisters. I love doing it because it connects me to culture. I love talking about culture and educating when I do it … That connection and just being barefooted on country is amazing. It reenergizes you and recharges your batteries. (Traditional Owners, focus group 1)[6]

As highlighted in the quotation above, Traditional Owners must carry on the traditions of leading ceremonies. They understand the importance of participating in such practices and

[6] Stop 5—Culture Theme.

their impact on the innate connection to Country and culture. Although Traditional Owners acknowledge that teachers cannot teach the innate connection Indigenous people have with Country, they feel it is essential that they try. Teaching the intrinsic connection Indigenous people have with their Country is impossible if you are non-Indigenous because it is something born inside you and strengthened over time. Traditional Owners' sentiments about non-Indigenous teachers building their connection with Country are essential. However, connecting to Country is unrealistic without an epistemic reflection on their colonial upbringing.

Suppose Indigenous people do not reside on their own Country; it does not necessarily mean that their connections to Country are erased or that their importance is no longer apparent. V. Watson (2009, p. 99), a Tanganakeld and Meintangk woman, offered, as she reflects on her connection to Country, the following statement: 'I still belong to Country. It is bred into me, and it is an old idea and one that still lives'. Author Sally Morgan (2008), a Palyku woman, explained how 'our Country is alive, and no matter where we go, our Country never leaves us' (p. 263). Professor Bob Morgan (2008, p. 204) asserted 'my culture and worldview centred on Gumilaroi land and its people. This is who I am and will always be. I am my Country'. The connection to Country exists irrespective of whether Bob Morgan, Sally Morgan, Irene Watson, and other Aboriginal people are living on their Country. The notion of 'I am my Country' is a common sentiment felt across Indigenous groups and gives authority to the idea that Country is a living, breathing, caring family member that provides safety and sustenance to those with innate connections to it.

Indigenous people living off Country are cognisant of traversing other Indigenous people's homelands (Fredericks, 2008; Moreton-Robinson, 2020). Further, settler Australians are also negotiating Indigenous Country, although their consciousness may not be in tune with other non-Traditional Owner Indigenous people. Country exists regardless of Traditional Owner or settler status (Due, 2008; Moreton-Robinson, 2020). One of the Traditional Owner focus group members also reflected on their connection to Country despite living elsewhere:

> I'm [currently] not on Country, going back to Melbourne, remembering that my Country is where I belong. You can tell the difference when you're not on Country and when you're on someone else's Country. You have more rights when you're on your own Country. Country, to me, is feeling safe and comfortable. (Traditional Owners, focus group 1)

The above quotation is important as it highlights that the connection to Country is still intact for Indigenous people living away from home. Importantly, for Indigenous people, connection to Country and the feeling of belonging has been developed and maintained over many generations to a place that is inseparable from existence. Similarly, Morgan (2008) articulated

the desire to reconnect with Country when an Indigenous person has been away from their ancestral lands for extended periods:

> When we experience that deep longing inside ourselves, we know our Country is calling us back. It is time to go home, even if only for a short while. This is because my Country is far more than what can be seen with physical eyes. Our Country is the home of our ancestral spirits, the place of our belonging. The core of our humanity. (p. 263)

The realities of spiritual connection to place and the obligation to care for and preserve Country for future generations are not lost on Indigenous people, even if the ongoing project of erasure persists in severing the connections and obligations Indigenous people have to their Country.

Wiseman (2021) is a settler researcher who calls for other settlers to provide further attention to the fragility and complexity of the ecologies and environments we live in so that the short-term choices made about consumed resources do not impact the environment long term. Further, Indigenous people's knowledge needs to be given the respect it deserves, particularly when climate change and natural disasters such as flooding, droughts and bushfires threaten to cause irreparable environmental damage. Additionally, conversations about the environment and climate change need to include the voices of young people from diverse cultures to hear different perspectives based on places people care strongly about. Finally, to contribute to decolonial efforts, conversations about the environment and climate change must involve discussions with the community and include Indigenous perspectives so that caring for Country and sustainability can be achieved.

Lending an Indigenous perspective to Learning on and from Country landscape, Coff (2021), a Yorta Yorta woman and education academic, argued that education must include Indigenous epistemologies to complement Western approaches to pedagogy. Coff (2021) stated that Country can be embedded meaningfully throughout the curriculum if non-Indigenous teachers are prepared to contest pre-existing ideas and beliefs about pedagogical approaches to teaching L. Smith (1999) further adds to our understandings of why learning about Country is important.

> A key part of this is learning about Country, as it represents our survival, our humanity, our worldview and language, our imagination and spirit, our very place in the world depends on our capacity to act for ourselves, to speak for ourselves, to engage in the world and the actions of our colonizers, to face them head on. (L. Smith, 1999, p. 198)

L. Smith's (1999) words are potent because they suggest that non-Indigenous educators' self-reflections can assist self-determination and Indigenous resurgence efforts. One of the central contentions of this research project is to help shift teacher participants' mindsets of Indigenous people only belonging to bush Country or remote places. Many Indigenous people

belong to Country where cities and townships now exist that screen the visibility of Indigenous people and their connections to Country. Indigenous people living in large cities and townships are often regarded as non-authentic because settler Australians perceive that Indigenous people live in the bush or on tropical islands (Fredericks, 2013).

> there's not much Country left. So, we've got to make sure that the Country that's remaining is being looked after. And yeah, we fight for it as well. Plus, the Country that's been built on, it's not gone it's still there. So, it's about making sure that you acknowledge and appreciate Country. (Traditional Owners, focus group 1)
>
> Fed Square is such a significant site, we do Tanderrum there; it was a meeting place and a ceremonial ground … sometimes people ask how can you even connect to Country when half of your country is the city? I reply that the city is still a place of significance. Country is more than just the visibility of land. (Traditional Owners, focus group 1)

The first quotation from the Traditional Owners focus group captures thoughts about their Country and the need for greater awareness within society that Naarm is Indigenous land, even though it is covered with buildings, roads and concrete. Despite the erasure of Indigenous visibility in urban areas, the Traditional Owners feel compelled to still care for Country and feel obligated to instil these feelings and responsibilities into the participant teachers. The follow-up comment also implies that settler-teachers and non-Indigenous people can travel far to discover, participate in, and connect with Country through the annual Tanderrum ceremony, a revived ancient cultural celebration. For me, the two quotations are interconnected. In the first quotation, Traditional Owners talk about Country philosophically. The second quotation exemplifies how teachers can connect with Country in urban places, such as by attending a Tanderum celebration in Federation Square.

On the other hand, Australian settlers may assert their claim to Australia as their home, but their current knowledge and perception of what defines 'home' is still limited to a location beyond the Australian borders (Moreton-Robinson, 2007). Gupta and Ferguson (1997) argued that settler Australians constantly look to align themselves with a culture and identity held across the sea. Fredericks (2013) added that settlers rely on an epistemological framework for what is an Australian trait and what constitutes 'home'; both have their roots in terra nullius—the removal of Indigenous from their land, the whitewashing of history and the promotion of a culture that has come from Europe (Fredericks, 2013).

Even in Australia's metropolitan cities such as Naarm, where freeways, multistorey buildings, sports facilities, places of worship and houses have been built, Traditional Owners still have a strong spiritual connection and cultural obligations to Country. Traditional Ownership exists regardless of geographic position and irrespective of an individual settler's

claim of ownership. Settler assertion of locations and possession of land is made achievable through the de-territorialising and dispossession of Indigenous people from Country (Fredericks, 2013). Despite the ongoing settler-colonial project of erasure, Indigenous people fulfil their obligations to Country as articulated by the Traditional Owners focus group:

> I also feel a large responsibility to do my part within the tribe. I'll help dad when needed with burning, cleaning up and planting trees. Then there's also making sure that the ones around me know what's expected. (Traditional Owners, focus group 1)[7]

Indigenous people continue to live their life guided by their moral obligation and accountability to care for their families, communities and Country. However, non-Indigenous people tend not to operate under similar guidelines as Indigenous people because they carry out daily activities within the confines of what settler authority tells them is acceptable.

De Certeau's (1984) book *The Practice of Everyday Life* looks at how people are assumed to be uncritical of the unwritten rules written for society to operate under. De Certeau theorised belonging as an emotion that develops through the daily rigours of life. When everyday activities are carried out, they solidify the appropriation and territorialisation of settler occupation. He advised that attachment and belonging are embedded into the psyche, consciousness and familiarities of everyday activities. For Fredericks (2013), this is observed in the daily practices of settler Australians who have established belonging and attachment to places grounded on the disenfranchisement of Indigenous people and the ongoing settler-colonial project of erasure.

During the onslaught of efforts to render Indigenous people invisible, non-Indigenous settlers have sustained their presence and territoriality with symbols, representations, signs and images. By solidifying their connection to place, settlers also outline how Indigenous people are positioned, presented and silenced.

While researching concepts of Country, the thoughts of place and space keep appearing and are deliberately compared throughout the literature. Mills (2005) clarified that 'space is a question of relations: perceptions of and actual relations between the individual, the group, institutions and architecture, with forces being perceived as restricting or enabling movement or access' (p. 23). Sommerville (2007) observed that space and place are so 'deeply implicated in one another it is difficult to consider one without the other' (p. 2). Gupta and Ferguson (1992) asserted that 'an identity of a place emerges by the intersection of its specific involvement in a system of hierarchically organised spaces with its cultural construction as a community or locality' (p. 8).

[7] Stop 6—Responsibility Theme.

Spaces represent societal instructions, communicating messages and symbols of exclusion and belonging and constructing and maintaining power relations across society (Dudgeon & Fielder, 2006). For Lefebvre (1991), spaces are shared products shaped by economic, political, legal and communal activities and configurations derived from the doctrine of terra nullius. As offered by Foucault (1980), they are 'sites of social struggle and contested realms of identity' (p. 149).

Dutifully, spaces are reciprocally essential and reliant on their relationships with places and, therefore, should not be isolated or understood as being natural or neutral. Places and spaces are highly political because they reproduce validations of social (un)consciousness, identity, belonging and citizenship (Wallwork & Dixon, 2004) and maintain an othering mentality within private and public spaces. Further, settler societies aggressively function to construct Indigenous people as outsiders on Indigenous land. This can involve non-Traditional Owners, and Traditional Owners from their own Country who are made to feel like aliens and their sovereignty diminished (Carey, 2004, 2008; Moreton-Robinson, 2007). Within urban landscapes, Indigenous people are not responsible for constructing places. Instead, Indigenous people are cared for, nurtured and shaped by Country (Fredericks, 2009). This perspective is encapsulated in the following observation presented by one of the Traditional Owner focus group members, Country can provide comfort, rejuvenation, and guidance:

> The way I view it is it's kind of my home base. No matter where I am, I always know that I have a home that I can go to. Not in a physical sense of a house. No matter where I am on Country, I always feel like I'm home. I'm always feeling connected and at my strongest when I'm on Country. I also look to Country as not necessarily an authority figure, but almost like a parental figure because Country has so much to teach me. So Country is like home and a mentor. (Traditional Owners, focus group 1)

Even in large cities, the authority of Country is always omnipresent and dictates the lives of Indigenous people despite the settler colony's attempts to silence and erase Indigenous people's visibility.

In Naarm, countless symbols, signs and representations affirm a European and settler-colonial presence through history, which involved the claiming and degradation of Country and efforts that undermined and erased Indigenous sovereignty. Signs and symbols reinforce borders and markers of the settler colony and centre white sovereignty within the domains of the city layout and over its populations. As a result, settler-colonial power, representations, and political and social meanings are embedded and expressed to Indigenous people and about Indigenous people without a verbal exchange occurring (Fredericks, 2013). In Naarm, settlers are overwhelmingly placed as the owners of places and buildings. A similar tactic is employed regarding who is deemed an Australian resident or an alien, and who has the right

to allow entry (Lefebvre, 1991). The power and control of the urban landscape can be seen through the names of people of importance from the colony, which further entrenches Indigenous erasure and ownership of place.

Having places named after prominent people of the colony is a statement that suggests the land is under Crown ownership, and the names of these places have become embedded and inscribed internationally as markers of place and possession. With this type of proprietorship, there is a corresponding distinction of power and the enduring determination of Indigenous erasure to safeguard the theft of Indigenous lands by the settler colony (McGaw et al., 2011). Many names and symbols of places throughout Naarm share commonality with the names and symbols of the foreign places from which settlers come, reinforcing the colony's power (Fredericks, 2013). Indigenous people and their sovereignty are silenced through the excessive use of images, symbols, signs and representations throughout Naarm, and settlers employ racial discrimination to stamp their authority of place (Moreton-Robinson, 2007). The obsession of settlers to have authority and control of Indigenous Country is 'predicated on the taking of other peoples' lands and resources for the benefit of Empire' (Moreton-Robinson (2005, p. 21). The notion of terra nullius, which justified Britain for the theft of land, has not been an isolated incident of the past; instead, it has been adapted to maintain power and systemic oppression (Wolfe, 2006).

Even with constant attempts to remove the visibility of Indigenous people in cities, Boucher and Russell (2012) and P. Edmonds (2010) explained that Indigenous people have always been present in Naarm despite the efforts of authorities to keep Indigenous people out of sight. Naarm has also seen different junctures where Indigenous people struggled to remain visible in urban localities, such as Traditional Owners leaving Coranderrk and other missions in Victoria to take up residency in Fitzroy in the 1930s (McGaw et al., 2011). From that point, Fitzroy and Collingwood became a focal point for Indigenous occupancy and advocacy due to the cheap rent of inner-city dwellings where socially and economically disenfranchised people would reside (McGaw et al., 2011). As the visibility and population of Fitzroy grew, the suburb gained a reputation as a haven where Indigenous people could go to find other Indigenous people regardless of their homelands. In research conducted by the Yarra City Council (2002), Elder Iris Lovett Gardiner explained, 'Fitzroy has always been the place our people came to. There has always been an Aboriginal community within that suburb, although people's roots were elsewhere in the country'.

DEVELOPING AND DELIVERING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS

UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

Calderon et al. (2021) asserted that, with the support of non-Indigenous educators, Indigenous people can disrupt settler-colonial education that is continuing to erase their connection to Country. By embedding Indigenous frameworks and land-based approaches in professional development sessions for non-Indigenous teachers, Calderon et al. (2021) suggested there is an opportunity to disrupt the epistemic knowledge settler-teachers possess (Bang et al., 2014; Deloria et al., 2001; L. Simpson, 2011; G. A. Smith, 2013).

It Is necessary for teacher education and professional development opportunities to include concepts of Country for non-Indigenous teachers so that they can reflect on the way they have come to know and understand the world. For G. A. Smith (2013) and Davidson (2018), an efficient way to assist teachers in reflecting on their standpoints entails a repositioning of their sense of place, which needs to shift towards an Indigenised framework of relationality. Far too often, the importance of walking and connecting to Country, particularly in urban places, fails to be addressed within the classroom. Therefore, the two professional development sessions will be set in urban localities, which are traversed daily and often disregarded as Country and places of significance for Indigenous people. These locations were the University of Melbourne and Organ Pipes National Park.

During the first focus group meeting with Traditional Owners, and after reading through the transcripts, it was evident there were six emerging themes: history, respect, belonging, critical thinking, culture and responsibility. Again, these six themes have been highlighted throughout the chapter using footnotes. Unmistakably, Traditional Owners wanted participant teachers to gain knowledge about the local history of the Wurundjeri people, the importance of Indigenous values, the significance of belonging at school, conversations around deficit discourse, the importance of being strong in culture, and the large responsibility Indigenous people have for caring for Country.

For the initial session with teacher participants, designing a Learning on Country professional development session that accurately represented these six themes and reflected the Traditional Owner's motivations for involvement in this research project was essential. Instead of devising something entirely new, the suggestion from the focus group was to use a 'cultural walk' that had already been developed, embedding the six themes to control the narrative and delivering what was essential to the focus group. Billibellary's Walk was offered as a suggestion. This cultural walk developed by the University of Melbourne is intended to be a self-guided cultural experience that can be further informed using the Billibellary's Walk

smartphone application. Billibellary's Walk offered a solid platform because the walk had already been developed in partnership with other Wurundjeri Traditional Owners. The content used to build Billibellary's Walk could leverage the desires of Traditional Owners from this research project, generating appropriate outcomes for the first professional development session.

Being familiar with Billibellary's Walk, I thought I could develop the first professional development session encompassing the information from this walk and the knowledge shared with me through the Traditional Owners focus group. This was to be achieved by using six of the stops from Billibellary's Walk and relating these to the six themes identified following the initial meeting with the focus group (see Table 2). For example, stop one at the river red gums started with a conversation about what life might have been like before British people arrived. Topics of trade and traditional customs were explored, and the river red gum's many uses—such as for shelter, shields, axes, medicine and glue—were discussed. The conversation then navigated to when John Batman arrived in Naarm and the resulting and lasting impacts this has had on the Wurundjeri way of life. Other discussion points included the Batman Treaty, the significance of suburbs such as Fitzroy and Collingwood in providing a place for Indigenous people to belong, and the coordination of advocacy campaigns.

Table 2

Stops and Themes

	Stop	Theme
1	River Red Gums	History
2	Agriculture Garden	Respect
3	Murrup Barak—Indigenous student precinct	Belonging
4	Medical School	Critical Thinking
5	Manna Gums	Culture
6	University Square	Responsibility

In the planning for the first professional development session, it was imagined that teachers would stop at six different stops where they would be asked to consider the physical aspects of the place as well as the emotional, historical, and sociopolitical contexts that inform and create the teachers' understandings of the stop and its associated theme (Deloria et al., 2001).

Much like Minthorn and Nelson (2018), who critiqued how colonialism operates in the physical sites of campus spaces, the first professional development session aimed to promote the stops as more than a selection of inanimate places. Indigenous people see these places as vessels for life that constantly interact with the human spirit's consciousness.

To help understand the relationship between places and human interaction, a study by Bridge (2018) considered how land-based pedagogies can help educators align and embed greater comprehension of the communities they belong to and adapt those understandings into practice. The research by Bridge (2018) involved training teachers in participating in several land-based activities at numerous urban locations, including the university campus. Teacher participants in Bridge's study reflected on various guiding questions, and their thoughts were collected through semistructured interviews and reflective journals (Hare et al., 2020). Similarly, notes relating to teacher participants, Traditional Owner focus groups and professional development observations were analysed and placed into seven themes. The quotations cited in each of the seven themes were then examined to understand how they related to the aims and the overall arguments presented in this research project.

To assist in the first professional development session, a small booklet was also developed for teacher participants that shared the stop's name and the accompanying theme. Underneath the stop name and theme, quotations from the Traditional Owner focus group and relevant literature were also shared. Talking points were also added to help participants consider the significance of the stop/theme. Finally, reflective questions were detailed at the bottom of the page to help teachers think about their current practice and how they might consider and connect with this information as educators.

Ways to contest settler colonialism through the Learning on Country professional development sessions included sharing knowledge of colonial histories and the initiatives used to sever Indigenous people's connections to Country. It was also an objective to help teacher participants better understand Indigenous standpoints, history, culture, language and contemporary realities. As part of the professional development, student teachers are also asked to explore how Indigenous histories and cultures can be embedded into their pedagogy. Educators must reflect on their pedagogical practices and how the education system is connected to settler colonialism, which maintains power and production of knowledge that renders Indigenous people's connection with their lands invisible. For Calderon (2018), reflection is needed to see the importance of education implicated by the ongoing structures of settler colonialism and the ongoing attempts to erase Indigenous connection to Country.

However, learning about the effects of settler colonialism is not enough to stop the erasure process; instead, a re-learning from Indigenous peoples is needed to accurately portray the Indigenous experience so that critical thinking may occur in ways that contest long-held assumptions about Country where teachers live, work and grow (Hare et al., 2020). Additionally, when teaching Indigenous content, educators should avoid teaching outdated views and romanticising Indigenous people's connection to Country through notions of sustainability, nomadism or stewardship. Instead, students must be directed and introduced to

the settler-colonial process, maintenance and reproduction, particularly the consideration and Eurocentric importance placed on land and place (Calderon, 2018).

> when you're running cultural training and things like that, you need to get those people out of their comfort … it just hits home and makes them realise what our culture has been through. Respect is our culture. That's what everything is built around. And I think that's where we should start, teaching these teachers what respect is for our culture … these teachers need to go out and build partnerships and their networks and find out who the Traditional Owners are, find out what they can tap into for resources that are out there. (Traditional Owners, focus group 1)[8]

The above observation provides a strong indication of where Traditional Owners would like educators to start when teaching Indigenous content. While the main objective of this project is to understand whether teachers will further their engagement with Indigenous knowledges and develop an increased understanding of Country, success should also be gauged on teacher participants' willingness to build relationships with the Indigenous people involved. As the above quotation indicates, Traditional Owners are demanding that teachers engage with the local community and build their relationships to understand better and teach Indigenous content. Non-Indigenous teachers can build relationships by connecting with Indigenous support officers at schools, attending local community and sporting events, and actively seeking professional development sessions or cultural competency training.

Table 3

Questions Asked at Different Stops by Teacher Participants

Theme	Questions or Comments
History	What was the population of Koori people of Naarm before invasion?
Respect	Why is economic participation important?
	Why is Indigenous intellectual property not seen as important as Western intellect?
	Would the current Wurundjeri calendar still be accurate with global warming?
Belonging	How many students use the facilities?
	What would Indigenous success look like without an Indigenous student centre?
	Teachers are mostly aware of the options to teach Indigenous knowledges in middle/secondary school, but it is one of the many options.
	The student precinct looks very welcoming and inviting and is in a central location.
Critical Thinking	Why are the Close the Gap benchmarks harmful/dangerous/etc.?

[8] Stop 2—Respect Theme.

Theme	Questions or Comments
	Disbelief in harmful impact caused by the University of Melbourne on Indigenous communities.
	Consensus—if people understood these moments in time, we (Australia) would be more empathetic towards Indigenous peoples.
Culture	Collective realisation of how colonisation continues to render Indigenous people invisible.
	Project of Erasure still happening through big organisations like the Australian Football League (AFL) and their denial of Australian Rules Football having no links to Marn Grook.
Responsibility	How do we incorporate the use of art painting without cultural appropriation?
	Do Indigenous people have specific roles within their community?
	What happens when there is not an easily identified person for the information you are trying to seek?
	Interesting discussion around identity politics and adaption of culture.

A table of questions and thoughts teacher participants shared about the stop and its designated theme is compiled above. The themes were taken from the initial conversation with Traditional Owners about the type of information they would like to see in the first professional development session described earlier in this chapter. The teacher participants asked the questions in the table during the first professional development session. Several questions are related to Country, such as: What was the population of the Koori people of Naarm before the invasion? Would the current Wurundjeri calendar still be accurate with global warming? Do Indigenous people have specific roles within their community? It was also pleasing to see critical questions and comments about how Indigenous knowledges and affairs are dealt with daily within Indigenous cultures and what considerations such conversations are given by policymakers.

The conversation also highlighted that teachers are often not asking critical questions about education, or thinking about what purpose and whose interests such questions serve. However, teachers were open to questioning their analyses of different educational policy initiatives as Annie's considerations below suggests:

> I guess, not really knowing enough to start with, it really had me thinking about why do I not know more about this? Why is this not part of curriculum? Why has it taken me 39 years to understand the impact of what has happened to Country and continues to still happen in some places? So, I think my biggest challenge was wrapping my head around why it is taking society so long to understand it themselves. I don't think it can be fixed. But I think we can educate better about it. (Annie, Interview 1)

Annie's comments are quite revealing for several reasons. First, the comment is more of a revelation and a critique of why it has taken so long to learn the information she learned during the session. Second, Annie is concerned because she knows that her experience is not siloed and is common among people her age. Third, the statement reflects a sense of personal agency and a desire to generate change by becoming equipped with the history of this country. Fourth, Annie is frustrated that it has taken so long to learn about Indigenous history and the impacts of colonisation and she understands the excessive task of educating and sharing this knowledge. Fifth, the comment is a typical reflection across the participant cohort in that teachers see the problem with not learning Indigenous content and are willing to educate themselves so that they can educate their students.

Another conversation during the first professional development session required much unpacking due to the complicated nature of identity, deficit discourse, and stereotypes that only allow Indigenous people to progress economically while maintaining their cultural identity (Rigney, 1999). For example, when asked about the resources teachers have relied on in the past, the responses indicated that the resources used very much perpetuated ill-informed perceptions of Indigenous people:

> I don't feel like there was much Indigenous cultures in the Geography books at all. But there was always a fair bit in the history section, but it was very much like the history. It wasn't present day. It wasn't current. It was kind of like what happened around colonisation, which is still very important to understand. But I would, as I always do … use lots of different resources. (Sally, Interview 1)
>
> [the professional development session] challenged some of my ideas of perceptions of Aboriginal people these days, in terms of land and Country, I guess just reinforced there are different ideologies and how different they are from a Western ideology. And it made me think about how I approach things, and that I might need to be a bit more inclusive of different ideologies, which is really hard when you've been raised in a certain way … it kind of made me check my white privilege. (Sally, Interview 2)

Reflections offered by Annie and Sally deserve merit for several reasons. First, they challenge how they have come to know the world, mainly from public discourse that constantly offers Western constructs of society as the only truth. Second, Annie and Sally recognise there is not much Indigenous content in the subject books they use at school. They understand that more work is required to adequately embed Indigenous content, including the need to reflect epistemically.

Sally's reflections are critical because she recognises that using subject-assigned handbooks is not always an appropriate resource, particularly when the information positions Indigenous people as relics of the past. In her additional quote, Sally observes how history and

knowledge can be represented through different viewpoints, such as Indigenous and Western lenses. Finally, Sally reflects on her upbringing and suggests she needs to check her privilege so that she does not take the ease of interacting in society for granted.

Wildcat et al. (2014) research suggested that the decolonisation process must involve an education fostered through Indigenous intelligence. The facilitation of Learning on Country professional development sessions informed by Wurundjeri Traditional Owners has encouraged educators to reconsider their connection to Wurundjeri Country through an Indigenous lens. Further, Datta (2018) added that decolonisation is a constant process of self-reflection, and people must actively seek responsibility to change. Epistemic reflection is the process used by an individual to evaluate how they have established their beliefs and cognitive systems about knowledge and knowing (Pintrich, 2002) and how different perspectives can better inform these understandings. Suppose educators need to reflect on their epistemic knowledge in the decolonisation process; in that case, they will need to disrupt their epistemic standpoints so that they do not continue the displacement, loss of Indigenous knowledges, economic inequality and sustained oppression in Indigenous communities (Datta, 2018) due to settler-colonial structures of power.

Organ Pipes National Park

As with the first Learning on Country professional development session, the researcher wanted to select a place on Country that was in an urbanised environment to show teachers that you do not have to travel far to immerse yourself in Country. The second professional development session was therefore held on Wurundjeri Country at the Organ Pipes National Park, 20 kilometres northwest of Melbourne's CBD. The national park is renowned for its imposing basalt rock formations that tower over the river below, resembling organ pipes. The basalt columns were formed over two million years ago by the cooling and cracking of lava.

Undertaking research for the second professional development session proved difficult because there needed to be more local Traditional Owner or Indigenous knowledge about the significance of the National Park. Fortunately, I was afforded knowledge of this Country from the Traditional Owners focus group, who gave their time and expertise throughout the project. Further to the generosity of the Traditional Owners focus group, I would be joined on Country for the second professional development session by two other Indigenous experts. Both are accomplished in their professions as archaeologists and ecologists, although the power and knowledge they shared during the session came from their experiences as strong Indigenous people. Their insights further helped highlight that a full articulation of Country needs to be understood through land, waterways and sky. We were also joined by Adam, a settler-

educator and founder of Eco Explorers (a forest school initiative that has been delivering bush programs to students for many years). Adam has acquired much knowledge of native foods, plants and medicines from Traditional Owners and has been motivated to share this appreciation with his students.

The second professional development session was pleasing to watch unfold because the presenters could complement each other's knowledge. For example, when Maddison and Jess were talking about their milky way creation story, they shared whom they had learned the story from, discussed the similarities and differences of their creation stories, and considered what lessons could be gained from understanding their stories. Unlike the first professional development session, the Organ Pipes session was less formal. The presenters and participants spent two hours yarning about Country and colonialism's educational implications before finishing with practical suggestions.

To help ground the participants, the Dreamtime story of Bunjil, the Eagle, and Waa, the crow, was shared at the top of the hill. Elements of this story helped to articulate the way Indigenous people believe the landscapes and waterways around the national park were made and cared for. Coupled with a scientific understanding of the Organ Pipes, participants reflected on how their understanding of the national park had been informed by two different but complementary views. Next, I recounted one of the Indigenous experts' explanations of the significance of Dreamtime stories and why they are essential. Maddison, an Indigenous archaeologist, stressed that Dreamtime stories tell you about Country and the values they keep. She then explained that Indigenous Dreamtime stories often assist Western understandings of places and that science is trying to catch up to what Indigenous people already knew before, citing the examples of Hobsons Bay and Budj Bim. Finally, Maddison related Dreamtime stories—including stories of people returning home from war—through a Western framework and explained them such that they were intimate and easy to recall.

From the top of the hill, the participants and presenters made their way to the Organ Pipes, where we would yarn and share knowledge for the next 90 minutes. It was noted as we stopped that Country was present and speaking to us. The crows and other birds sang out to the group, the leaves rustled in the gentle breeze, the river moved gently, and the rain fell softly. Country had a calming presence. The conversation picked up from the previous Bunjil story as we embraced the surroundings and discussed how educators could introduce some of these topical ideas into their classrooms. Books such as Bruce Pacoe's *Young Dark Emu* were suggested as appropriate resources students could interreact with to gain a better understanding of the way Indigenous people cared for land, used landmarks as guides or borders and facilitated discussion of time being circular, not linear.

Some participants displayed outrage, citing insufficient Indigenous knowledge in the curriculum, which should be further embedded to ensure a more significant interaction. It was their opinion that the CCPs were tokenistic. With the curriculum already overwhelmed by content, it took much work to teach Indigenous content respectfully due to time constraints and a lack of resources.

In disbelief with how curriculum enacts and maintains power, one of the teachers added that their perspective on the curriculum had changed and that she would make a concerted effort to embed an understanding of land into each lesson. The other important discussion point teachers engaged with was the concept of Aboriginal Joy, which can be used to overcome default positions of deficit discourse when teaching Indigenous knowledges. The conversation discussed how teachers might teach Indigenous wellbeing and self-determination in a culturally safe way.

As the session ended, we made our way up the hill where Adam would rest at different stops to talk about native foods and medicine and share his insights about his journey of learning Indigenous knowledges as a settler teacher. Adam has been fortunate enough to learn wisdom from Traditional Owners over the years, and his advice to teacher participants was simple and direct. He encouraged teachers to connect with local Indigenous people and, if this is unachievable, to use many credible sources and acknowledge where their knowledge has come from. Lastly, Adam stressed that when working with Traditional Owners, you cannot just ask for their expertise because it is sacred and has been earnt through different life milestones. He said it is critical to build trust with Indigenous people and wait for the information to be shared with you. As an Indigenous person observing how Adam shared advice with his non-Indigenous teacher colleagues, there appeared to be power in his parting wisdom. It was evident he was sharing knowledge that had been given to him through relationships he had developed over time, and he seemed very grateful to have been given that knowledge. Adam modelled the advice he gave the teachers immediately through his demonstrations and by sharing information about vegetation such as kangaroo apple, bush soap, headache vine and other plants.

Teachers: Reflecting on Professional Development and Improving Their Pedagogy

In my initial conversations with the participant teachers, they all showed interest in learning more about Indigenous perspectives. In addition, each was enthusiastic about improving their confidence to teach Indigenous knowledges as well as establishing relationships with Traditional Owners as emphasised by Sally's thought:

> I'm hoping then that I can come away feeling a bit more confident sharing this with my students. I want to know more about the local area and how Aboriginal people connected in the past and the present. (Sally, Interview 1)

When participants were asked how they felt the professional development sessions went and what implications this may have for their pedagogical approach when embedding Indigenous knowledges, the responses were positive overall as highlighted by Annie's quote:

> I would [recommend the professional development sessions] because as a white female going through uni or going straight into a job, not knowing much history of what has happened and trying to learn from Sorry Day, NAIDOC [National Aboriginal and Islander Day of Celebration week], it's not enough. And I think that the information I'm getting from you and the other speakers is helping me understand where we're at and how much work we still need to do to try and make amends. But it's also helping me know that it's never too late to learn. But I want our kids to know this from a young age so that they don't become oblivious until they're almost 40. But yeah, I would highly recommend it to colleagues. (Annie, Interview 3)

Annie's response highlights her disappointment in having progressed through school and tertiary education without learning about Indigenous history and cultures. This issue was experienced by all the teacher participants. However, despite Annie's disappointment, there was a sense of ambition to return to the classroom and share the knowledges she and other participants had been interacting with. Further, participant teachers saw the value of undertaking professional development sessions on Country and understanding contemporary Indigenous connections to Country as vital. This is depicted through Sally's and Andrew's quotes:

> I find it valuable to be in the field and have real-world experiences. I enjoy meeting other teachers as well and meeting you. And I guess I enjoyed being immersed in Indigenous history and culture. (Sally, Interview 3)

> The PD [professional development session] solidified what I've been reading over the last couple of years, which is excellent. I also like hearing about the contemporary Indigenous perspectives and how that's changed over the years … I probably haven't looked at it so much from that contemporary perspective. (Andrew, Interview 3)

As well as hearing about the positive impacts the professional development sessions have had on participant teachers, it was also pleasing to listen to how they considered engaging the Indigenous experts from the project and building their relationships:

> I'd love to get together with those girls again and have them come out and talk about their local knowledge, like the person from Yorta Yorta Country. I'm very much about going and finding someone who has intimate knowledge of a topic rather than people

> who might have studied about it or whatever; you must go to the source. The experts were good at adding little bits of knowledge to complement what others were saying, enriching what we were learning. (Mary, Interview 3)

Further, their peers encouraged participant teachers to hear about their successes at their schools and how they could adopt similar approaches when embedding Indigenous knowledges. There appeared to be power in having teachers share their lived experiences and how they have embedded Indigenous perspectives into the authorised structures of the school, such as the CCPs:

> I think it's cool to hear how other teachers will embed it because we could potentially do it in a similar way and share resources. Or they could go, 'oh, this is what they're doing in their faculty'. And I'll take it back to our faculty and say, 'hey are you doing this in humanities? What do you think?' (Annie, Interview 3)

Consideration for peer support and encouragement was an element of this research project. Participant teachers were paired up with someone else from their school so that they could share the experiences of the professional development session with someone they knew. The part of peer support I should have accounted for was how the teachers from their respective schools might share what worked well for them when embedding Indigenous content. As a settler-educator Adam (from the second development session) reminded the participant teachers, there is power in how teachers from different schools share ideas and resources, as reflected in Annie's observations above. She further stated:

> I just feel like getting them out there is so much more engaging, and they're more likely to remember it and care more. That's why I think all this stuff that you're teaching me I can impart onto our 164 kids every year, and then that's 164 families that know more and can be more empathetic and more understanding of the situation. (Annie, Interview 3)

Amy's reflections suggest that the professional development sessions have helped overcome apprehension about teaching Indigenous knowledges. She shows enthusiasm for taking a Learning on Country by taking the students outside the classroom to conduct lessons about the environment because she believes students will connect more with this approach. By using the outdoors, Annie feels she is better placed to teach the 164 students she has direct contact with and envisages this will extend positively into her student's homes.

> we've built on top of all these beautiful, unique historical sites and places with a lot of significance. And, interestingly, it's not just landmarks. It's not just the famous places, we know that this has happened everywhere in Australia. (Sally, Interview 3)

Sally's considerations complement Annie's thoughts as they suggest she has epistemically reflected and is now aware that Country is significant to Indigenous people even in the most

urbanised places in Australia. Annie and Sally are experienced teachers who have been alerted to pervasive operations of settler colonialism but are trying to decolonise their teaching practices by embedding land-based approaches.

There are several reasons to justify guiding non-Indigenous teachers through two Learning on Country professional development sessions. One of the research project outcomes is to help educators understand that they are always on Country, even in the densest urban localities. Settler-teachers must be given the time and space to reflect on their practice, epistemological standpoint, and how they will use the Country concept to contest settler colonialism. With the help of the Traditional Owners focus group, the two professional development sessions have sought to help teachers understand their role in disrupting settler-colonial narratives and contribute to the resurgence and visibility of Indigenous people and their connection to Country.

Similarly, Hare et al. (2020) investigated training teachers' contemplations on the education system's colonial connection to Indigenous histories and Country. The first professional development session utilised the University of Melbourne campus to uncover settler colonialism in educational spaces by emphasising strategies of Indigenous erasure (Calderon, 2018) so that teacher participants could reflect on their practices.

It was essential to have the first professional development session at the university, given the institution's role in colonisation. The university has used different strategies to embed itself into the landscape while contributing to the project of Indigenous people's erasure. The assistance of Wurundjeri knowledge of Country, history, spiritualism and values has further problematised the University of Melbourne. The Traditional Owners were able to help participant teachers see Country through an Indigenous lens and illustrate how the river red gum trees and the eel migration patterns hold important cultural knowledge. The teachers also reflected on how the university has a reputation for being righteous as it provides opportunities for anyone willing to put in the hard work. Further critique and information around the contributions the university has made to the eugenics movement and the housing of over 1,600 Indigenous remains (Murray Black collection[9]), the participant teachers were once again in disbelief that they were not across this information and the treatment of Indigenous people. Having Traditional Owners inform and help deliver the first professional development meant the participant teachers were able to participate in truth-telling

[9] The Murray Black Collection was the largest collection of Indigenous Australian remains, comprised of approximately 800 individuals from the Maraura, Kureinji, Tati-tati, and Wati Wati peoples across five burial sites along the New South Wales side of the Murray River (Russell, 2010). This collection was housed in the Medical School before repatriation work began in the 1980s.

opportunities that assisted in critiquing their epistemic knowledge. As educators, it's important to examine the colonial influences on educational spaces and explore how they can be used as opportunities for inquiry. We should also acknowledge and respond to the resurgence of Indigenous knowledge, stories, and histories that have been suppressed by past and current campus land developments.

For the first professional development session, the goal was to allow participant teachers to safely engage in a learning environment that used an urban education institution with which they were familiar so that they could reflect on Indigenous visibility through history, culture and Country. Andrew shares:

> I think so often, especially on Outdoor Ed camps and excursions, we can go to some pretty incredible places. And it's so easy just to; you can easily go somewhere, go for an hour walk and come back, and sort of getting nothing out of it. But I think it's important, especially being with a group to stop and pause, listen to the sounds, what can you hear? What can you smell? What can you see, using your senses to really listen to Country and just taking a moment to pause? (Andrew, Interview 2)

Reflecting on the first Learning on Country professional development session, Andrew has started to contend with how he can improve his lessons by pausing and tuning into Country using his senses. By asking his future students to connect to Country using their senses, Andrew will be encouraging them to view his lessons through a decolonial and Indigenous lens that will assist with informing holistic understandings of the places they inhabit. Unfortunately, the curriculum taught in the confines of the classroom is limiting in that it does not encourage the use of all the senses, innovation, or an appetite to act on local issues affecting the community.

Educators with the confidence and capacity to embed Learning on Country approaches through CCPs must still face the dilemma of deciphering understandings relating to Country and land. For Maxwell et al. (2018), the contradiction in understanding the difference in the meaning of land and Country is one of the many ways Indigenous knowledges are whitewashed and presented to students in a mundane way to fit into the standardised curriculum. However, as Andrew's observations illustrate, there is a thirst for settler-teachers to learn more about Country and embed this knowledge into their teaching:

> I think the more I can learn, the more I can then pass it on to students. And I think that's the most important aspect. I think it can integrate it nicely. I guess outdoor education serves as a good platform for doing it. (Andrew, Interview 1)

Once teachers gain a greater understanding of Country, they aspire to embed those learnings into their teachings, as Andrew's words suggest. However, building the capacity of settler-teachers to improve Indigenous education outcomes is further enhanced through the

transformation of current curriculum practices, and teachers are left to commodify knowledge and pedagogy for school and government mandates.

The Expectation of Traditional Owners to Share Knowledge

Although it has been pleasing to see participant teachers demonstrating a deeper engagement with the concept of Country, there were still comments about Indigenous people handing over their knowledge without acts of reciprocity:

> I didn't have a good opportunity to chat with the other presenters, so I didn't know what they could offer me. (Sally, Interview 3)
>
> I'm thinking of calling on some of my Indigenous friends more this year to help. (Annie, Interview 3)
>
> I guess I see Traditional Owners as the experts in their knowledge and how they can also share it. (Sally, Interview 1)

The expectation of Traditional Owners to hand over their intellectual and cultural knowledge does little to disrupt the power dynamics in the education system. While participants have immersed themselves in a land-based approach, a fundamental quality of this approach is to make respectful and reciprocal relationships with Traditional Owners. Annie's comments are also problematic because she states she is going to rely on an Indigenous friend to help her embed Indigenous knowledge into the curriculum. I don't believe this entails completing the necessary work required to connect with Traditional Owners. Annie's friend has cultural knowledge given to them that they may not want to share due to cultural protocols. However, if her friend is willing to share knowledge, will there be an expectation to receive this wisdom without reciprocity? Annie's focus should be to build relations with Traditional Owners so that these relationships become sustainable and live beyond her tenure at the school.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined how I have worked with Traditional Owners respectfully to develop professional development sessions for non-Indigenous teachers to build their culturally responsive pedagogy. In doing so, I have modelled for educators effective and respectful ways relationships with Traditional Owners can be built as strides are made towards building culturally responsive pedagogy. In my interaction with Traditional Owners, I have become increasingly aware that Traditional Owners want to be engaged in improving the way Indigenous knowledges are taught, and that they wish to provide guidance in increasing culturally responsive approaches for teachers. In addition, involving Traditional Owners in

every step of the process gave mob voice and autonomy, which is an essential component in the self-determining process.

Having settler-teachers be better informed and connected to Country has many benefits. These include having a greater understanding of place, a sense of ownership to care for the environment and making deeper connections with the local community. Additionally, when teachers become aware of the cultural backgrounds of the Indigenous students they teach and their innate connections to Country, they can provide opportunities for all students to engage with the teachings and be cognisant of deeper social and environmental issues affecting their communities. While having non-Indigenous teachers participate in two professional development sessions is a starting point, it is evident that teachers understand there is ongoing work to be done to embed Indigenous knowledges in the curriculum. The two professional development sessions have made teachers critique their epistemic knowledge and overcome the barriers they have identified to building relationships with Traditional Owners and embedding Indigenous knowledges. Unfortunately, due to the lack of opportunities teachers have to learn about Indigenous people and culture, participant teachers will need to source further opportunities to gain a deeper understanding of Indigenous people.

Finally, the chapter concluded with a section dedicated to hearing participant teachers' thoughts on the professional development sessions in which they participated. Obtaining teacher perspectives served several purposes. In the following two chapters, I will investigate what teachers identify as potential barriers to embedding Indigenous knowledges, and then discuss the potential opportunities associated with overcoming such barriers. Additionally, teachers will share their optimism concerning embedding what they have learned into practice; they will also reflect on ways to build on the knowledge they have acquired. Conclusively, teacher feedback is essential so the project can gauge teachers' enthusiasm for professional development sessions based on Country and better understand how these sessions might affect the ways in which teachers interact with Traditional Owners and Indigenous-related content going forward.

CHAPTER 6: NON-INDIGENOUS TEACHER'S PERCEIVED BARRIERS TO EMBEDDING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

Previously, I have acknowledged that there are many ways to address how Indigenous knowledges are taught through the Australian Curriculum. One of these methods involves increasing the cultural responsiveness of teachers by building respectful relationships with Traditional Owners. During this research project, I spoke to participant teachers about their thoughts on embedding Country-oriented curricula while providing students with opportunities to connect local and environmental issues. Teachers expressed their concerns and the perceived barriers they felt existed in embedding Indigenous knowledges. Their reflections offered insights into their current experiences as they described how they might feel better supported in the journey towards becoming culturally responsive. Overwhelmingly, teachers expressed that the teaching of Indigenous knowledge is left to very few educators within schools; this reality has deemed the task of disrupting settler-colonial power and deficit discourse surrounding Indigenous people to be complex.

This chapter is essential and offers insights into how Learning on Country professional development opportunities provide a solution to improving culturally responsive pedagogy. The chapter also highlights that teachers know they could be working more effectively to embed Indigenous knowledges. Moreover, teachers acknowledged that the professional development sessions have assisted in improving their knowledge of Country, their cultural responsiveness and their confidence to embed Indigenous knowledges within the curriculum.

NON-INDIGENOUS TEACHER'S THOUGHTS ABOUT EMBEDDING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

The preparedness of the education system to respond to the educational aspirations of Indigenous communities and their children is well documented in a paper by Anderson et al. (2022), which outlined the issues confronting Australian schools in terms of being equipped to embed Indigenous knowledges. Results revealed gaps in existing Indigenous education strategies and highlighted the need to address shortcomings in the following areas: relevant teacher knowledge, curricula content, pedagogical approaches, appropriateness of the school environment, and degrees of cultural readiness. This research project strives to better understand the effectiveness of Learning on Country professional development sessions in building the capacity of settler-educators to teach Indigenous knowledges. A significant gap

identified relates to capacity-building or teacher readiness to respond to Indigenous education.

In Australia, teachers are encouraged to embed more Indigenous content and to be well-attuned to the cultural diversity of their classrooms through different education policies such as the APST and The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration[10]. Importantly, settler-teachers must be aware of culturally responsive ways of embedding Indigenous knowledges. One reason for this is the need for more opportunities to learn about Indigenous histories and cultures through their schooling and teacher training, which is reflective of the teacher participant cohort and seemingly a far more significant problem for the teaching profession. Alarmingly, educators are not encouraged or compelled to connect appropriately with Traditional Owners when teaching Indigenous knowledges.

Policies such as the APST and The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration suggest non-Indigenous teachers are being asked to provide culturally safe classrooms and embed Indigenous knowledges without the required regulation, engagement with Indigenous communities and critical reflection to reach desired benchmarks. For teachers to contend with critical reflection, Kouri (2020) suggested teachers need to go through a process of critiquing their ethical standpoint as it intersects with the identities of their students, which has substantial implications for how students engage in the classroom. Further, epistemic reflection is needed by non-Indigenous educators so that awareness can be created concerning the knowledge Indigenous students hold and the potential benefits that may arise from being adept with such consciousness (Kouri, 2020).

To develop suitable Learning on Country professional development sessions, it was essential to understand the levels of experience teachers have with teaching Indigenous knowledges. The teachers involved in this project had a diverse range of experience, expanding from three to thirty years with subject areas that included Religious Education, Physical Education, Outdoor Education, Geography, History and Humanities. However, when teachers were asked about their experience of teaching and embedding Indigenous knowledges, there needed to be more consistency with the minimal amount of interaction they all possessed:

> I didn't have a whole lot of experience teaching it [Indigenous knowledge] prior to teaching outdoor and environmental studies in VCE [Victorian Certificate of Education]. It is sort of a big part of unit three, Outdoor Ed, where we look at Indigenous relationships with outdoor environments, prior to European settlement, and after European settlement, and sort of, I guess the sort of way that it's structured

[10] The Mparntwe declaration is the educational goals for all Australians set out by the education ministers; it sets the vision and commitment of Australian governments to improving educational outcomes.

> is, we look at the way that they perceive the outdoor environment, how they interacted with the environment, and how they impacted the environment, pre and post. And we're looking at specific Indigenous tribes. So, I guess, prior to teaching this, I didn't have much experience. A lot of it was self-educating. And doing that through a number of different resources that I could find online, in the library, and on the TV. (Andrew, Interview 1)

The participants' experiences throughout the research project primarily represent the current education workforce, whereby the required embedding of and interaction with Indigenous knowledges amounts to appallingly little or none (Harrison & Greenfield, 2011). Andrew's reflections illustrate how he has become familiar with Indigenous content through 'official' channels, such as exploring Indigenous relationships and interactions with land and early settlement. Although there is an enthusiasm to examine the relationships held with Country and colonial forces, there is no apparent desire to build genuine relationships with local Indigenous groups. Teacher participants expressed that, although they attempted to embed Indigenous content into the curriculum teaching Indigenous knowledges, it still feels like an add-on approach. Teachers added that Indigenous content is only taught for significant events throughout the year, such as National Sorry Day, Reconciliation Week and National Aboriginal and Islander Day of Celebration (NAIDOC) week. Similarly, Sally articulated the way her interests were initially generated:

> I guess it probably started when I was teaching history. And I was teaching Year 9 History for Australian History in my first year, and I was like, 'Oh, this is really interesting'. And that's, when I started looking and engaging with the curriculum and finding out what's in the curriculum. I've always had a passion for Aboriginal history and culture. (Sally, Interview 1)

Sally, therefore, explained that she learned more about teaching Indigenous knowledge through curriculum engagement, which reflects the cohort's experiences. None of the other teacher participants received any education related to Indigenous history or culture during their secondary and tertiary schooling. Sally has had less interaction and encouragement from official channels than Andrew. In addition to Sally's desire to teach Indigenous content, teacher participants expressed a desire to access further opportunities to increase their capacity to teach it well.

Research conducted by Moreton-Robinson et al. (2012) concluded that a significant number of teachers complete their training with insufficient knowledge and confidence to successfully engage Indigenous students and their families. Although there is a lack of education related to Aboriginal history, as signalled by Andrew's quote, teachers regularly face opportunities throughout their careers that prompt them to do more self-directed research to

teach and engage with Indigenous knowledges. Sourcing opportunities such as cultural competency training provided by the Leading with Strength professional learning program, which offers strength-based approaches for working with Indigenous students and their communities, is an example educators can build their capacity. As Annie noted:

> I need the knowledge, to be able to understand the messages that I'm trying to pass on. I want to know, as well, with regards to the language, how to say different things and I know Aboriginal people have preferences for words and terminology. So, you're not going to pigeonhole. But just making sure in the classroom, that I'm using the correct terminology. Like Aboriginal versus Indigenous and making sure students understand. (Annie, Interview 1)

As envisaged, the professional development sessions have given teachers the time to reflect and understand where they are situated on the continuum of teaching Indigenous knowledges confidently and respectfully. Annie's comments suggest a resolute desire to teach Indigenous knowledges as she ponders the correct terminology she will use when sharing Indigenous content. I suspect Annie's passion for teaching Indigenous content well ensures students engage positively with Indigenous knowledge so that the stereotypes and deficit discourse relating to Indigenous people and their cultures will be critiqued and quashed. Throughout this research project, Annie and other participants have thought about how they will critique deficit discourse, mainly through available resources. Andrew offers his thoughts on using subject textbooks:

> The two main resources that I've used the outdoor textbook is because they give quite a general overview of Indigenous relationships and critical practices. (Andrew, Interview 1)

Andrew's comment suggests that he uses the subject textbook because he lacks knowledge regarding Indigenous knowledges in outdoor education and how he should embed these. It seems the book helps to start initial dialogues with his students around why Indigenous knowledges are essential for initiatives such as Caring for Country. Unfortunately, teacher participants in this project are dissatisfied with the vagueness of information in the textbooks and the homogenisation of Indigenous peoples contained therein, which makes it hard to provide meaningful lessons that celebrate Indigenous history and culture. Subject-specific textbooks such as the one Angus uses to teach Outdoor Education do not explore topics of cultural practices, the importance of language, or how we can better understand Country through an Indigenous perspective. The workbooks provide minimal detail, do little to encourage curiosity, and fail to support students in guiding their learning. As well as providing shallow lessons on Indigenous people, the teachers in this project have stated that their schools have organised cultural immersions outside of Victoria.

> The term Country for me when teaching—it comes from such a paraphrased way. I often use statements that I've read online but I think it would be good for me to hear from Indigenous people. And I look forward to the walk and learning more. (Andrew, Interview 1)

As Andrew's comments imply, he has reflected on his practice as a predominantly Outdoor Education teacher, and the term Country has not been captured through a Wurundjeri perspective. Instead, it has been tweaked to satisfy settler-colonial understandings of land and negative stereotypes of Indigenous people in education that continues the ongoing project of Indigenous erasure. Still, despite the relentless nature of colonisation, Traditional Owners 'want non-Indigenous teachers to have the desire to interact and teach Indigenous knowledges well' (Traditional Owners, focus group, session 2). Concerning barriers associated with the ability of non-Indigenous educators to teach Indigenous content, there is a commonality among teachers lacking confidence and the support from school leadership to do so:

> I think there's still that little bit of hesitancy in me as a white person trying to teach about a different culture. But I still think it's important that we do it, and we try. And that we also try to consult where we can and try to bring in a Traditional Owner or an expert. Because I think if we don't try then we're only going to learn about the one thing, the one culture. (Sally, Interview 2)

Although there is hesitancy and ambivalence to teach Indigenous knowledges, there is unity among the participants to build their culturally responsive capacity to do a better job which will benefit all students.

Teacher Confidence and Apprehension in Embedding Indigenous Knowledge

There are various reasons settler-teachers hesitate to embed Indigenous knowledge in their teaching. One of the main reasons teachers need more confidence to teach Indigenous knowledges is that they need to figure out how to approach Indigenous communities; in this respect, they find it hard to connect with local Traditional Owners (AITSL, 2020). Further, research by Ma Rhea et al. (2012, p. 54) revealed that teachers are hesitant to teach Indigenous knowledges because they believe the content requires cultural awareness and sensitivity, which they need to improve. To combat teacher apprehension, Traditional Owners provide reassuring advice:

> Teachers that are nervous or fearful about the content that they're going to teach need to be assured that they're safe to teach the content. Teachers also need to provide a disclaimer that the knowledge has been given to them from a particular

> person or indicate where they've gotten their information. (Traditional Owners, focus group 1)

While Traditional Owners are happy to share knowledge, they also need to provide the language for non-Indigenous teachers when non-Indigenous teachers are sharing the knowledge that has been given to them. The use of language is crucial in forming a sense of identity. It is what makes Indigenous people unique because it conveys meaning beyond words themselves. Speaking language is empowering and provides a sense of belonging, mainly because settler colonialism has worked tirelessly to erase it from our beings. Language is essential to Indigenous people and Country because it passes on cultural knowledge and heritage (Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2022).

There is also an issue of commodifying the knowledge non-Indigenous teachers have learned from Traditional Owners and making sure teachers are returning to the question of how they are being ethically responsible for the knowledges they have inherited. In response to observations by Ma Rhea et al. (2012) regarding teacher hesitancies, the Traditional Owners focus group was firm in its position, citing that teachers are welcome to teach Indigenous knowledges. However, they must be prepared to do the groundwork and cite where they have received their knowledge from. For example, teachers need to try to immerse themselves in Indigenous environments where rallies or community events have taken place. Teachers also need to research before asking Indigenous people for help because Indigenous people need to see that teachers have endeavoured to go out and find the information before reconnecting with Indigenous people for affirmation. Sally offers her thoughts when embedding Indigenous knowledge:

> I think that's often a challenge for teachers because they're like, 'okay, I know this, how do I teach it without making it tokenistic? Without it feeling like this is a white person in front of me trying to teach a different culture'. I think that is often where teachers get held up. (Sally, Interview 1)

Sally has reflected on her apprehension, believing that the challenge comes once teachers have found knowledge and are looking for meaningful ways to deliver it without the lesson coming across as empty and void of feeling. Sally's thought process is critical because it highlights apprehension about respectfully teaching Indigenous knowledges, which is not uncommon among educators. Sally said she was able to alleviate these feelings by finding several resources that were saying similar things. Her searches would include talking to subject coordinators and peers at school, internet searches, YouTube and other television outlets like ABC or SBS for visual resources.

According to the Education Council (2015, 2019), to increase the outputs and successes in Indigenous education, schools must develop respectful partnerships with local

Indigenous communities and sustain these partnerships through continuing dialogue, engagement and reciprocal activities. The APST (Focus Areas 7.3 and 7.4, AITSL, 2014) also asks schools to connect with Traditional Owners and their communities, particularly where engagement with parents is concerned, to show that schools are willing to embed Indigenous knowledges. Unfortunately, a recent publication by AITSL (2020) highlighted teacher anxieties when embedding Indigenous content are often attributed to fear of failure to deliver meaningful lessons or that attempts to do so respectfully will be viewed as tokenistic. Teacher participants reflected on how their schools were trying to increase the visibility of Indigenous knowledges. Their responses indicated schools needed to do more, and when efforts were made, it often felt tokenistic as Annie's and Sally's quote suggests:

> I know in NAIDOC week, to me, it feels gimmicky. It's like we do it for a week, and then we kind of forget about it. And there are a few of us that have a bit of a drive. And we want to try and see that come through as many faculty areas as possible. At the moment, I don't feel like that's happening. (Annie, Interview 1)
>
> I feel like they're (CCPs) kind of generic and not enough resources available to be honest. I feel like maybe it's a bit tokenistic by the Department of Education. Not enough is being done to support teachers to feel confident to teach that. (Sally, Interview 2)

Settler-teachers often need to work on undertaking professional development in Indigenous education. As Annie's comments show, past training is yet to give teachers the confidence to successfully teach Indigenous content because it has been delivered in a tokenistic way. Further, when trying to understand teachers' uncertainties about embedding the AITSL Focus Areas 1.4 and 2.4, a study by Ma Rhea et al. (2012) gave additional voice to teacher resistance. The study suggested that 'professional development opportunities are patchy, ad hoc and lacking in cohesiveness' (Ma Rhea et al., 2012, p. 58).

Paired with the AITSL policy, the Australian Curriculum is possibly the most likely document to assist teachers in delivering Focus Areas 1.4 and 2.4, so there is a need to have professional development that builds the capacity of teachers to respectfully interact with Country, Indigenous cultures and histories (Booth, 2014). The scope of addressing teacher competency to embed Indigenous content needs to be far greater than capturing teachers in training. To build the capacity of teachers to embed Indigenous knowledges, consideration must be given to how recent teachers have graduated, as this might determine the amount of training they have already received. Another issue that must be considered is how the sector will encourage well-established, time-poor, and under-resourced professionals to build their capacity to teach Indigenous knowledges. Mary offers her thoughts about teacher training of Indigenous knowledge:

> There is nothing in teacher training. And that's the problem, people come out ignorant. And they come out with even the wrong knowledge for what they've got in terms of classroom and whatever. If you don't sow the seed in teacher training, then it's not going to be something that they're going to pursue in any real meaningful way within the context of what they're teaching. Because there's a disconnect. But when it's part of your training, and if it's put in such a way, the learning that takes place is about how would you be integrating this into your knowledge-based areas that you're going to be looking at. And I think that would be the important thing. (Mary, Interview 1)

Mary's reflections on teacher training are crucial because capacity-building courses can often present helpful information but neglect to provide guidance about embedding them into teaching practice. It appears Mary (Interview 1) presents herself as a victim of poor educational opportunities. I am curious whether any of the teacher participants have questioned why their parents did not encourage them to learn about Indigenous history, culture and perspectives. Practical implications such as identifying how to use the CCPs or locating appropriate resources to teach Indigenous content have been essential to the Learning on Country professional development sessions. As a result, teachers could leave the training feeling empowered to pass on the knowledge they have acquired in a culturally safe and respectful way. Mary's observations are also illuminating because they highlight that when she was being educated, teacher training largely overlooked Indigenous knowledges and only minute improvements have been made in this area.

Although most teachers are respectful in their pedagogy, comprehending and poorly delivering complex topics related to cultural protocols, nuances and priorities can have ill effects when working towards a culturally safe environment. This can lead to fear and guilt of offending students, limiting future teaching of Indigenous knowledges. Additionally, with the influx of teacher resources to support the embedding of Indigenous knowledges, teachers are frequently anxious to differentiate between the quality of these resources:

> I wouldn't say I'm 100 per cent confident, but I'm a lot more confident in the way I speak about Indigenous culture. And obviously, I'll preface it by saying, you know, I'm a white woman, and I've learned this, but I'm a lot more confident in what I have learned to be able to pass that information on to students and be happier with the way that I say it to. (Annie, Interview 1)

> I do try to involve First Nations voices however I can into that, whether it's videos or websites or whatever, because I'm a white person, and I don't have the personal experiences to sort of share. (Sally, Interview 1)

Annie and Sally still had reservations about teaching Indigenous knowledges after the first professional development session because they identified themselves as 'white' (non-Indigenous) and, consequently, did not have much experience with Indigenous communities. There is, however, a sense of comfortability in prefacing what they are about to teach with acknowledging from where they have acquired their knowledge and by using many resources to validify the knowledge they are sharing. To further assist in embedding Indigenous knowledges, the participant teachers identified school leadership as a barrier or enabler to doing so:

> I haven't seen it (the use of CCPs) when attending the teaching and learning meetings with the heads of faculty, which is a shame because I can see so much value in using CCPs. (Annie, Interview 2)

Annie's comment about leadership is essential because it signifies that the embedding of Indigenous knowledges is not being discussed in high-level meetings at her school. Suppose there is no expectation of teachers from school leaders to interact with the CCPs and embed Indigenous knowledge; in that case, the likelihood of teachers embedding Indigenous content is very low. There is an awareness on Annie's behalf that the conversations about Indigenous content are not occurring. At what point, though, does she speak up and suggest that the need to embed more Indigenous knowledges should become a topic of discussion at such meetings? Here, the responsibility to talk about Indigenous knowledge is not given the respect needed to see an improvement. It calls for someone to take it upon themselves to raise it as an agenda item at meetings.

When asked how to overcome apprehension about teaching Indigenous knowledge, Sally could articulate her thought process on how she would typically approach teaching content she was unfamiliar with and how the professional development sessions helped achieve this:

> sometimes I do feel like maybe I'm not the right person, because I'm not Aboriginal. I think if you are doing it with the right intentions that's a good place to start. Understanding it's not necessarily going to be perfect and that's okay … so the PDs [professional development sessions] have given me the confidence to engage Traditional Owners and embed Indigenous perspectives. (Sally, Interview 1)

Again, Sally has suggested that being non-Indigenous is a barrier to teaching Indigenous knowledges. However, her reflections suggest that having the input of Traditional Owners throughout the project has been a powerful tool in helping her overcome anxieties about interacting with Indigenous content; she is open about not being the expert and approaches the lessons with good intentions. Though, having the right intentions can be dangerous if the

wisdom of Indigenous people is not drawn on because having the right intentions does not mean you are teaching Indigenous knowledges well.

> When you put the respectful element into the conversation, people can better grasp Aboriginal values. That respect element is essential and has been drummed into us repetitively thing. Like you always had to be respectful, or you were considered disrespectful. (Traditional Owners, focus group 2)

The above comment is vindicating and something I could identify with growing up, as my Elders always deliberated on the value of respect and knowing your place in the cultural hierarchy. Additionally, the comment made me reflect on how respect and deep listening were instilled in me from an early age, and that if you did not follow the protocol, you were scolded or met with some form of punishment.

The value of respect has been a repeated topic for the Traditional Owners focus group and is something teachers can employ when engaging with Indigenous knowledges. When learning about and embedding Indigenous knowledges, teachers should practise deep listening and acknowledge that they are not the holders of all knowledge. To promote learning, teachers can provide a constructivist environment for their students by encouraging them to explore and interact with Indigenous content on a deeper level. Alleviating teacher anxieties and receiving affirmation from Indigenous communities to respectfully teach and embed Indigenous knowledges could further be assisted with the support of school leaders.

Lack of Directive From School Leadership to Teach Indigenous Knowledge

The anxieties of educators are more likely to subside when school leadership are direct about the cultural changes that need to occur. Without clear instructions and a desire to embed Indigenous content from school leaders, professional development providers have little reason to develop capacity-building experiences to support this work. A lack of agreement among leadership for educators about the need to embed Indigenous knowledges and insufficient resources to support this work means settler-colonial education, and the power it keeps, will be maintained (Ma Rhea et al., 2012). Effective and strong leadership is a critical determinant in producing a supportive education environment as this directs and guides the elements needed to facilitate Indigenous educational success (Ockenden, 2014; Purdie & Wilkinson, 2008).

Educators need school leaders who are willing to invest in building the capacity of teachers so that they can educate well and cater for diversity in the classroom. In addition, school leaders must support educators in keeping their credentials current to improve their pedagogy (Timperley, 2010). Accordingly, leadership must also be well-informed of current

best practices through professional development and literature reviews so that their responses improve and advise the direction of the school. Finally, leaders need to use research to improve their processes and inform decision-making to affect change and continue this process until it becomes habitual (Earl & Katz, 2006). Below are two quotations from teachers from different schools about whether they feel supported by school leaders in embedding Indigenous knowledges:

> The principal loves what I'm doing. And he wants to see more of it. Knowing my previous principal and the slowness that I had to move at—I'm going to say it's such a breath of fresh air to have my principal saying go with it. And the fact that we're now planning our second Indigenous immersion, it's a part of our school life now. (Mary, Interview 2)
>
> Probably not, if we're being honest. It is something that we touch on (Indigenous content). And when we're looking at our curriculum in other subjects, I guess it is an aspect if you can include it, you know, make sure you include it. However, it's not something that is probably explicitly told. And I think if it had not been for Outdoor Ed education, I probably wouldn't have the knowledge that I do. (Andrew, Interview 1)

There is a supportive approach from school leadership at Mary's school to embed Indigenous knowledges. However, Andrew feels that leadership at his school does not directly mandate their teachers to include Indigenous knowledges. For instance, when attending subject area meetings, Andrews believes there is no consciousness to include Indigenous content or how such knowledge could amplify the placed-based pedagogy they are expected to model. However, Mary (Interview 1) feels she has the support to embed Indigenous content, which positively affects her desire despite her school trying to send four teachers and a group of students to a remote location in Queensland organised through the Red Earth Organisation. While effort and learning with Indigenous people are occurring on Country, this is not occurring on Wurundjeri Country, where Mary's school is based. One of the core tenants of land-based approaches is establishing relationships with Traditional Owners where the school is based and raising student awareness for the local community and environmental lessons. The engagement with Red Earth takes away the apprehension of meeting Traditional Owners. Unfortunately, Red Earth appears to have established itself in northern Australia, where there is an attached stigma that only 'real' Indigenous people live in the north or remote parts of Australia. Mary (Interview 1) and her school need to challenge themselves to create partnerships with Wurundjeri people so that relationships and teachings are local. In establishing these relationships, the school is inevitably working towards becoming better-versed in culturally responsive pedagogy as well as teaching their students that Indigenous people reside in their local areas and have a wealth of knowledge to contribute. Reflecting on

Andrew's observations once more, he would not have given Indigenous knowledges a second thought had it not been for relevant interactions through his subject area and the interface of the CCPs.

The literature concerned with school leadership and creating change within the school environment suggests there are only sometimes conclusive pathways to facilitating systematic revision. However, current data should postulate sufficient awareness to inform leaders to take the best action (Wilkinson et al., 2014). Following the same line of thought, when thinking about student outcomes, educators should also be informed by current evidence rather than homogenising student cohorts by relying on indicators of student rankings or capabilities as the current Australian Curriculum does (Wilkinson et al., 2014).

Recent research observing educational leadership practices related to Indigenous education objectives highlights that when respectful partnerships are established with teachers, community and parents, the experience of schooling for all students improves; students feel a sense of belonging and enjoy the familiarity of their classroom, and communities are strengthened (Flückiger et al., 2012; Frawley & Fasoli, 2012; Kamara, 2009).

Minimal Capacity-Building Opportunities For Teachers

Although the teacher participants are showing enthusiasm to build their capacity to teach Indigenous knowledges and build relationships with Traditional Owners, there has been a recurring theme of reliance on teaching resources related to international or Indigenous clans who are not Wurundjeri. For example, Annie and Sally have relied on international examples to amplify the learnings they are trying to impart to their students:

> We've been looking at the Declaration of Human Rights. I think I mentioned that to you. And so we're doing a comparison. Why do you think the Indigenous community needs their own set of declarations, their own set of rights on top of basic human rights? (Annie, Interview 1)
>
> Sometimes I might talk about First Nations peoples with other countries, and then I'll try to then draw some parallels and that sort of thing, just to kind of get the students sort of thinking about it as well. (Sally, Interview 1)

Teacher participants have mentioned they are reluctant to interact with and teach Indigenous knowledges because they have struggled to find resources and pedagogical strategies related to Traditional Owners, and they need the relationships with Indigenous people to leverage. Without the relationships or appropriate resources, teachers are likely to draw on the knowledges of other First Nations people to draw parallels to Wurundjeri people.

The message coming through firmly in participant teacher responses is the need for more professional development opportunities to build the capacity and confidence to teach Indigenous knowledges. Lampert's (2012) research argued that interaction with Indigenous history and culture through teacher training is needed. However, more work is required to make teachers culturally competent to deliver Indigenous content and ensure Indigenous students feel safe. Compounding the issues of inadequate professional development sessions related to Indigenous knowledges, as well as a lack of best practice examples and illustrations of respectful interactions with Indigenous communities, is the fact that there exists a missed opportunity to upskill the teaching workforce, particularly when teachers gain experience in the classroom (M. Bishop et al., 2021; Lowe et al., 2020).

To help alleviate educators' inexperience with teaching Indigenous knowledges, teachers must build meaningful relationships with local Indigenous Traditional Owners to contemplate those interactions and inform their future pedagogical practice (Marom & Rattray, 2019). In addition, recent research by Davidson (2018) and Toulouse (2018) suggests that teacher education must prioritise teaching Indigenous knowledges and connect these lessons to the curriculum so that educators are cognisant of an Indigenous worldview; this 'opens up space within the academy and schools to conceptualise education differently' (Madden, 2015, p. 4).

Research by Madden (2015) sought to understand the dominant pedagogical pathways settler-educators use to engage in Indigenous education, suggesting that settler-teachers do not regularly see themselves as keepers of knowledge. Even when settler-teachers feel self-assured in their capacity to deliver and engage Indigenous knowledges, Gorecki and Doyle-Jones (2021) asserted that the best practice for engaging with Indigenous knowledges is seeking and relying on the relationships of Traditional Owners and Indigenous people from the local community. Of course, reliance on and leveraging relationships with Traditional Owners should be an ongoing partnership based on respect and reciprocity (H. McGregor & Marker, 2018). Unfortunately, encouraging schools and educators to build relationships with Traditional Owners presents capacity issues due to the Traditional Owners in Naarm working in the education industry. This is an essential consideration because exposing students to learnings on Country and land-based approaches have proven beneficial for all students. Students deserve to have these experiences at school. Innovation and strategic thinking are needed to help cater for this application. Taking the learnings from this research project, there is a willingness and consciousness to work collaboratively with Indigenous experts (and Traditional Owner groups and organisations) to contribute to the broader movements of decolonisation, Indigenous resistance and resurgence, and culturally responsive education efforts (Gorecki & Doyle-Jones, 2021).

> All my learning has come from self-education. I'm excited to do this. Because I feel like when I'm teaching somebody else's culture I want to be reassured I'm doing it justice or a good enough job. So yeah, I'm keen to learn more. (Andrew, Interview 1)

Andrew's experience with Indigenous knowledges has been minimal to date. However, there is an overwhelming desire to build on his self-directed education, connect with Traditional Owners, and embed Indigenous knowledges in a culturally safe and respectful way. Unfortunately, the reality for Andrew and other teachers striving to improve their knowledge is that this has come through self-directed education. To help participant teachers with their endeavours to embed Indigenous knowledges, there needs to be a personal exercise of epistemic reflection to understand how teachers have come to understand the world. Andrew has used the word 'culture' above to mean Indigenous knowledge, which suggests there is work to be done with teachers around what terminology is appropriate and the acceptable Indigenous knowledges that non-Indigenous teachers can teach because teaching 'culture' is not their responsibility.

Lack of Knowledge to Embed Indigenous Knowledge

To reform the current curriculum, the education system needs to be assessed in its entirety so that the operations of Eurocentric education can be fully understood and deliberate strategies employed to disrupt a system that is ignorant of many worldviews (Guenther et al., 2020). To disrupt an oppressive education system, teachers must reflect on their pedagogical practice to fully appreciate their responsibility for improving the education system. They also need to be supported to attend appropriate professional development sessions to build their capacity to embed Indigenous knowledges. As one of the teacher participants noted:

> I don't think we've ever had anyone come to the college and give us PD [professional development] on much Indigenous content. If we have, nothing springs to mind at the moment. Rather than saying we're doing a professional development day, and this is happening, we have had people come and give a Welcome to Country, smoking ceremonies, and didgeridoo players. (Annie, Interview 2)
>
> My tertiary studies initially had absolutely nothing. Not even in the theory side or the practical component. It wasn't until I probably did my Grad Certificate in RE [Religious Education] that I actually did much research on Indigenous spirituality. (Mary, Interview 1)

The above comments show that teachers must receive capacity-building opportunities through teacher training or professional development sessions once in the workforce. Current

strategies embedded within AITSL and the Australian Curriculum encourage teachers to interact with Indigenous content in the education sector. However, this is not realised when school leaders do not drive this work and professional development opportunities are limited. Further, Mary's experience is a commonality felt across the sector with teachers receiving inadequate education about Indigenous cultures and histories, a barrier that needs addressing. Training teachers are not prepared to teach Indigenous knowledges. When qualified and in the workforce, they are expected to follow a standardised curriculum without room for educators to pursue their interests or build their capacities.

Andrew criticises the minimal education he received in his teacher training and believes he would have benefited more from learning how to build relationships with Indigenous communities. Instead, he has had to rely on online resources to embed Indigenous knowledges:

> I guess through a Masters Course, we looked at Indigenous education from a Koorie Curriculum aspect, and probably not so much from a relationship aspect. Through school, we had very little, if I'm being honest. In terms of professional development, a lot of it has been through reading online. (Andrew, Interview 1)

If Andrew's teacher training had allowed opportunities to build respectful relationships with Traditional Owners, then, when met with vague descriptors about how to embed Indigenous knowledges in his Outdoor Education planning, he could have reached out to Indigenous people for assistance in developing meaningful and culturally appropriate lessons. Instead, Andrew is left to decide whether to embed shallow lessons inclusive of Indigenous knowledges or aimlessly explore other ways to incorporate Indigenous perspectives into his Outdoor Education lessons.

> thinking about the ways we measure and how we, as teachers, we're taught, we're told to measure and track progress. And we're told to measure and test and see if they're [students] improving, and there's lots of emphasis on those things. And at the same time, I've never placed a whole lot of emphasis on it. I don't think they're the be-all and end-all of education. I think that that's just one element of education. But it just reminded me that there is a lot more to education and to teaching than measuring. (Sally, Interview 2)

Sally's reflections also clarify how Indigenous knowledge is neglected in the education system, mainly when testing students' knowledge. Her comments are noteworthy because she speaks from a place of experience and reflects on her complicity in a system fixated on simplistic tests that measure specific knowledge or skill. Reflecting on how she has tested students, she knows that this is not the only way to develop knowledge production. Outstanding academic success seems to be more about how students memorise knowledge. Instead, knowledge acquisition

should be assessed on how specific knowledge might be applied to improve societal, communal or environmental causes. Although Sally has maintained the status quo of using tests to measure knowledge and skill development in students, a part of her has seemingly been critical of the outcomes of such tests. Sally and other teacher participants in this research project ask critical questions about the purpose of the Australian Curriculum and imagine a curriculum with greater flexibility and less rigid testing agendas.

TEACHERS NEED HELP TO MAKE INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE RELEVANT

Even with teachers being appropriately equipped to teach Indigenous content through the CCPs, conflicting ideologies about land and Country, for example, are indicative of the many 'concerning ways Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, cultures and histories are liable to be deconstructed, reconstructed and metamorphosed to fit into the curriculum' (Maxwell et al., 2018, p. 172).

> Yeah, I think we are we know that they're there [CCPs]. But I feel like a lot of teachers and myself included, sometimes seeing them as a bit of a tick the box, where it's not like you must do it, it's sort of okay, like, if I can. And I think that's where it might get lost a little bit. Which is a bit of a shame. I think about that. Yeah, like knowing that it's there. And yeah, I guess because it is difficult. It's not its own subject and then trying to incorporate it but not trying to incorporate it in a tokenistic way. (Andrew, Interview 3)

The curriculum maintains its stronghold of sustaining settler-colonial dominance when the government does not support embedding Indigenous knowledges. However, as Andrew has suggested, the CCPs can be challenging to navigate and feel tokenistic. However, with the appropriate professional development opportunities, the CCPs present a possibility to teach Indigenous knowledges, particularly if teachers feel empowered to teach them (Burnett et al., 2013).

When education is concerned with the directive to make students better citizens in line with the current outcomes of the Mpartnwe Declaration, schooling is involved in the relentless project of Indigenous erasure. To disrupt the ongoing project of erasure, teachers must be able to reflect on their epistemic knowledge and how they are complicit in maintaining and upkeeping the role of a Eurocentric curriculum. To truly reflect on their standpoints and understandings of the world, teachers must become better informed about conflicting ideologies of land, Country and sovereignty; this will help educators critically analyse their pedagogical practice (Epstein, 2010). The ignorance and silence perpetuated by

the settler-colonial curriculum are standard features of settler society that can be disrupted by educators willing to embed a land-based approach to learning (Brayboy, 2005 & Levstik, 2000).

> I think I'm not quite sure how to put it into a classroom context, yet I'm still trying to work out how best to incorporate what I'm learning, in terms of having a set curriculum for many subjects and not having the flexibility. (Annie, Interview 2)

As Annie's comments demonstrate, many resources are designed to help embed Indigenous knowledges. However, a dilemma remains in terms of making Indigenous knowledges fit into such a rigid and confined curriculum, one that does not cater for innovation or other worldviews.

Embedding Learning on Country pedagogy forms the platform needed to assist teachers in imagining the possibilities of decolonisation, whereby the curriculum is no longer confined to a one-knowledge system and caters for the diversity now reflected in society (McKnight, 2016).

> My colleague and I went back, and we have got two [separate] coordinators next year, and I had spoken to one of them, and she had spoken to the other one. We did not know that we were doing it. But we went in and we said, we need to be teaching Country in week one of term one. (Amy, Interview 2)

There was a sense of enthusiasm to embed Indigenous knowledges in future lessons from teacher participants on completion of the first professional development session. However, the real challenge now lies with maintaining interest and finding opportunities in the curriculum that deliberate on the concepts of Country when delivering Indigenous knowledges. In addition, teachers need to build on their enthusiasm to teach Indigenous knowledges by building relationships with Traditional Owners; this will enable students to receive local knowledge that appreciates efforts to connect with Country and supports Indigenous perspectives.

Embedding Indigenous Knowledge Left to a Few Educators

There are many ways to improve the way Indigenous content is taught in schools and to ensure Indigenous students feel culturally safe in the classroom. A recent study by AITSL (2020) investigated Indigenous cultural competency in the Australian teaching workforce, the barriers to Indigenous student success, and the teaching practices that potentially embedded Indigenous knowledges within the classroom. Educators who identify leadership within schools as an essential factor for building a culturally competent teaching workforce were found to be of particular importance, especially when/if leadership does not articulate or drive the changes necessary to celebrate cultural diversity.

Without the necessary support from schools, leaders suggest cultural competency is not regarded as a collective concern by all educators, and this, in turn, allows resistance from other staff members to continue. Educators in settings with few to no Indigenous students find it exceptionally difficult when met with teacher apathy, reluctance and resistance. Mary's observations presented below are reflected throughout the cohort of participant teachers who believe time constraints are one of the most significant issues when teaching Indigenous knowledge. Teachers feel the curriculum is too rigid and does not allow for student-guided learning, and there is not enough time to invest in building individual capacity.

> Some people try to teach it well but feel they don't have the background knowledge. So, you try to give them as many resources as possible. But then there's a problem with time restrictions—do they give themselves time to look at this information? Then you have other people that believe it's just teaching, they're not really investing in their own teaching and their own learning. It's just let's get through the curriculum. (Mary, Interview 3)

Teaching Indigenous knowledges not only requires settler-teachers to be across the content they are trying to teach but also requires them to be culturally competent while teaching. According to AITSL (2022), being culturally competent and able to embed Indigenous knowledges involves collaboration. However, many teachers in the research affirmed they were unwilling to embrace the unfamiliarity and uncomfortable feeling when embracing other worldviews (AITSL, 2022). Educators would rather avoid deploying other worldviews and are reluctant to shift themselves epistemically for fear of failure or moving out of their comfort zones. Conversely, for those educators willing to learn, grow and embrace different worldviews and cultures, professional development sessions that endeavour to build the capacity and give teachers the space to self-reflect are limited (AITSL, 2022). I believe this is where this research project could play an important part in informing future professional development sessions that help build the cultural competency of non-Indigenous teachers.

Compounding concerns surrounding the availability of good professional development sessions for educators, anxieties have also been raised about cultural competency at a systemic level across the education system, where there needs to be more provision for building a culturally competent teaching workforce. The absence of support for cultural competency training was also underpinned by a shortfall in commitment from education leaders and underwhelming financial backing, making a sustainable change a challenging task (AITSL, 2020). The need for knowledge of Indigenous culture and cultural competency of the education workforce was a topic that many of the participant teachers observed.

> I think if I was to evaluate their knowledge, I'd say it would be quite limited. I don't know how much, or whether they would actually incorporate any Indigenous views or

> curriculum into their content unless it's explicitly there. I think the junior campus in humanities, they do have a part of Australian history, which they're trying to incorporate. But I think a lot of the other knowledge, once again, will just be coming from self-learning. And it is something that I think, as a whole school could improve on. (Andrew, Interview 1)

Coming from an early career educator and Outdoor Education team leader, Andrew's comments are important because they align with current research undertaken by AITSL (2020), which calls for a culturally competent workforce. Andrew's and Sally's commentary suggests that engaging with Indigenous knowledges is often challenging because such initiatives are left to teachers who are passionate about seeing this happen.

> NAIDOC week falls in the school holidays normally, and that is a bit challenging, so then it's just kind of up to the teachers … (Sally, Interview 1)

While the teaching of Indigenous knowledges is often left to those driven to see them embedded, the celebration of significant Indigenous cultural dates also needs to be noticed because they inconveniently occur during the school holidays or are an added responsibility for teachers to undertake.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, participant teachers reflected on their practices and identified barriers to embedding Indigenous knowledge. Some barriers included low confidence, lack of leadership and professional development opportunities, lack of knowledge, and challenges associated with making Indigenous knowledges fit into the rigid curriculum. More professional development is needed for settler-teachers to improve their culturally responsive pedagogy and ability to embed Indigenous knowledge. Further, teachers must understand that this process requires constant reflection and a conceded effort to establish relationships with local Indigenous people, groups and organisations. When this occurs, efforts to teach Indigenous knowledges and disrupt settler education are further enhanced.

Participant teachers shared their insights on Learning on Country pedagogy, connecting place to local issues, contending with terminology issues, and doing their part to curb deficit discourses surrounding Indigenous people. Teachers also provided insights into where they thought land-based pedagogical approaches could be embedded into the curriculum. In addition, participant teachers observed how land-based approaches could be applied to their teaching through innovative approaches and strengthened relationships with Traditional Owners. Lastly, teacher commentary was used to help advocate the importance of Learning on Country professional development opportunities. Teacher participants believe

that further opportunities for educators to access such opportunities would help improve teachers' cultural responsiveness, embed Indigenous knowledges, and build respectful relationships with Traditional Owners.

In the next chapter, participant teachers share what a deeper understanding of Country and establishing relationships with Traditional Owners might mean for their pedagogical practice. Next, the chapter will consider how Learning on Country professional development sessions will assist epistemic reflection. Finally, teachers offer their thoughts on how the professional development sessions will help them refine their cultural responsiveness and become better equipped to embed Indigenous knowledges within curricula.

CHAPTER 7: PRACTICAL WAYS TO EMBED CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE EDUCATION

In this chapter, I will build on the work of the previous chapter, in which teacher participants identified the barriers that prevent them from becoming better-versed in culturally responsive curricula and strategies for embedding Indigenous content. Teachers will first discuss the necessary unpacking of their epistemic knowledge and how the Learning on Country professional development sessions assisted in this process.

Teacher participants identified that the aforementioned process was needed to facilitate their humble interaction with Indigenous knowledges, culture and histories. This called for teachers to embrace their vulnerability so that they could connect with Traditional Owners via reciprocity. Through interaction with Traditional Owners, participant teachers could see how the relationship would foster values-based teachings that assist learning outcomes tied to local and environmental issues in culturally appropriate and safe ways. An analysis of the two Learning on Country professional development sessions aimed to understand teacher participants' recent experiences with embedding Indigenous knowledges. As the teachers progressed through the two professional development sessions, it was essential to understand whether their confidence to teach Indigenous knowledges had increased and the extent to which they would engage and maintain relationships with Traditional Owners.

Finally, this chapter will iexplore participants' thoughts about their involvement with the Learning on Country professional development sessions and how they have considered teaching Indigenous knowledges in the future. It is equally important to understand how teachers will maintain and build on relationships they have established during the research as they endeavour to improve their culturally responsive approaches. The chapter will then conclude by advocating for Learning on Country pedagogy as a practical method to enhance the cultural responsiveness of teachers in Australia.

EPISTEMIC REFLECTION ON SETTLER TEACHER BELIEFS

For Indigenous knowledges to be respectfully embedded into curricula, epistemic reflection is needed so that teachers can critique how they see and understand the world. Further, epistemic reflection forms part of the decolonising process required to set educators on the path towards developing cultural competency and using Indigenous concepts of Country to improve how they embed Indigenous knowledges.

The learning process for participating settler-teachers focused on learning and immersing themselves fully in Country. In doing so, participant teachers were able to understand how colonialism continues to work within the schooling process and contribute to the project of Indigenous erasure. Education in Australia has continued the process of erasure by having a curriculum that does not represent Indigenous people's homelives and by imposing institutions that do not visibly represent the Country they are in (Hare et al., 2020). Throughout the first professional development session, teachers were asked to engage, reflect, reimagine and decolonise an education system encompassing Indigenous people, communities and knowledges.

The current education system is informed and maintained by colonial understanding that stipulates the type of knowledge valued and how the curriculum should be delivered and assessed. Participants were provided with guiding questions to help them consider and capture the various layers of stories and colonial nuances represented at each of the six key locations visited in the first professional development session. They were committed to challenging and disrupting preconceived views while constructing new knowledge and social understandings (Metcalfe, 2020).

Calderon (2014) noted that 'a land education model demands we decolonize the "local" to understand how settler colonialism is currently enacted and taught' (p. 5). Drawing on Calderon's (2014) thought is essential because it highlights the theoretical underpinnings of land-based education, which positions itself as a pedagogical approach that facilitates discussions of decolonisation and dominant ideas of Country by using Indigenous epistemologies. Therefore, it was imperative that the Learning on Country professional development session be co-designed with Wurundjeri Traditional Owners with the understanding that a land-based approach would assist participant teachers in their epistemic reflections.

Educators repeatedly make decisions about the content they teach and how they will deliver it. Thus, their decisions encompass ingrained values and beliefs that differ from stakeholders in the education system, like caregivers and education leaders (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2014). Kouri (2020) argued that settler-teachers should be compelled to critically analyse the practices of self-reflection, acknowledgement, and appropriation practices within learning environments to disrupt the Indigenous erasure process. In doing so, settler-teachers can identify how the settler-colonial curriculum is maintained and repeated by reflecting on their current pedagogy and continually strengthening relationships with local Traditional Owners.

Settler-educators need to understand their epistemological standpoints and how this might differ from their student's epistemological standpoints. This could be the difference in

connecting and engaging students in the learning process. Teachers must be aware of the backgrounds and experiences Indigenous students bring to school; such understanding could alleviate the harms that might eventuate from students sharing their knowledge. While talking with the Traditional Owners focus group, it was evident that participant teachers understand their vital role in keeping Indigenous students culturally safe and engaged at school.

> I think sometimes teachers do not fully understand the power that they hold as teachers. During the school week, at least I know for some kids, they'll see teachers more than they see their own parents. They're such important parts of our lives for like many years, and they really can make or break a generation of how that generation forms their morals. And that's a really big problem if teachers aren't able to question their own standpoints. (Traditional Owners, focus group 2)

Throughout the conversations with Traditional Owners, it was also apparent that the focus group members were fully aware of teachers' power and responsibility in shaping the way the next generation thinks ethically about society due to the amount of time students spend at school. Teachers help students develop their belief systems and shape how they see the world through their conceptualisations of society. Teachers need to continue to epistemically reflect on their understandings of the world to become holistic educators.

To remind teachers of their ethical responsibilities, ongoing dialogue is needed in the education realm about the moral dilemmas students face concerning the continuous interaction of privilege, power, identity and affect. Settler-educators must model appropriate behaviours and dialogues for settler students, particularly regarding empathy and understanding Indigenous communities' struggles and resilience (Kouri, 2020). Teachers can present current Indigenous issues in class that allow students to critically examine their role in improving the visibility of Indigenous people and their socio-economic status.

The rhetoric of settler-teachers and students mandated by the government to learn more about and empathise with Indigenous people's histories and cultures is not new. The Reconciliation policy was drafted in the 1990s and reinforced by the *Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Act 1991* (Cth). Robert Tickner, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs at the time, initiated the establishment of the Aboriginal Reconciliation Act and pronounced the need to educate settler Australians about Indigenous Australians and the degree of resilience still displayed by Indigenous communities as one of the critical goals of Australian reconciliation (Tickner, 2001).

One way to improve relationships and reconciliation efforts between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people is through education. As Mary's reflections highlight, a deeper understanding of Country lends teachers the confidence to embed Indigenous knowledges and

this, in turn, potentially encourages students to engage positively with Indigenous histories and cultures:

> My confidence has changed in linking more to Country as a way for really getting kids to connect better with Indigenous history, Indigenous stories, whatever. It [Country] just gives it a much more spiritual sense. (Mary, Interview 2)

Mary's comments suggest that the Learning on Country professional development sessions have helped improve her confidence in embedding Indigenous knowledges and understanding that Country is essential for making respectful connections with Indigenous people.

Research conducted by Maddison and Stastny (2016) sought to understand where non-Indigenous people tend to acquire knowledge about Reconciliation efforts, Indigenous knowledges, and Australian history, which is derived from four primary sources: school, social media, family and friends, and work. With schools being identified as one of the two primary sites where Indigenous knowledge is acquired, the data's caveat suggests that this is a recent occurrence. Older contributors who participated in research by Maddison and Stastny (2016) stated that an engagement with Indigenous knowledges throughout their schooling was insignificant or non-existent. The experiences of participants in the Maddison and Stastny study bear similarities to the experiences of the settler teacher participants of this research project. One participant recounted:

> I don't think I knew how to is probably the reason that I didn't incorporate Indigenous knowledge, and I didn't have any resources, nor did I know a whole lot about Indigenous health. So that's something I didn't do, I think, due to a lack of knowledge, would be my reasoning. (Andrew, Interview 2)

Andrew's reasons for not interacting with Indigenous content reflect a shared experience across the participant cohort. In the next section, I will discuss the significance of connecting Country to localised issues and highlight the positive implications of non-Indigenous teachers being well-versed in teaching Indigenous knowledges.

Connecting Country to Local Issues and Online Learning

Indigenous connection to Country and the production of Indigenous knowledges are inextricably connected. Simpson (2017) stated, 'land-based relationships are the foundation of Indigenous thought' (p. 213). In that article, Simpson problematised the political underpinnings of settler colonialism and the ongoing acts of violence on Indigenous peoples and their lands. Simpson asserted that when settlers offer recognition on matters of justice, they are untrustworthy because there is no action to rectify the current imbalance of power. Simpson further suggested that a refusal of the false attempts made to reconcile past wrongs is needed

because recognition is limited in disrupting the structures that maintain the power of thought, politics and settler traditions that erase Indigenous people from their land. Adding to Simpson's thoughts concerning land-based pedagogy and the aforementioned notion of refusal, contemporary theorisations have begun to connect Indigenous knowledges, connection to Country and its proximity to digital technologies. Research has underscored the importance of emerging philosophies associated with the complex relations between digital literacies and Country (Duarte, 2017; Wemigwans, 2018).

The global pandemic caused by COVID-19 demanded that classroom learning pivoted to an online model so that education could occur while adhering to government-regulated quarantine rules. For many Australians on the Eastern seaboard, this happened almost instantaneously. Although current attempts to embed Indigenous knowledges could be more assertive, looking to international efforts, First Nations people have been innovative in employing lands-based pedagogical approaches that can be delivered online. Research by B. Wilson and Spillman (2021) highlighted examples of where land-based pedagogy, technology and the ambitions of Indigenous students have been combined to advance self-determining efforts that contribute to the sustainability and protection of Country.

When listening to how participant teachers engaged with Indigenous content, I found it troubling that, when teaching Indigenous-specific curricula, teachers relied on delivering lessons about Indigenous people and knowledges from other parts of Australia. For example, Sally has used the closing of the Uluru climb to teach why it is essential to listen to Indigenous people:

> The significance Country holds to Aboriginal people was overlooked because they just saw this beautiful rock and thought, 'hey, we can earn some money from it'. In class, we talked about by closing the climb, we are listening. We're listening and we're also accepting the fact that we don't need to know everything … Aboriginal people have been treated poorly in general in Australia, and how we really need to value them a lot more than that. (Sally, Interview 1)

Notably, Sally is teaching crucial lessons. However, why could a localised comparison for teaching the value of more profound listening not be used? L. Simpson (2014, p. 9) stressed the necessity for Indigenous knowledges and education to 'come through the land' because land is our first teacher. Likewise, supporters of Indigenous language revival (Corntassel & Hardbarger, 2019; McIvor, 2009) noted the significance of land-based education to language regeneration due to the inseparability of languages from the lands from which they have arisen. Additionally, storytelling is an essential and powerful tradition that 'should be respected as a way of sharing lived experiences, exploring personal beliefs and values, and discovering place-based wisdom' (Cunsolo Willox et al., 2013, p. 133). When Indigenous people

use storytelling, opportunities are created to strengthen relationships among Elders, community members and the youth.

THE POWER OF LANGUAGE AND CHALLENGING DEFICIT DISCOURSE

How we communicate has power and is deeply connected to culture and language (Obiakor, 1996). While language unites us and gives us an identity, it also has a controlling element. During the second professional development session at the Organ Pipes National Park, one of the Indigenous knowledge holders spoke of reimagining how we think about Indigenous people. She then challenged the non-Indigenous teachers to flip the conversation to move beyond thinking of Indigenous people as impoverished people who are deficient socio-economically because of their culture. Instead, the Indigenous expert invited teacher participants to consider Indigenous people as brave and resilient community members who have overcome many barriers because of their connection to each other and Country—thus, coining the term Aboriginal Joy. The idea of moving away from deficit discourse and towards Indigenous joy had a profound impact on the participant teachers:

> I've taught and we've thought about the stolen generation and Indigenous beliefs, but to me, it's very much been 'oh, the poor Indigenous people. This is what happened to them. Look how sad they are. They've turned to alcohol', but there's no celebration of what they have achieved and overcome. And that is the deficit discourse we've been talking about. I want to be able to speak to that and introduce the concept of the joy is to being Indigenous. (Annie, Interview 1)

Annie's statement is thought-provoking and interesting because her ability to listen and reflect on her epistemic position and pedagogical approach means she is in an improved place to teach Indigenous knowledge. Amy is in an enhanced position to teach Indigenous knowledge because she wants to move from referring to Indigenous people as disadvantaged to celebrating Indigenous adversity, histories and cultures. Educators must critique how they use words and deliver their sentences to students. It could have a significant bearing on their students and how they interact with the world, particularly for students from disenfranchised communities who have routinely been marginalised by colonial-settler society. Again, drawing on Annie's comments, there is thought connected to Indigenous joy and how she will use this understanding to teach Indigenous content to her students:

> I've got the knowledge and the understanding now. It's just a matter of how do I want or what perspective do I take when I'm bringing this into the classroom. And I loved I can't remember who said it … The concept of it's not always negative and turning it on its head and thinking about the joy of being Aboriginal. (Annie, Interview 3).

Annie's comments illustrate that she has been reflecting internally on her unconscious bias and how this has affected her teachings in the past. Interestingly, Annie's reflections suggest she is content with the work that she has done. However, I would argue that becoming proficient in teaching Indigenous knowledges needs ongoing work rather than being something one arrives at. Research conducted by Kovel (2001) endeavoured to theorise the way unconscious bias and systemic racism are connected. In his writing, he created the term 'thingification' to describe how powerful societies use language to demonstrate and create a boundary between themselves and disenfranchised groups. This power exercise is reinforced in communities where people use labels to exert superiority over others. As a result, such tactics have consequences for education, particularly in multicultural environments.

Considering the power teachers yield when using language, F. Smith (1995, p. 26) stated, 'no one should be deaf or blind to its power' and adds, 'teachers must respect language, not as some unattainable ideal of how students ought to speak and write, but as a source of every student's self-image and learning potential'. F. Smith's (1995) commentary is helpful because it lends itself to the idea that language is an essential element of culture and an instrument that permits people to consider and define thoughts. It informs the way educators influence and teach others.

The language used throughout this research project presents a unique opportunity for non-Indigenous educators to shape the language they use when Indigenous knowledges are drawn on to disrupt the deficit discourse narrative surrounding Indigenous people. Terminology and language have loaded definitions that can raise emotional reactions linked to communities, histories and places. As a result, one word can portray many meanings for different people and their communities. Regarding education based on the epistemology of Indigenous knowledges, and when asking educators to reflect on their epistemic understandings, teachers should use language that promotes positive change, empowers, inspires, and moves away from deficit-laden language that maintains the power and structures of settler-colonial societies. When we look at Indigenous education policy that looks to improve the retention, attainment, and success of Indigenous students, it is often laced with aims designed to enhance Indigenous achievement in ways that align with the success markers for non-Indigenous students.

Comparisons indicate an achievement outcomes discrepancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, and the language is laden with deficit implications based on cultural background (Morrison et al., 2019). Miller (2020) countered the deficit mindset and offered the expression 'cultural fluency', which indicates an educator's capacity to have empathy and the confidence to work with students from culturally diverse backgrounds. Recognising that language can reflect personal and societal biases is crucial when discussing and overcoming

barriers and sensitive issues such as racism in the Australian education system. However, discussing sensitive topics of racism and having teachers reflect on their epistemic knowledge may inadvertently incite disagreement and cause teachers to ignore the topic altogether. To alleviate anxiety, school leaders and educators need more significant interaction and dialogue to unmask unconscious bias in the classroom.

Through their research, Benson and Fiarman (2019; Kovel, 2001) encouraged professionals to interact inwardly with their unconscious bias. Building on Kovel's theories related to 'thingification', Benson and Fiarman (2019) asserted that understanding our biases is a powerful tool because it helps individuals recognise the ways racism can influence the way we think, interact, and relate to people from different cultural backgrounds. Given language can be used to maintain structural powers and contribute to societal change, it follows that power can undoubtedly dictate the course of that change, mainly when critical discourse analysis is adopted to draw attention to the disparities or injustices of the settler-colonial curriculum.

As policymakers and school leaders strive towards contributing to the educational success of Indigenous students and embedding Indigenous knowledges, the importance of language should not be understated. For positive change to occur in Indigenous education, school leaders and policy developers need a strong stance on the use of language so that teachers feel encouraged, empowered and supported (AITSL, 2020). Speaking to the teacher participants and the Traditional Owners focus group, it became evident they were aware of the power language can have within the education setting.

> I also want to learn the history behind what did happen so that I can better educate others. I want to learn more about the significance of language and how this is connected to Country and spirituality so that I can embed this knowledge into my classes. (Annie, Interview 1)
>
> all of the toilets would be labelled 'jillowah' instead of 'toilet'. A lot of the classrooms had Indigenous names. We had an indigenous class specifically that taught language and culture… Aboriginal artwork was all throughout the school. In maths, they'd always use math equations that related to Country somehow, they really incorporated it. And it felt safe and homely. It wasn't incorporating Indigenous knowledge and Country in a forced way. (Traditional Owner, focus group 2)

The visibility of the Indigenous language is an important aspiration, as reflected by the Traditional Owner's comments above. It is effective when seamlessly integrated into the school's makeup. When schools try to employ Indigenous languages to make Indigenous students feel safe, they feel appreciated in a culturally safe way. Additionally, Annie's reflections suggest a desire to learn about language and its connection to Country and

spirituality, which would inevitably disrupt the negative stereotypes surrounding Indigenous people students have come to know due to deficit discourse.

Deficit discourse surrounding Indigenous people is a complex system that spans different locales, expressions and policies, and functions within non-Indigenous and Indigenous places (Bamblett, 2011, 2013a, 2013b; Gorringe et al., 2011; Hinkson, 2007; McCallum, 2010, 2011). The way Australian society comprehends Indigeneity demonstrates what Foucault described as 'discursive formation', whereby settler apparatuses work to maintain and constrain inclusive understandings of the world. During the first professional development session at the University of Melbourne, participant teachers shared that they have used and critiqued a variety of resources to maintain the deficit discourses surrounding Indigenous people.

> I use poor resources to critique and explore with the students the different ways in which Aboriginal people are being portrayed through mainstream media. (Sally, Interview 2)

Given the commentary about the lack of appropriate resources accessible to teachers, Sally's comment suggests she has attempted to find a solution to this problem by creating her teaching strategy of using media that poorly portray Indigenous people. In this exercise, she teaches her students to critically analyse discourse and its portrayal of Indigenous people. According to S. Hall (2001, p. 72), robust structures frame and maintain dominant worldviews and social interactions and 'defines and produce the objects of our knowledge [and] govern the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about.' Additionally, Kerins (2012,) asserted that it is helpful to understand the way discourse and power are connected:

> Those who have the ability to shape discourse define what it is possible to think, while suppressing other ways of thinking. The ability to shape discourse, legitimatise and reproduce it builds power. By defining what is possible to think and suppressing others, those with institutional power – like governmental agencies – do not need to draw on coercive force to change people's behaviour because the dominant discourse has established a framework, or 'rules of the game', that individuals and groups must 'play to' in order to be recognised and participate. (p. 26)

Dominant establishments, with the use of people, routinely employ language to establish and maintain their authority so that it becomes a 'social practice' (Fowler, 1987, p. 142). The maintenance of power through language and repetition is what Fairclough (1989) described as power built and sustained by force and the use of language coercion. There is also the interpretation that power is maintained through social interaction, where language manipulates and constructs power ideas in society (Fowler, 1987; Kramarae et al., 1984).

VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS AS DISRUPTION

In the urban environment, Indigenous art is used on large scales to depict Indigenous histories and cultures, disrupting the settler-colonial project of erasure. The opportunity to collaborate on large murals provides a platform individually or collectively for Indigenous resurgence where Indigenous artists can reclaim identity and culture in innovative ways. Ginsburg and Myers (2006, p. 30) suggested that creating murals is an undertaking that is 'slowly but surely … re-imagin[ed]', shaped and reconfigured through an ongoing interaction of the historical, contemporary and forthcoming.

For F. Edmonds (2012), murals bring to light the issues of discrimination and ill-informed understandings of contemporary Indigeneity and re-educating the masses on the diversity of Indigenous people in Australia. While Indigenous murals in Melbourne are considered overly political by urban Indigenous people, the growth and visibility of Indigenous-inspired murals have seen an upsurge internationally by other Indigenous peoples in settler-colonial environments (Leslie, 2008; Neale, 2000).

Imageries depicted locally and internationally by Indigenous artists do so with an intent to support Indigenous resurgence movements and support the call for self-determination control over social and economic outcomes. Large-scale individual or collaborative projects strengthen the distinctive characteristics of the artists and their people. Relatedly, LaWare (1998) contended that murals facilitate a visual narrative where communication is depicted through visual representation, which offers opportunities for disenfranchised communities to have a voice through a familiar medium.

The artistic approach allows communities to achieve and assert their world truths and connection to Country while accompanying a 'rhetoric of difference'. Consequently, murals have a celebratory purpose generating a visual language between the audience and the mural, supporting the identity and place of Indigenous history and culture by 'making visible the previously invisible'. Through visual imagery, 'community-based murals present an image of community that resists marginalization and reverses internalized prejudices' (LaWare, 1998, p. 144).

> We [the school] have a mural now that sits outside our chapel that you can see from inside the chapel. And Bunjil is a feature on that mural. I understand that within Aboriginal spirituality, sister beings and connection to land is important for maintaining a sense of belonging. You don't have to be physically on the land to have that connection. (Mary, Interview 3)

Mary's school has made a conscious effort to improve the visibility of an Indigenous presence around their school to remind the school community that they are on Wurundjeri Country.

Mary's observations also highlight that she is aware of the strong connection Indigenous peoples have with their Country even when they are not on Country. Mary also provided valuable insights into where she was situated on the continuum for embedding Country into her teaching:

> I think we as people with European backgrounds, need to recognise that places for Indigenous people are important for all of us. We tend to go to a building and carry out a ritual there, whereas for Aboriginal people conduct ceremonies on Country. I suppose if you compare it to Catholicism, which is part of my heritage, this notion of connecting to a being greater than yourself, I think that it's the same thing but shown in different ways. (Mary, Interview 1)

Mary's comments suggest she has practised some reflection to shift herself epistemically. Although she uses her epistemic knowledge and catholic upbringing to compare how Indigenous and non-Indigenous people connect spiritually, it demonstrates that different ideologies can be used to understand the world better.

THE POWER OF YARNING ON COUNTRY

The Learning on Country professional development sessions was designed to be delivered face-to-face on Country so that participants could interact with Indigenous knowledge holders who could foster a space where teacher participants could decentre their preconceived ideas of what a professional development session entails. In doing so, the professional development sessions catered for the epistemic reflection of settler-teachers to occur through critical and moral interaction with all aspects of Country—waterways, spirit and land. Allowing space for epistemic reflection was necessary because teacher participants had little exchange or education of Indigenous history and perspectives. Teachers needed the time to digest, process and critique what they had been learning through professional development to understand why they had missed out on learning Indigenous perspectives during their education.

Land-based pedagogies that adopt yarning practices need the educator to understand the history and significance of place to impart wisdom about relationality, spirituality, futurity and responsibilities to Country. However, for settler-educators, this can often be difficult because it requires them to reflect epistemically and ground themselves in Indigenous places that have been taken by violent forces such as acts of genocide and forced removal of children (Recollet & Johnson, 2019).

One element I particularly enjoyed about coordinating the two professional development sessions was that participant teachers were asked to park all preconceived ideas

of Indigenous people and cultures. In doing so, teachers had no expectations of the type of knowledge they were about to interact with. As an Indigenous person, the sessions did not need to be performative to meet teacher expectations. Instead, the honest dialogues would be driven by the Traditional Owners' recommendations without the possibility of risking the components of a land-based approach. For instance, there was a discussion about how Wurundjeri people have used storytelling to explain phenomena, such as how Port Philip Bay was turned into an inlet after it flooded over a thousand years ago. Western science thought the bay flooded ten thousand years ago, and this analogy highlighted how Indigenous knowledge is often overlooked because it does not agree with Western thought. Participant teachers also appreciated the relaxed approach that required teachers to slow down and take in their surroundings:

> I love just being able to have a chat, I've really enjoyed the informalness of it. And hearing the other people's perspectives as well on what they think they can do at their school, or even more talking about what we can do with our school. I think it's important to build those connections between colleges as well. (Annie, Interview 3)

Although stories and anecdotes were used from the past during the second professional development session at Organ Pipes National Park, these were used to relate to current-day events, thoughts and assumptions. Annie used the words 'chat' and 'perspectives' when describing the informality of the discussion, but she represented some of the qualities of yarning. So often, yarning and its connection to Indigenous pedagogy can be misconstrued as an activity that relies on the past to arrive at meaning. However, Indigenous people have always cared for their carbon footprint and the state of Country they leave for their forbearers.

> According to Wiedmann and Minx (2008, p. 4), 'carbon footprint' can be defined as: a measure of the exclusive total amount of carbon dioxide emissions that is directly and indirectly caused by an activity or is accumulated over the life stages of a product. This includes activities of individuals, populations, governments, companies, organisations, processes, industry sectors, etc.

The carbon footprint is essential to mention as carbon emissions have implications for the health of the environment and the health and wellbeing of future generations. Indigenous people have valuable contributions to make for issues about sustainability and the ongoing health and maintenance of the environment.

Indigenous yarning and storytelling are technologies of futurity, mainly when they engage with and disrupt settler-colonial narratives of erasure to create space for Indigenous geographies. For Hunt (2018, p. 81), 'Indigenous stories and resistance produce an Indigenous futurity, a world wherein settler futurities are thrown into question and not portrayed as a

given'. Unfortunately, when issues such as sustainability and global warming are discussed, the Indigenous perspective is often overlooked due to ignorance, power, and white fragility.

Thinking and yarning about reinhabitation—decolonising territoriality of place and the possibilities for sustainable environmental practices of Indigenous futures (Brandt, 2004; Gruenewald, 2003a; Peña, 1998)—brings the feeling of joy that our Indigenous experts spoke about, changing the deficit discourse narrative. Recollet and Johnson (2019) interpreted 'Indigenous joy as a precious hub—and refocuses our attention to how land spaces and more-than-human kin are activated in the now and how they relate to kinships of future ancestors' (p. 182). When discussions of Indigenous futurities are taking place on Country, it affords Indigenous people and communities a space for innovative thinking that disrupts the project of erasure.

Reviewing the conversations with participant teachers, it was evident that the professional development sessions profoundly affected how they think about teaching Indigenous content and using Country as a teaching tool to disrupt settler-colonial ideologies:

> It definitely increased my perspective. But it just shows, I've done some learning from the internet here and there, but I'm interested to do some more learning from Indigenous people. I think I take away a lot more from just listening to a conversation like the one the other day, I took a lot more away from that than just reading stuff on the internet. (Andrew, Interview 3)
>
> I just think having those sorts of conversations on land was just so meaningful. I think the big takeaway for me is just the whole impact of grounding everything about the importance of land. And that really colours what I say and do with the kids now, you know, and it gives a bit of a different slant. And it gives context to this whole sense of belonging. (Mary, Interview 3)

Andrew's and Mary's reflections highlight the importance of deep listening, the implications this has for learning about different worldviews, and how this added knowledge complements the other learnings occurring in the classroom.

Advice for Other Settler-Educators

Indigenous knowledge holders were invited to share their wisdom during the second professional development session. After numerous unsuccessful attempts to connect with Indigenous Rangers at Parks Victoria, I followed up on one of their suggestions to contact local businesses focused on providing educational experiences. One of the suggestions to connect with Indigenous knowledges was to connect with Eco Explorers, who provide educational experiences that embed Indigenous perspectives, help develop and strengthen community

connections, support mindfulness in nature and encourage sustainability through sensory play experiences.

Adam, a settler-educator and founder of Eco Explorers, has developed a wealth of knowledge through his educational background and Eco Explorers programs. He was invited to share his insights about the Organ Pipes National Park. While the Indigenous knowledge holders were generous with their time and knowledge, having Adam present at the second professional development session was equally powerful. Adam could share what he had learned over the years with the participant teachers. He spoke of the (sometimes) long process of building respectful relationships with Traditional Owners, which required patience and reprogramming to learn to listen intently. As well as providing ways to initiate relationships with Traditional Owners, Adam was also able to model how to share the Indigenous knowledges he has acquired over the years. He did this by acknowledging where and how he had learned specific information and then explaining to the teachers how he had been trusted with such knowledges. There was a responsibility to share it respectfully. As a settler teacher, Adam's reflections are powerful because he demonstrated and demystified how he built relationships with Traditional Owners. From conversations after the professional development sessions, participant teachers were impressed and motivated by how Adam had been able to make solid connections and share Indigenous knowledges.

Observing how teacher participants were encouraged by Adam's story to embed Indigenous knowledges, I thought it would be interesting to understand how teacher participants would encourage their peers. Below is a collection of comments provided by participant teachers who have reflected on their pedagogical approach to teaching Indigenous knowledges; when asked about what advice they had for their peers, this is what they had to say:

> No matter how big or small, just make a start, whether Googling or just looking at a government website and do some learning yourself. I think that's important. And just don't be afraid to ask questions. I think that's important … there's no correct way to do things or implement things in the classroom, and you need to find out what works for you. (Andrew, Interview 3)
>
> Go and get it. Go out and do as much as you can. Go on immersions, do PDs [professional development sessions]. Get in contact with local Elders, research, read books, and do whatever you can to find more, find out more. Because I think it's essential for us to be educated, to pass that education on to the kids. So, as I said before, we don't want our youth to become adults and be unaware of Indigenous issues. I want to stop that cycle from the younger generations as early as possible. (Annie, Interview 3)

> I would say learn, be open-minded, read, and reflect as well; I think it's important to reflect on your own cultural biases and racial biases and see if there is any cultural or racial bias there. And I think that it's essential to acknowledge any of that, and then just try to make connections where you can, and don't be afraid. Yeah, don't be scared to get a little bit wrong, as long as you give it a good go. And ask questions because there might be people around you who are slightly more knowledgeable than others. Yeah, and I'd say if you can engage with a Traditional Owner or engage the Aboriginal community, and if you can't, then at least read extensively and undertake some form of PD [professional development] or something given by an Aboriginal person. (Sally, Interview 3)

The participant teachers are encouraging in their advice. There is some commonality in their responses, such as not being afraid to ask questions, reading widely, building the necessary relationships with Indigenous experts, and reflecting epistemologically because there is a moral obligation to teach the next generation. Further, Andrew and Sally added that getting a range of sources is necessary and articulated the importance of embedding the experiential learning pedagogical approach informed by Traditional Owners:

> The way I plan to teach Indigenous knowledges will be to rely on a range of different sources, having that experiential side of things, but also, like watching videos, particularly when you can see or hear Indigenous people talk about that connection to Country. (Andrew, Interview 3)
>
> I love getting a range of perspectives, both from different educators and different people and take on the land and Aboriginal connection … I really liked what Maddie said about how it's a joy to be an Aboriginal person at the moment. And I think that we do often get caught up a little bit in this negative narrative and the deficit … I thought, how can I then bring that into the classroom to show that it is, it is a joyful thing as well? (Sally, Interview 3)

All participating teachers stated that the professional development sessions were valuable because they allowed them the time to pause and connect with Country and each other. Most importantly, teachers were asked to embrace the informality of the sessions so they could reflect on how they felt about not having a rigid structure and set of objectives and why this sat uncomfortably with them, particularly regarding the yarning aspect. Andrew and Sally commented on using a plethora of resources to teach Indigenous perspectives. An appropriate follow-up question would be to ask how they might discern the quality of resources and how they might filter out less suitable teaching resources.

CONCLUSION

In the previous chapter, it was alarming to see the recurring theme of teachers expecting Traditional Owners to willingly share their cultural knowledges without having the relationship to care for such knowledge. To overcome this entitlement to quickly obtain Indigenous knowledges from Traditional Owners, I argued that teachers must shift themselves epistemically to improve their culturally responsive pedagogy. Employing a Learning on Country pedagogical approach necessitates a self-reflective task to decolonise thought processes and build respectful relationships with Traditional Owners. While I acknowledge that the teacher participants are on journeys to improve their cultural responsiveness and better understand how to embed Indigenous content, work needs to be done to fully comprehend the importance of having respectful and reciprocal relationships with Traditional Owners. Building respectful and reciprocal relationships was an important topic discussed during the final professional development session when we were yarning at the Organ Pipes National Park, where four Indigenous people contributed to the conversation. By reinforcing the importance of establishing relationships with Traditional Owners, teachers will adjust their expectations about being given Indigenous knowledges freely without the appropriate level of trust.

Finally, the chapter concluded with participant teachers sharing their thoughts on how the professional development sessions encouraged them to shift epistemically as they strive towards embedding Indigenous knowledges. Perhaps the most pertinent section of this chapter was the advice participant teachers had for other settler-teachers (peers) endeavouring to teach Indigenous knowledges more effectively, which epitomised the aims of the thesis. Teachers responded to the narrative that Indigenous people and their cultures exist in cities despite colonisation's best efforts to fulfil the ongoing settler project of Indigenous erasure. Teachers could also articulate how the professional development sessions would improve their cultural responsiveness and the quality of Indigenous knowledges taught in their classrooms. In the next chapter, I will summarise the findings of this research project and provide recommendations for educators wanting to embed Indigenous knowledges. I will then discuss the limitations of the project before concluding with a discussion concerning opportunities for future research.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

(Picture taken by Josh Cubillo on Wadjigan Country)

Recently, I took my two eldest children home to Gulumerrijin (Darwin) during the school holidays to reconnect with Country, friends and family. During this time, and with the help of my dad, we took the two kids out bush to Wadjigan Country, a two-hour road trip from Darwin. Unfortunately, Sea Country is often met with torrential rain, strong tides and murky water during the wet season, which only sometimes culminates in good fishing conditions. Even with this, the kids still wanted to try their luck at the front of camp. So, as I unloaded the truck and set up camp for the evening, Dad took the kids to the beach to throw in the fishing lines.

Due to the windy conditions, I could see it took Dad longer to rig the lines with heavier sinkers so that the bait would not drift away and stay in its intended location. He was also educating the kids on where they should be casting their lines. Dad was teaching them to cast out in front of the reef to avoid getting their lines snagged on the rocks. He also showed them that aiming for the front of the reef would encourage the fish to come out of the reef's protection to take the bait. After about 30 minutes, I could see everyone had been given their turn in reeling in something from the ocean. Once I had finished unpacking and setting up camp for the evening, I made my way down to the beach. As I got closer, I saw that luck was not on our side, as we could only catch a handful of catfish. However, the kids were satisfied with their catch as they enjoyed spending time with their pop (grandfather) on Country. In usual fashion, Dawson (my son) asked many questions about why they were catching so many catfish and why we had yet to return them to the ocean. He asked this question because he was taught to return what we do not eat to their environment. In this instance, Dad told Dawson that catfish are pests to the environment and are not tasty fish to eat but will serve as good bait for the crab pots later. However, to our surprise, the two sea eagles watching us from the sky had other plans for the fish as they swooped, collected, and then ate dinner from their nests.

Reflecting on this moment, I could not help but feel gratitude for the cultural learning in which my kids were immersed. It was something I had been involved with growing up. I was pleased to see the kids' engaging and wanting to learn more about reading the tides and identifying the best times to fish. Every time my kids return to Country, I see the connection to the land grow stronger as they become more eager to learn about their culture and fulfil their cultural obligations. In this instance, the kids were Learning on Country in a culturally responsive way that included the transmission of intergenerational wisdom given by my dad, which had been given to him by his grandparents. This made me think of the questions I had pondered in the introduction about my schooling experience and the teachers who helped me progress through the system. What would school have looked like if my teachers used this cultural knowledge? Was my education primarily sourced from the curriculum, or did I accept

it was something I learned from my family on Country? What relationships did the teachers have with my Aboriginal family? Would an on Country approach have improved my education? Who are the teachers, and what are their roles? These questions have all been fundamental to the foundations of this thesis and hold greater significance for me now that I have children who have just started their school journeys. These questions are also profound because as I reflect on my education, some of my best teachers and role models have been family and community members, Traditional Owners and Elders with no teaching credentials. Considering my reflections, I want my children to see themselves reflected in the school curriculum, to enjoy their schooling experience and be provided with rich learning opportunities from many different sources of knowledge holders. Paired with the above self reflective questions, this research project aimed to understand how professional development guided by Traditional Owners could improve the cultural responsiveness of non-Indigenous teachers. The project also sought to recognise how Learning on Country professional development sessions improved the visibility of Indigenous people in the city.

During my schooling years, there needed to be more opportunities to interact with Indigenous histories and cultures. As such, this has become a major driving force in pursuing research that advocates for more Indigenous knowledges to be taught in schools, particularly now that I see how important it is for my children to receive these educational opportunities. Additionally, this research project has been motivated to understand if non-Indigenous teachers feel confident to embed Indigenous knowledges once having participated in two professional development opportunities informed by Traditional Owners.

Given the conversations and efforts occurring in Australia to make education more culturally responsive to the cultural backgrounds of Indigenous students, I do feel a sense of optimism for what is about to transpire in the next few years in Indigenous education. Though, there is a sizeable task ahead to realise this fully. Solutions have been developed by educational experts and the government through policy development, increasing the Indigenous education workforce, expanding the availability of teaching resources, and providing appropriate professional development. These solutions have all been suggested to improve how Indigenous content is taught in Australian schools despite the limited opportunities to embed such knowledges. The idea of having more significant opportunities to access professional development to enhance the cultural responsiveness of teachers has resonated with me because it is a practical solution that allows the teaching academy to learn more about Indigenous history, knowledges and culture. When considering the ways Indigenous content is taught, cultural responsiveness is a term that has appeared frequently and prompted more research.

Culturally responsive pedagogy is a pedagogical approach that emerged from the United States (see Gay, 2002, 2010; Ladson-Billings 1994, 1995, 2008, 2014, 2017) and predominantly sought to improve the educational success of African American students. This has mainly been achieved by offering educational opportunities reflective of the homelives and cultural strengths African American students represent. In the southern hemisphere, Russel Bishop applied the learnings of culturally responsive pedagogy through his research with Māori students in New Zealand (see R. Bishop, et al., 2012; M. Bishop & Durksen, 2020). In Australia, theorists have further theorised and adopted culturally responsive pedagogy (see M. Bishop & Vass, 2021; Harrison & Skrebneva, 2020; Hogarth, 2020; Jackson-Barrett, 2021; Morrison et al., 2019; Santoro, 2013; Vass, 2018). The academic investigations have been conducted to help non-Indigenous teachers understand the cultural backgrounds of their Indigenous students as well as how they might celebrate these strengths in the classroom to improve the success of Indigenous students. Most recently, AITSL (2022) tabled a report titled *Building a Culturally Responsive Australian Teaching Workforce.* It provides resources to support intercultural development and enhance culturally responsive teaching practice. My research through this project extends the literature on culturally responsive pedagogy in Australia. It has shown the appropriate and necessary work teachers must do to build respectful relationships with Traditional Owners while continually reflecting on their epistemic worldviews. I acknowledge, however, that building these relationships with Traditional Owners has been easier to negotiate, given I am an Indigenous person. I understand building trustworthy relationships with Traditional Owners will take longer for non-Indigenous teachers to establish and this is a reality they must embrace if they are truly invested in improving their epistemic knowledge and respectfully embedding Indigenous knowledges.

Additionally, having professional development sessions that are informed and delivered with the support and wisdom of Traditional Owners also allows educators to develop and harness reciprocal and respectful relationships as they endeavour to make their classrooms culturally safe for all students. Throughout this research project, I have argued that educators teaching on unceded Indigenous lands are responsible for disrupting the settler-colonial mandate and the privileged Western knowledges that continue to erase Indigenous people's connection to Country. Teachers are best prepared to do this work when their cultural responsiveness and understanding of Country have been elevated. Further, I have shown that teaching is a moral profession that helps shape the minds of young people. I argue that teachers must experience an ongoing process of epistemic reflection to disrupt their colonial conceptualisations of the world so that they are prepared to teach content to which students can relate. Teachers must understand how colonisation affects our society and,

further, provide opportunities for their students to disrupt settler-colonial power structures through interaction with Indigenous knowledge and concepts of Country.

Making Sense of the Thesis Chapters

As part of the literature review, I examined the literature associated with land-based approaches, culturally responsive pedagogy, CCPs and the APST to identify gaps in the literature. As previously outlined, land-based pedagogy is an essential theoretical and practical concept used internationally to embed Indigenous knowledges. It has been used as an engagement tool that deploys Indigenous constructs of land to disrupt settler colonialism while increasing the visibility of Indigenous connection to land, culture and language. Lessons from around the world have helped to understand and explore the ways Australia is using similar pedagogical approaches. Land-based pedagogy in Australia is primarily used through Learning on Country initiatives initially adopted by Land and Sea Ranger programs in remote and rural locations in Northern Territory. However, recent examples of Learning on Country initiatives are starting to appear in secondary and tertiary environments throughout Australia.

The international land-based education learning systems have assisted and informed this project to imagine how land-based approaches can be used more readily and broadly in Australian urban localities. In particular, the literature clarifies how Learning on Country initiatives, as a form of culturally responsive pedagogy, can be used through the CCPs and the national teaching standards. In doing so, I have shown, in line with the aims of the thesis, that Learning on Country initiatives are relevant in urban localities as they are in rural and remote communities. Further, Learning on Country initiatives are positioned well to disrupt the current curriculum because they prompt teachers to think critically about colonisation and engage students through local environmental and social justice issues. I have also argued that professional development opportunities that work to build the culturally responsive pedagogy capacity of non-Indigenous educators are a crucial element in disrupting the settler-colonial curriculum. While the literature (and practice) of Learning on Country is mostly about Indigenous education in rural or remote settings (see Christie et al., 2010; Country et al., 2015; Fogarty & Schwab, 2015; Fogarty et al., 2015; Schwab & Fogarty, 2015) little has been written about Learning on Country initiatives in the urban context. When Learning on Country education has been used, it has been done through the perspectives of health and wellbeing (Ganesharajah, 2009; Garnett & Sithole, 2008; Kerins, 2012; Taylor-Bragge et al., 2021; I. Watson, 2008), belonging and strengthening of identity (Harrison & Skrebneva, 2019; Jackson-Barrett & Lee-Hammond, 2018), tertiary land-based program delivery (Jackson-Barrett, 2021; McKnight, 2016; Nicholls & Steen, 2017) and Country as decolonisation

(B. Wilson & Spillman, 2021; Wiseman, 2021). I have addressed the gaps in the literature by developing a research project that concentrates on developing the cultural responsiveness of non-Indigenous teachers and Learning on Country initiatives in urban localities. This has been made possible through two professional development opportunities designed with Traditional Owners who have shared their wisdom relating to concepts of Country. One of the overarching aims of this research project was to elevate the voices of Wurundjeri to be heard and contribute to the visibility of their culture and knowledge in the curriculum. Non-Indigenous teachers needed to improve their understanding of Indigenous culture and histories. It was interesting to see the many epiphanies teachers experienced when the professional development sessions sparked critical questions about their upbringings and schooling. Teachers also left the sessions with the intention of completing research about their local areas and learning more about how they could embed this knowledge into their teachings.

Culturally Responsive Teaching and Appropriate Professional Development

When teachers access professional development sessions to improve their culturally responsive pedagogy, they must place themselves in positions of vulnerability. When teachers are willing to learn new things that go against the way they have come to understand the world, they must decide whether to disrupt the settler-colonial education system through epistemic reflection. Notably, teacher participants experienced uneasiness during the first professional development session. Most were ashamed that they did not know the extent of colonisation and its severity on Wurundjeri people and Country. Those feelings of embarrassment soon turned to anger as they questioned why they had not been taught about Indigenous people, history and culture. At different stages of both professional development sessions, teachers were asked how they would use these new understandings to embed Indigenous knowledges and to critique their thought patterns. Casting a critical examination of local issues is a crucial element of Learning on Country pedagogy as it mandates a process of decolonisation and appreciating the world through an Indigenous perspective. As teachers were encouraged to examine their lives critically, they were challenged on how they might assist students in decolonising their environments by using a Learning on Country approach.

When teachers were asked how they might employ a pedagogy of Country, they stated that embedding Indigenous knowledges was particularly difficult because this task was left to only a few and that a lack of support from peers and leadership hindered efforts. However, teacher participants believed teaching Indigenous content seemed less daunting when they were across terminology and understood how language could challenge deficit discourse.

Having access to teachers on three separate occasions for interviews that were staged evenly between the professional development sessions has proved crucial for the learnings of this research project. The discussions have helped to establish the case for why Learning on Country capacity-building opportunities are needed to assist teachers in overcoming the barriers they have encountered, as outlined in Chapter 6. Understanding the problems teachers have recognised, paired with the reasons teachers need to shift themselves epistemically, has helped participant teachers identify how they can better prepare themselves to teach Indigenous knowledges.

Crucially, teacher participants offer their self-reflections on the two Learning on Country professional development sessions so they could articulate where and how they could teach Indigenous knowledges in the curriculum. Teachers reflected on the informality and power observed with connecting and yarning on Country during the professional development sessions. They recounted what they believed to be the most valuable aspects to them.

> I liked that it was hands-on … more experiential learning, and we were actually outside. I really liked hearing the stories of how, for example, trees were used, and how they use the land. And just being able to explain the connection to Country. Using those stories, I think is really powerful. And I think for students as well, being a teacher, it's always a little more powerful than just reading about it in a book. It's one thing to say it on a PowerPoint, but actually, be out there and hear a story about you know, what actually happened, it does make it a little more powerful. (Andrew, Interview 3)

Andrew has shown an appreciation for the informal approach to the session. The relaxed session prompted rigorous discussion about power and knowledge as they asked whose knowledge is valued and why. Teachers discussed how the current curriculum mandates a standard approach limiting student-directed investigation and innovation. As teachers pondered the difficulties of standardised curricula, they offered that Learning on Country could be the answer to providing a holistic education that encourages students to care more about their community and the environment. Reflecting on the second professional development session, teachers believed a similar approach to teaching could provide valuable teaching opportunities where the mandated curriculum is currently deficient.

Teacher educators were enthusiastic about sharing their learning with their peers and disrupting the colonial curriculum and the mundane processes it necessitates. However, some of the teachers' answers represented an overwhelming theme; that is, expecting Traditional Owners to share knowledge. One teacher stated, 'I'm looking forward to speaking to the Traditional Owners further to see what they could offer me', which suggests that teachers need reminding that building relationships takes time. They also need to be reciprocal.

Further, teachers need to understand that Indigenous knowledges should not be considered as something that needs to be commoditised. I am confident that further epistemic reflection and deeper relations with Traditional Owners will alleviate participant teachers' sense of entitlement towards receiving traditional knowledge.

When teachers are receptive to reflecting on their epistemic knowledge, they make the appropriate strides towards better understand the world by being open to other cultural learnings. Through interactions with Traditional Owners and a deeper understanding of Country, the literature helped demonstrate that professional development builds the culturally responsive capacity of educators, which is essential for embedding Indigenous knowledges into the curriculum. This point is vital because it helps strengthen the argument as to why Learning on Country professional development is needed to build the cultural responsiveness of non-Indigenous teachers in Australia. Further, while teachers know how to embed Indigenous knowledges through the CCPs and according to the professional teaching Focus Areas 1.4 and 2.4, they still need help teaching Indigenous content. Culturally responsive professional development sessions strengthen the existing efforts to teach Indigenous knowledges through the CCPs and the APST mechanisms. Further, although Focus Areas 1.4 and 2.4 state that teachers should understand cultural and linguistic nuances and appreciate Indigenous values, I argue that the standards must go further because they alone are not helping teachers overcome their anxiety about teaching Indigenous content.

Ultimately, culturally responsive teaching is a fundamental concept for my research project and a pedagogical approach well suited to improving the delivery of Indigenous content taught in schools. The education system in Australia advocates for teachers to be culturally responsive. Schools and educators can achieve this by seeking appropriate professional development sessions, establishing relationships with Traditional Owners, and routinely epistemically reflecting on their values and ways of knowing. Incorporating such measures assists teachers in feeling empowered to navigate the mandated Australian Curriculum and embed Indigenous content through the CCPs, even with a lack of leadership and enthusiasm from peers. I also believe that due to the limited number of Wurundjeri educationalists, schools need to do more relational work with Traditional Owners to alleviate the burden Traditional Owners feel when asked to work with educators to embed Indigenous knowledges. Schools can also help teachers find suitable resources and allow time for teachers to translate these resources so that they are meaningful for their students while maintaining the cultural integrity of the knowledges shared by Traditional Owners.

To complement the literature review, extensive thought was given to the theory used to support the arguments in this thesis. The thesis predominantly used two theoretical underpinnings to illustrate how the Australian Curriculum has silenced Indigenous people and

culture. First, I discussed the invasion of Australia and the subsequent doctrine of terra nullius, which has used false narratives to maintain colonial education structures. Settler-colonial theory (Veracini, 2011; Wolfe, 2006) has illustrated how colonisation continues its ongoing motive to disconnect Indigenous people from their land through the 'logic of elimination' (Wolfe, 2006). Second, Foucault's power/knowledge theory has added weight to the argument that Eurocentric knowledge has been privileged over other worldviews and has maintained the narrative and lies they continue to reproduce. Power/knowledge and settler-colonial theories have been used to read the efforts made to render Indigenous knowledges invisible in the Australian education context as the primary motive of the colony, which is to access Indigenous land. Both theoretical underpinnings highlight the way settler colonialism is an ongoing project that seeks to sever the innate ties Indigenous people have with Country. This has been particularly effective through education, where students and teachers have received little education related to Indigenous peoples in Australia. I have argued that teachers can disrupt the power settler colonialism has embedded into the education system by improving their culturally responsive pedagogical approaches. This involves an increased understanding of Country, employing an ongoing epistemic reflection of their role in colonisation, and continued efforts to connect with Traditional Owners.

Connecting with Traditional Owners is not always easy if you have no experience working with Indigenous people. This is why the engagement work here between Traditional Owners and teachers is critical because the project has helped to form these connections much more quickly. The generosity of the Traditional Owners who gave up their valuable time and wisdom must not be understated and significantly contributed to the success of this project. This was mainly achieved due to the pre-established relationships I had built with them through work commitments and community work. Similarly, non-Indigenous teachers were also recruited based on the relationships I had formed with schools over the years. Building respectful relationships was a common theme throughout the project, and having these pre-established relationships proved very important. For instance, I had initially organised to work with two schools before the COVID-19 pandemic hit and protocols were implemented across Melbourne. Unfortunately, one of those schools withdrew from participating in the project. However, I was able to leverage another relationship and find a school to participate in the project without impacting my data collection timeline.

The methods used to carry out this research also required much thought. I wanted to ensure that the methods employed contributed to self-determination efforts and improved the visibility of Indigenous people and their perspectives through education. Forming a focus group comprised of Wurundjeri Traditional Owners was necessary to advocate for what they would like teachers to know about concerning their culture and knowledges. The focus group

sessions were also instrumental in informing and delivering the professional development sessions. Teachers participated in three interviews between the two Learning on Country professional development sessions. In those interviews, teachers shared their thoughts, feelings, and aspirations on topics such as Country, curriculum, barriers and beliefs. All interviews and focus group sessions occurred online to coincide with government-sanctioned COVID-19 protocols. Once COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, professional development sessions were conducted where observation notes could also be taken to record the conversations taking place between teachers and Indigenous presenters.

Most Significant Learnings

From the first focus group discussion, it was apparent why Traditional Owners (focus group, session 1) had chosen to participate: 'We want non-Indigenous teachers to have the desire to interact and teach Indigenous knowledge well'. According to AITSL (2022), Indigenous people value reciprocal and trustworthy relationships and perceive these qualities as essential to creating change. As this project evolved, teachers started to understand the importance of developing meaningful relationships with Traditional Owners so that their cultural responsiveness could improve as they endeavoured to embed Indigenous knowledges and disrupt settler-colonial curricula. Building relationships with Traditional Owners is also necessary so teachers can be better informed to help students become more aware of their communities' social and environmental issues, a core element of land-based pedagogy. Weak relationships with Traditional Owners and minimal efforts to embed Indigenous knowledges in the classroom will, unfortunately, draw much of the criticism place-based pedagogy is devalued for. For instance, it does not go far enough to foster conversations about colonisation and the prevalence of renaming Indigenous places with English names.

The research project has profoundly affected how participant teachers think about embedding Indigenous knowledges. They understand that while many barriers inhibit their ability to teach Indigenous content, there are still many opportunities to do so. Moreover, to do it well, teachers must show vulnerability when connecting with Traditional Owners because this can often be time-consuming. Further, teachers have been exposed to understanding and critiquing how they have come to appreciate the world through an ongoing process of epistemic reflection. In doing so, teachers can improve their cultural responsiveness because they can respond to how they interact with the world. Finally, through this process, teachers become critical of how they have acquired knowledge, how knowledge has been produced, and how they have become benefactors of knowledge production.

Additionally, as teachers have developed their concepts of Country, this a process that they must share with students to help disrupt settler-colonial curricula and knowledge production. Teachers believed that as their understanding of Country increased, so did their commitment and responsibility to embed Indigenous knowledges in the classroom. Through my analysis, I was able to ascertain that participant teachers felt more confident to:

- build on the relationships with the Indigenous people involved in this project
- ask leadership to support aspirations to embed Indigenous knowledges
- find appropriate Indigenous-grounded professional development opportunities
- identify places where Indigenous knowledge will fit into the curriculum
- source their resources
- take lessons outside the classroom
- reflect epistemically.

The Learning on Country professional development sessions within this research project increased the visibility of Indigenous people and their cultures in urban places. This was made possible by the direction and wisdom of the Traditional Owners in determining what they wanted participant teachers to take away from the sessions. Upon completing the two professional development sessions, the teachers could grasp the concept that they are always on Country despite the landscape being covered in concrete and buildings. The locations of the two professional development sessions were chosen deliberately to demonstrate the idea that teachers can travel easily, if at all, to be on Country. The knowledge the Traditional Owners shared helped to illuminate the understanding that Country is ever-present. This concept enthralled teacher participants, and they were excited to formulate lessons to deliver the wisdom given to them by Traditional Owners. Equally important, teachers understood the innate connections Wurundjeri people have with Country and why the value of this connection needed to be shared with students. Finally, teacher participants identified that these revelations could have significant implications when students inevitably go home and share this knowledge with their families and friends. Throughout the project, I showed participant teachers that it was possible to respectfully engage with Traditional Owners, gain their trust, and share their wisdom and aspirations to have their knowledge taught in schools. As a result, Traditional Owners felt comfortable sharing their innate connections of Country with me and further relayed these understandings to the teachers.

One of the most significant outcomes of the project was learning that Traditional Owners want their knowledge taught in schools and are happy for non-Indigenous to form respectful and reciprocal relationships with them. I also learned that the teacher participants wish to teach Indigenous content respectfully. The reflections of teachers assisted in forming

an argument as to why the capacity-building of embedding Indigenous knowledge is needed within the teaching profession. Much of teacher capacity-building opportunities relating to cultural responsiveness occur in initial teacher education programs, which disadvantage the already established teacher cohort (Jackson-Barrett, 2021). When participant teachers reflected on their recent experience teaching Indigenous knowledges, they identified many barriers to embedding it. They cited a lack of understanding as the most significant barrier in embedding Indigenous content, noting that this contributed to their anxiety and apprehension.

Additionally, participant teachers added that a lack of leadership and appropriate professional development opportunities significantly impacted their ability to embed Indigenous knowledges. When teachers did feel empowered to teach Indigenous content, they cited that they needed a variety of learning resources that were more specific to place and Wurundjeri people. Despite having diverse resources to draw on, teachers believed the mandated curriculum made it increasingly hard to go beyond a superficial understanding of the Indigenous content they wanted to teach. It is essential to know that the teaching barriers identified in this research project reflected similar results in the Australian literature (see Booth, 2014; Ma Rhea et al., 2012). Addressing the obstacles of participant teachers is necessary because it adds to the current literature highlighting the difficulties non-Indigenous face when embedding Indigenous knowledges. In addition to asking participant teachers to detail the barriers they face, I also asked them to identify the opportunities they feel are present in embedding Indigenous knowledges.

Asking teachers to identify the opportunities to embed Indigenous knowledge while having them epistemically reflect was essential to improving cultural responsiveness. Although teachers have identified opportunities to embed Indigenous content, this can only be carried out with the appropriate epistemic reflection and the desire to connect with Traditional Owners respectfully. The two professional development sessions helped teachers identify the opportunities and express the importance of attending such sessions and how they approached their lessons through a lands-based approach. Teacher participants were outraged to learn how colonial concepts of place have been used to displace Indigenous people and their connection to Country and were grateful to learn of the deep care and connection to Country Traditional Owners have. Teachers suggested that with an improved concept of place, they had a greater awareness of the environmental and social justice issues brought about due to colonisation. Teachers then concluded by stipulating they had a renewed enthusiasm to learn more about Wurundjeri people. They felt an overwhelming desire to share these understandings with their students and peers as they strive to improve their cultural responsiveness and disrupt settler-colonial curricula. Although the reflections were mostly

positive, teachers still felt Traditional Owner's wisdom should be given to them without doing the work of building strong relationships. It was then necessary to revisit why teachers need to reflect epistemically regularly; this process was discussed at the end of Chapter 5, which illustrated how teachers should engage Traditional Owners in a culturally responsive way. Some teachers found themselves falling back into old colonial ways of thinking, suggesting they were eager to reach out to Traditional Owners to see what they could do for the teachers when embedding Indigenous knwoledge. Teachers had to be reminded that respectful engagement with Traditional Owners meant the process of reciprocity and the acquirement of knowledge should not be a one-way transmission.

Learning on Country professional development increases the cultural responsiveness of non-Indigenous teachers because teachers are given the opportunity to interact with Traditional Owners and Indigenous knowledge holders. Teachers are allocated the time to learn new knowledge, reflect and ask critical questions about knowledge. The Traditional Owners understood the importance of allowing enough time during the two sessions so teachers could deeply reflect on the wisdom they had received while simultaneously unpacking why it has taken so long to learn this information. In doing so, Traditional Owners encouraged teachers to ask questions; offering this invitation to ask critical questions also meant that teachers could start developing relationships with Traditional Owners. It was also heartening to hear in recent conversations with teaching participants that they had been maintaining relationships with Traditional Owners to help design learning activities for their students.

Throughout the different stages of the project, it was evident teachers were willing to reflect on how they perceive the world and were very critical of the current education system's power for Eurocentric knowledge. Teachers could articulate this in their interviews and during the professional development sessions. As teachers grew more aware and vented their frustration, they actively sought opportunities to disrupt settler-colonial mandates. For example, since the professional development, both schools have engaged Traditional Owners and other Indigenous groups to complete murals at their schools and organise Indigenous cultural immersion programs. These examples have provided opportunities for their students to understand and appreciate the complex knowledge and cultural obligations Wurundjeri and other Indigenous people hold. The murals have helped increase the visibility of Wurundjeri culture, while the immersions have assisted in showcasing the diversity of Indigenous peoples. I argued that these two examples directly disrupt the project of elimination as theorised by Patrick Wolfe (2006). Finally, professional development helped teachers alleviate the stresses of embedding Indigenous knowledges. Teachers felt confident in building relationships with Traditional Owners, sourcing appropriate resources and developing and embedding Learning

on Country initiatives. Teachers also created their own walks similar to Billibellary's Walk. Producing walks that involve embedding Indigenous knowledges is an effective way to improve the visibility of Indigenous culture. Unfortunately, while the Organ Pipes National Park is a significant location for Wurundjeri, there is no signage to suggest that this site is of great importance, which is a lost opportunity in terms of disrupting settler-colonial narratives.

LIMITATIONS

The small sample size could be a limitation of this research project as the interpretation of the data could be seen as inadequate (in terms of needing a larger sample size to generate a broader range of conclusive information). A smaller sample size also meant there would be a more significant influence on data if a participant withdrew from the project. However, having a small group of participants made it easier to build close and trustworthy relationships with Traditional Owners and teacher participants, resulting in honest and detailed responses to questions.

I believe the research would have yielded different results had the focus group worked with Elders rather than Traditional Owners (younger members) who did not hold that title. Unfortunately, while I would have been humbled to have Elders join the project, I was encouraged by community members and other Indigenous people to approach Traditional Owners instead. This decision was made due to Wurundjeri Elders being stretched with many other commitments in the community and to avoid the risks of Elders contracting COVID-19.

Despite the limited number of teachers interviewed, the sample included participants from both independent and government schools. The sample size also contained men and women with diverse teaching experience within Melbourne, including teachers who had taught for decades and teachers who had graduated in the past five years. This range in teacher experience revealed similarities between the Indigenous learnings teacher participants received through their teacher training and their former schooling years. It also highlighted a real need for more professional development opportunities for educators because teachers want to learn more about Indigenous knowledge. The desire to teach Indigenous content is discouraged by school leadership, which often neglects to demonstrate and interest in this type of capacity-building work. In Chapter 5, I also pondered how teachers' responses would have fared if school leadership had made them participate. Perhaps this is a blind spot of the research and an element that would have yielded different results had the project included participants who did not see the significance of the study. Finally, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the interviews and focus groups were held through Zoom. This may have altered how participants engaged, answered and strengthened their connections with the lead

researcher. Given the COVID-19 restrictions in place, a relevant question arises: how would the research project have evolved if I had the opportunity to join teachers in their classrooms and help them deliver Learning on Country lessons?

Future Implications

Future research must consider how a larger cohort of educators might build connections with a limited number of Traditional Owners. For example, future relationship-building exercises could include working with local Indigenous education organisations to create a framework (step-by-step guide) for embedding local Indigenous knowledges in ways that ease the burden on Traditional Owners working in this space. In addition, potential future research might include working with local Indigenous organisations to develop a Learning on Country professional development session for education leaders and practitioners and produce related resources. Finally, COVID-19 made it difficult to interview people in person; face-to-face interviews could have provided an opportunity to create stronger relationships between teacher participants and Traditional Owners.

The scope of the research excluded understanding the student experience of being taught through a Learning on Country approach. This has been a deliberate approach because much of the emerging literature surrounding Learning on Country pedagogy in Australia has been around understanding the student experience. The gap I have sought to address is understanding the teacher experience, particularly the implications of teachers accessing culturally responsive professional development sessions guided by Traditional Owners. Expanding the field and further research would include following up with participant teachers to understand the different implications of their participation. Follow-up research should seek to understand if teachers have managed to sustain relationships with Traditional Owners and Indigenous presenters. It would also be interesting to know if they have embedded further Indigenous knowledges throughout the year and whether they have assisted their peers in doing the same. There would also be value in researching a larger cohort and comparing the data to draw further conclusions on the implications of Learning on Country professional development sessions. Lastly, this research has prompted me to hypothesise further questions as follows: What would a classroom look like if educators formed a deep connection with Country and Traditional Owners? How might we adopt some of the learnings from this project and apply them to a larger scale? What would a classroom that appreciated and included community members and people without teaching credentials look like? Each of these questions could be the catalyst for further research.

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