Chapter 10

Critical selection of curriculum materials

Tools for educators

Beth Madsen, Ren Perkins and Marnee Shay

Who we are

Beth Madsen

I am a Murri woman from South East Queensland, who grew up in Meanjin (Brisbane) on Yuggera country. My first teaching experience was in Goondiwindi, on Bigambul country. I will be forever grateful to the students that I worked with during this phase of my career, who truly taught me more than I taught them. While teaching across a variety of schools, both rural and urban, I have been asked by many teachers to help them embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives into their teaching. They often profess their best intentions, while simultaneously explaining their fears and hesitations about saying the wrong thing, offending people, and being unsure where to start looking for resources to use. These interactions with colleagues have fostered in me a deep passion for equipping teachers with the skills needed to appropriately embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges across all curriculum areas. I acknowledge that this can be confronting and difficult for some teachers, especially for those who weren't taught any Indigenous perspectives in their own schooling. However, I hope that this chapter can inspire teachers to be brave and take the first step in embedding. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history is Australian history, and vice-versa. By acknowledging our shared history, we can work towards true reconciliation as a nation.

Ren Perkins

I am a Quandamooka man with connections to Minjerribah or North Stradbroke Island. I also have connections with the Aboriginal community of Cherbourg, Queensland. Growing up Indigenous in an urban setting like Brisbane provided many challenges, barriers, and emotions for me, particularly regarding my Aboriginal identity. Growing up as an Indigenous young person in the 1970s and 1980s was difficult. In my experience, Australian society then was, by and large, white, Anglo-Saxon, and racist. There was little Indigenous culture present in any curriculum across Australia. This helped perpetuate the myth that Aboriginal people were 'dying out', that Australia was 'colonised' by the English, and that the unfolding 'white' history of Australia was to be celebrated and enshrined in our national identity. I had the

privilege of teaching Aboriginal Studies at TAFE for many years in NSW. What I was witnessing was how little knowledge Australians had regarding Australia's First Nations peoples. I had the opportunity to move back to Brisbane to undertake my Master's Degree at the Australian Catholic University and part of this opportunity included a teaching load. This experience gave me an insight into the contribution I could make to our future educators. I have had diverse experience in embedding in the curriculum, including in a Deputy Principal position at a flexi school in Alice Springs that included classroom teaching. I was working directly with the Australian Curriculum and I could see the gaps that were evident in embedding Indigenous perspectives across the curriculum. The focus of this chapter, identifying appropriate resources for teachers to embed Indigenous perspectives into their teaching, has been a skill I have developed over a long period of time. I look forward to continuing to contribute in positive ways to the field of education in Australia, by helping to prepare the next generation of Australians for an ever-changing modern society.

Marnee Shay

I identify as a Murri educator and researcher. Although my family connections (through my mother) are to Wagiman country in the Northern Territory, I have spent most of my life living and working in South East Queensland, where I have many community connections and therefore use the term Murri when identifying myself. I took my first post as a high school teacher at a flexi school on the Sunshine Coast, or Gubbi Gubbi/Kabi Kabi country. Nothing could have prepared me for how rewarding, challenging, and exciting teaching could be. I was also a teacher in communities south and west of Brisbane, where I worked in schools with high numbers of Murri students. By virtue of my culture and who I am, I brought many aspects of Indigenous knowledges and perspectives into my teaching. But embedding Indigenous knowledges and perspectives across all curriculum areas and whole of school practices was a specific skill that I felt my teacher training didn't quite prepare me for. I had an undergraduate degree in Indigenous Studies so I was eager to use this knowledge as well in developing curriculum, but I was challenged by what at the time seemed like limited resources to draw from. Fortunately, there is now a growing body of quality resources, Indigenous-authored stories and films and more willingness for schools to work collaboratively with communities. I hope this chapter will help in supporting teachers to embed Indigenous knowledges and perspectives and enrich learning about this great country and its 65,000 years of history for all Australian children and young people.

Introduction

As a group of Indigenous educators, we have observed the positive impact embedding Indigenous knowledges and perspectives in classrooms and schools can have for all Australian students. We have had varying experiences across different education sectors in how well supported we have been as Indigenous educators in our endeavours to embed this knowledge. Similarly, we have also had varying experiences of observing and supporting our non-Indigenous colleagues in doing so. In this chapter, we will share our collective experiences of our practices as classroom teachers. We will focus specifically on the skills needed to locate

Indigenous curriculum resources and materials as this is a core skill that teachers need in order to ensure they are not re-producing colonial and racialised ideas that should have no place in contemporary Australia. We also provide a tool for teachers that is a practical framework for selecting resources to ensure the materials are authentic, appropriate, and fit for purpose.

Chapter overview

In this chapter, we endeavour to give future teachers the historical and cultural context in relation to Australian histories to consider the implications for how these have been represented through social, political, and cultural discourses. A discussion about the power of language, cultural protocols, and the influence of the media will deepen teachers' understanding of Indigenous knowledges and perspectives. We provide a framework for teachers in selecting curriculum materials that represent Indigenous knowledges and perspectives, which we have called the YARNS tool. Our hope is that by the end of this chapter, teachers will be better equipped to embed Indigenous knowledges and perspectives within their own classrooms, using quality resources and materials to accurately represent diverse Indigenous peoples, knowledges, cultures and perspectives

Creating a balanced representation of our shared histories

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are the longest continuing cultures in the world. There is scientific evidence of Indigenous people's occupation in Australia for over 65,000 years (Clarkson et al., 2017). For a culture to continue for that amount of time, there is a huge wealth of knowledge, spanning all aspects of histories, pre and post colonisation. In this chapter we discuss the importance of embedding Indigenous knowledges in the curriculum, but to do so we must first look to history to understand why this can be a complex task. It goes without saying that Australian history was by and large written by non-Indigenous peoples. As Sarra and Shay (2019, p. 1) outline, "[T]he history of the First Australians has often been represented through the lenses of non-indigenous perspectives with little to no historical perspective recounting the lived realities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people".

The silencing of Indigenous knowledges began with James Cook's arrival on Eora country (now known as Botany Bay). Under 18th-century International Law, Britain could not 'settle' a country if it was inhabited (NSW Department of Education, 2015). If a country was inhabited, Britain could either purchase the land off the First Nations peoples or invade and conquer. Rather than admitting to stealing land that belonged to the Eora nation and the many hundreds of Aboriginal Nations that existed, the British colonisers chose to declare the land *Terra Nullius*, a legal fiction that means 'empty land', which was later overturned by the high court of Australia in 1992 (Reynolds, 1996). Therefore, the First Nations peoples of Australia were essentially classified as non-human, and grouped into a homogeneous culture that was classified as inferior to the European colonisers (Reynolds, 1999). It was much easier to portray a narrative

of Indigenous peoples as 'primitive natives' who were desperate for a superior race to provide enlightenment, than to acknowledge the British invasion.

Most Australians have heard of the concept of *Terra Nullius*, but many do not understand the ongoing implications that it has on social, political, and cultural constructs of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. The denial of Indigenous humanity and the false idea of European superiority has been deeply ingrained in policy formation and national politics, ideology, and values. Through the protectionist era, Indigenous people were separated from their country and forced into missions, allowing the British government complete control over Indigenous peoples' lives (McConnochie, 1982). On these missions, Indigenous people were not allowed to speak their languages, practise spiritual beliefs or follow their culture in any way. During the assimilation era, Indigenous children were removed from their families (commonly referred to as the Stolen Generations), with the intent to force them to forget their Indigeneity and assimilate into Anglo-Australia culture, thus obliterating Indigenous culture altogether (Australian Human Rights Commission, 1997).

These histories are what is often referred to as 'hidden histories', as they have not been included, or only superficially touched upon in the mostly Eurocentric curriculum – one that has ensured Australian history has only been recounted and learned about through the coloniser's lens (Hart, Whatman, Mclaughlin, & Sharma-Brymer, 2012). Phillips (2012, p. 10) explains that while all Australian history is our shared history, it is often "understood as separate". Phillips unpacks why this is problematic; on the one hand, when an Indigenous person recounts experiences this becomes known as 'black history', while at the same time a non-Indigenous experience becomes the "collective Australian story" (p. 10).

In 1967 a Referendum was held to allow Indigenous peoples the right to vote and be counted in the census. Over 90% of the Australian public voted to allow Indigenous peoples the same constitutional rights as every other Australian (Thomas, 2017) showing the beginning of a change in the perceptions of the public towards Indigenous peoples. Since that time, there have been repeated calls for constitutional recognition, treaties, as well as an increased understanding of the importance of recognition of Australia's Traditional Owners through significant policy changes, such as Indigenous histories and knowledges becoming a cross-curriculum priority in the national curriculum. Understanding the way that Australian histories have been positioned within the curriculum, policy, and also socially and ideologically, is critical to our understandings of how we view different materials and sources of information.

Judging a book by its cover – the power of language and imagery

Despite a clear legal precedent overturning the doctrine of *Terra Nullius* (see *Mabo vs Queensland*), many Australians do not accept the use of the word 'invasion' and instead use the terms 'colonisation' or 'settlement'. Amongst many Australians, there is a persistent level of ignorance and desire to look away from our history of dispossession, violence, and abuse, and pretend that Australian history is free from bloodshed. Quite some time ago this phenomenon was described as the 'Great Australian Silence' (Stanner, 1969). We suggest that repeated denial of

historical wrongs, along with the denial of 65,000 years of Indigenous knowledge, prevents Australians from moving forward towards a shared future. We need to recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history *is* Australian history and that it is only through acknowledging our shared history and being critical of the language describing this that we can develop a shared sense of what our full and embodied histories mean in this country.

We say this because language and power are interconnected (Mayr, 2008). More than one term may be used to describe events in any historical narrative. For instance, conscious use of terms such as 'settlement', 'occupation', 'colonisation' and 'invasion' will depend on the different worldviews and perspectives of the language users. The power of language to recognise, validate, or dismiss Australian histories is interconnected and will impact upon how we re-present particular ideas in our classrooms and in our work with children, young people, and their families. Language is particularly important as a means to educate us about the world we live in. For the First Peoples of Australia, this is vitally important. Language is not static, and our use of that language changes as well (Birner, 2020). It is, therefore, important that when selecting curriculum materials and resources that teachers understand the significance of language and its use for representing Indigenous peoples, non-Indigenous peoples, and Australian histories and cultures more broadly.

An example of how language use can shift over time is how the term 'Indigenous' has been used. The term 'Indigenous Australians' is an imposed term introduced by the Australian Government. It can be used to encompass both Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people, though preferably not for one or the other when it is known which group is being spoken about. There are many language guides available, for example, Oxfam (2015) developed a language guide in consultation with many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Although language guides are not definitive, the Oxfam guide explains simply how the terms Indigenous and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander have been used and their use now in contemporary Australia. They explain why using both terms need capitalising in writing and why the term Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander should not be abbreviated.

It is also important for teachers to understand that although one person may prefer the term Indigenous, another may not like it. As Indigenous people are not a homogeneous group, it is to be expected that people have different preferences with relation to language and how it is used.

The actual definition of the word 'indigenous' is 'occurring naturally in a particular place' (Oxford Dictionary, 2020). The term is used to describe First Nations peoples worldwide, such as in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. When used in an Australian context, it homogenises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures into one group, denying the rich and varied knowledges and traditions. For this reason, some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples reject the use of the term. However, 'Indigenous' can still be appropriately used, so long as the audience understand the meaning of the word, and are aware of the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. For example, within this book, the term is used interchangeably with the phrases 'First Nations peoples' and 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples', as the authors

are working off the assumption that you, the reader, have an understanding of the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. In a classroom context, the use of the term 'Indigenous', can be appropriate, so long as it is foregrounded by an explanation of the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

For these reasons, when selecting teaching resources, it is crucial to be discerning about the language they contain, and also as the teacher to be conscious to contextualise it. For example, teachers may wish to use historical records or policy documents within their teaching. Many of these documents use what would be considered today inappropriate and offensive terminology when talking about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, terms such as 'half-caste' and 'Aborigines'. The Aborigines Act 1905 goes so far as to give definitions of the terms. In the era, 'half-caste', 'quadroon' and 'Aborigines' were terminologies that were commonly used to describe our people. In today's context they are extremely offensive and derogatory terms. That's not to say that the Aborigines Act 1905 would not be an appropriate resource to use within a classroom setting, as it may be an excellent resource to demonstrate the historical conditions experienced by Indigenous Australians and for students to understand how Indigenous peoples were treated. However, it's crucial that it is given appropriate framing before being introduced and that there is a suitable introduction around the content to support students to understand why these terms are now so offensive. That is, students need to be walked through contemporary and appropriate terminology as well as the historical and political contexts of the resource.

Teachers must also be aware of the dynamic within their classrooms, as well as the maturity levels of their students, when presenting resources that may have inappropriate terminology. For example, whilst it may be appropriate to embed such content (as described above) within a year 12 Legal Studies unit, embedding this within a year 8 history lesson, such as about the Stolen Generations, would need to be done with caution, as students may be unable to understand the complexity of changing terminology throughout history and it could lead to introducing inappropriate terminology to young students who do not understand the racist undertones. There is clearly much to be considered to ensure maximum educational outcomes for all students, as illustrated in the example below.

A story from practice: From the outback to the city

Ren: Whilst working at Alice Springs, I had the opportunity to take some local Aboriginal students to a Sydney private school as a shared experience. The visit was to a large academic focused school, with high expectations, and at that time, there were no Indigenous students enrolled. The week was spent with our students sitting in on different subjects throughout the school. One of the subjects was science. Our students thoroughly enjoyed the experience, but I remember having a conversation with the teacher after the lesson. They asked me how they could embed Indigenous perspectives into that subject. They were wary of showing disrespect or getting things wrong and were seeking some advice. I pointed her to ACARA's illustrations of practice and their science elaborations to provide ideas and support for embedding Indigenous perspectives.

Creating dialogue and trust are important in supporting teachers in embedding Indigenous perspectives across the curriculum. This experience demonstrated to me that there is still much work to do with all Australian teachers, to support their practice, to ensure that all students had the opportunity to engage with the world's oldest living culture, knowledge, and history.

Understanding cultural protocols

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples place considerable importance on respect and observing cultural protocols. Using the correct language and observing protocols in the right place and context demonstrates respect to the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Some words and phrases, both written and spoken, may offend Indigenous Australians. For example, advice should be sought before using regional terms such as Koori (New South Wales), Nunga (South Australia), Yolngu (Northern Territory), Noongar (Western Australian) and Murri (Queensland) and on the use of the word 'black' in various contexts. It is, therefore, important that teachers also demonstrate this respect in embedding Indigenous knowledges and perspectives in their classrooms.

As outlined earlier, authoritative reference resources, for example, federal and state government style guides, are clear on the use of capitalisation of Indigenous terms, for example, whether to use elder or Elder, to avoid the incorrect use of important terms. Curriculum writers generally try to abide by these guidelines and use the correct language when writing learning materials. Furthermore, government style guides are updated regularly to ensure language changes are kept up to date so they can they can evolve and reflect contemporary Indigenous language contexts (Note: Some of these are listed at the bottom of this section).

Teachers often make use of third-party resources, including works authored by Indigenous Australian people, for teaching purposes. It is important that teachers are aware of the guidelines (as indicated above) when they copy or rewrite and that the language they use, and its meaning, is not removed or changed in inappropriate ways. A simple example of this could be the use of capital letters which are used to show respect and/or acknowledgement, for example, the use of the word 'Elders'. It is also important to acknowledge the contribution of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander writer. When older works are used, it will be obvious that the language may not be contemporary and unacceptable at the time. There are appropriate resources to assist teachers in the protocols around the use of language in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resources. Some of these include:

- AIATSIS - Guidelines for the ethical publishing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors and research from those communities (https://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-09/ethical-publishing-guidelines.pdf);
- Respect Relationships Reconciliation (https://rrr.edu.au/);
- ABC–IndigenousContent(https://edpols.abc.net.au/guidance/abc-indigenous-content/);
- Reconciliation Australia – Share Our Pride (http://www.shareourpride.org.au/).

Fake news? Understanding the role of the media

Through appropriate embedding of Indigenous perspectives, Australian teachers can challenge the negative representations and stereotypes of Indigenous peoples that are so prevalent in the media today. In this way all Australian children can

learn to "understand and acknowledge the value of Indigenous cultures and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from, reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians" (Education Council, 2019, p. 8). However, to do so, it is crucial to understand the role media plays in shaping our perspectives.

Whilst the Australian media plays a role in providing information about the society in which we live, it is important to understand that it also actively constructs that picture of our society and does so by choosing what it reflects and the relationships it creates and in this way it is influential in shaping public opinion. Think about the last time you saw a story about Indigenous Australia on the news. Was there some kind of controversy involved? Were the Indigenous peoples portrayed in a positive or negative light? Was there a non-Indigenous person commenting on Indigenous affairs? Was the report unbiased, or did it intentionally try to sway people's perceptions?

Often, when Indigenous Australians are presented in the media, they are portrayed as a 'problem' or an 'issue' and it is not uncommon for the majority of mainstream media representations of Indigenous peoples to be mediated, if not reported, by non-Indigenous people. There is also often some sort of controversy (for example, changing the date of Australia Day) within such reports. So, while the media plays a primary role in informing people about the issues concerning Indigenous Australians, it also plays a central role in the way this information is constructed – even controlling the discourse about what and who is seen to be Indigenous (and for that matter, non-Indigenous as well). There has been a long history of racist, distorted, and even offensive representation of Aboriginal people in Australia (Langton, 1993), and the Australian media continues to pander to racist stereotypes (Bullimore, 1999).

One way teachers can counter this is to utilise Indigenous media outlets. Fortunately, there is now an increasing Indigenous media presence available for teachers to draw from. These provide students with media that encapsulate the voices and lived experiences of Indigenous peoples, providing Indigenous voices and perspectives on current issues that students may otherwise not be exposed to. Some examples of Indigenous media that teachers can use to build curricular resources include:

- NITV – National Indigenous Television. This is a channel dedicated to Indigenous news, documentaries, sport, arts, movies, series;
- Indigenous ABC – ABC hosts a range of Indigenous dramas, documentaries, news, and current affairs;
- Koori Mail – iconic fortnightly newspaper (also available online), 100% Aboriginal owned and operated;
- First Nations Telegraph – free online national First Nations e-newspaper, 100% Aboriginal owned and operated;
- 'Speaking Out' – politics, arts and cultures from a range of Indigenous perspectives on ABC local radio (also available on podcast) by Prof Larissa Behrendt;
- @IndigenousX – rotating Twitter account launched to provide platforms for diverse Indigenous voices including actors, activists, authors, academics, teachers, doctors, university students.

A story from practice: Media influence

Beth: I was teaching a year 9 unit about cultural influences on sport participation. Throughout the term the class had been extremely culturally aware and very appropriate when discussing cultures that were different from their own. Late in the term, I had a student put her hand up to say: "my Mum said that all Aboriginals get free healthcare, and that her tax money shouldn't be spent so they can get stuff for free." This student did not mean offence and was just repeating what she had been told at home. I asked the class where people might find out this kind of information, and a few quickly mentioned various forms of media: the TV, radio, and social media. As a class, we discussed how everyone in Australia can access free healthcare, and how the media sometimes tells 'untruths'.

I was able to appropriately and calmly respond to this student, because I am knowledgeable on this topic. But it made me wonder how a colleague might respond, who is not Aboriginal themselves? How would they have the knowledge to skilfully unpack these racist ideologies that often present in classrooms? This highlighted to me the importance of teachers being aware of media manipulations, and where they can access media that comes from Indigenous authors.

When teaching any subject, it is important to be aware of the influence of the media in perpetrating and maintaining stereotypes about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and its role in promoting racism. One example of this was when a popular commercial morning television program featured a panel with no Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander participants, to discuss a very sensitive and complex issue surrounding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. These non-Indigenous panel members gave their opinions about this topic, by making strong negative generalisations about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as a group.

As educators, we have a responsibility to be aware of the negative influence the media can have on our society and remain vigilant about how to counter this powerful force. Teachers should encourage their students to critically discern what they hear and see in the media, in all its forms. By providing appropriate, factual, and relevant resources within your classroom, you are enabling young people to be in a better position to deal with the negative attitudes that are espoused by sections of the media.

Indigenous knowledges and perspectives

As educators we are in the privileged, but also powerful position of working with large numbers of young people. However, with great power comes great responsibility. In this case, teachers can be responsible for changing the narrative around Indigenous Australians (as well as the taken-for-granted assumptions produced about non-Indigenous people), by having a firm understanding of the truths detailed above. The information above regarding history, media, language, and cultural protocols is only the tip of the iceberg, and our hope is that educators would use this chapter as a diving board to continue their own education. These topics are both relevant background information, and Indigenous knowledges and perspectives that can be embedded into classrooms. In addition to this, there is 65,000 years' worth of knowledges and perspectives that can be incorporated into every Australian classroom.

What do we mean by the terms 'Indigenous knowledges' and 'Indigenous perspectives'? It is important to understand that the terms 'Indigenous knowledges' and 'Indigenous perspectives' are often used interchangeably. The Department of Education and Training defines Indigenous perspectives thus:

> Perspectives are ways of seeing the world. Perspectives affect the way we interact with the environment and the perceptions we have about ourselves, our culture and the way we see others.
>
> (2011, p. 21)

Indigenous knowledges are defined by Walter (2011) as

> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholarship, pedagogy, the cultural and specific knowledges of the many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations as well as the shared epistemological tenets such as relationality that define and delineate Indigenous knowledges from the Western frame predominant within the sector.
>
> (p. 1)

So, whilst differences are described in these and many other definitions, the key point to remember is that these terms are interconnected and shouldn't be viewed as separate entities: you can't understand Indigenous knowledges without Indigenous perspectives, and you can't understand Indigenous perspectives without Indigenous knowledges.

Quality embedding of Indigenous knowledges and perspectives benefits all students. The Australian Curriculum acknowledges this importance, highlighting two major benefits, including:

- that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are able to see themselves, their identities and their cultures reflected in the curriculum of each of the learning areas, can fully participate in the curriculum and can build their self-esteem;
- that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority is designed for all students to engage in reconciliation, respect and recognition of the world's oldest continuous living cultures.

(Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2020)

It is crucial that Indigenous knowledges and perspectives be included in our understanding of culture and Australian history, recognising the enormous contribution that Indigenous culture can make to all Australian students' understanding of their country.

Identifying quality curriculum materials for embedding

The ability to select quality teaching resources is a key skill that all educators across all subjects and topics need to develop. Via the internet, teachers have an unlimited access to resources and materials. However, the importance of being discerning about which resources to use for different learning activities is even more critical. Educators need to ensure that resources that they select are appropriate, meaningful, and that they represent the stories, knowledges, lived experiences, and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people rather than simply re-presenting historical misunderstandings and ideas that are underpinned by racialised ideas.

These curriculum resources provide teachers with cross-curriculum priorities in order to assist with embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives

across all subjects. The Australian Curriculum provides specific examples of resources that can be used to embed Indigenous knowledges and perspectives. While these resources are an excellent starting point for educators, ideally, teachers should be aiming to embed more localised knowledge and perspectives within their teaching.

It is important to note that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives should be present throughout all teaching units. Often, educators fall into the trap of planning whole units surrounding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, and while this is certainly important, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges should be embedded throughout other units. For example, within an English unit on Romeo and Juliet, students might compare and contrast the play with the story of Warri and Yatungka. This could be one activity amongst many in a lesson but gives students an insight into Aboriginal culture in Western Australia while focusing on curriculum-mandated materials.

A story from practice: Fear and avoidance

Beth: Across my various teaching positions, I have often been approached by colleagues to assist them with embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. To their credit, many are already doing a fantastic job with the attempts that they are making. However, they are often wracked with concerns, telling me that they don't know if they're saying the right thing, or if they are being offensive, or exclaiming how hard they are finding this requirement of the profession. I once had a colleague ask me: "But I'm not Aboriginal so why should I teach about that culture?" To which I asked: "Can a non-Italian Home Economics teacher present a lesson about how to make pasta?" One teacher asked if it is 'appropriate' for her to be teaching a culture that is not her own. A term later, I saw this same teacher deliver a year 8 history unit about Polynesian expansion – a culture that is not her own.

In my experience there seems to be a deep fear amongst non-Indigenous teachers of saying the wrong thing and causing offence, and this fear has led to an accepted avoidance of embedding. Yet by not incorporating Indigenous perspectives, teachers are sending the message that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives are unimportant compared to Western knowledges. While avoidance is unacceptable, this 'fear' shows that teachers are, generally, aware that there are huge gaps in their own knowledge. Within my six years of classroom teaching, I have taught many times outside of my trained subject areas, and I know this is an experience shared by many teachers. When I was first assigned to Science, Business, History, and Geography classes, I was terrified – how could I, as a PE teacher, possible learn the technicalities of these subjects? But I researched and upskilled myself in order to teach my students to the best of my ability. Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives needs to be viewed in the same light. By starting small (such as using the YARNS selection tool outlined below to demystify the process), all teachers should be able to select appropriate resources to use within their teaching.

YARNS First Nations resource evaluation tool

Often, teachers from English and Humanities subject areas find embedding much easier, but with a little bit of innovative and lateral thinking, Indigenous knowledges and perspectives can be embedded across all subject areas in meaningful and appropriate ways. While the most obvious way to embed knowledges is to use resources to explicitly teach, there are also other ways that Indigenous knowledges can be embedded in teaching.

First, however, there are a few quality checks to ensure that what is selected and taught is appropriate. The YARNS tool is one way that teachers can make sure that the source they have found is appropriate. While many guides

previously existed, the YARNS tool is an amalgamation of our own experiences as Aboriginal teachers, along with ideas from other frameworks including:

- *Selecting and Evaluating Resources Guide* (2007) by the Queensland Studies Authority;
- *Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives (EATSIPs)* (2010) by the Queensland Government;
- *The Aboriginal Education K-12 Resource Guide* (2003) by NSW Department of Education and Training.

This tool can be applied when embedding an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander resource into lesson planning and be used to analyse resources before their introduction into lessons (see Table 10.1).

As an example, the CSIRO Indigenous seasonal calendar (CSIRO, 2019) has been analysed using this tool. This resource shows traditional seasonal knowledge from seven Indigenous language groups and can be used across a variety of subjects. It must be remembered, however, these calendars demonstrate a

▼ **Table 10.1**
YARNS First Nations resource evaluation tool

YEAR	When was the resource written/made?
	Is it up to date?
	Does the year reflect contemporary Indigenous Australia?
	What contextual information would you need for students to understand the resource?
AUTHOR	Does the author identify themselves as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?
	Were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples consulted in the making of the resource and were they recognised for their contribution?
	Does the author identify the traditional owners of the country on which the resource was produced?
	Does the author (if non-Indigenous) clearly name their cultural standpoint and position they are writing from?
REPRESENTATIONS	Are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people presented in a balanced way, showing both historical and contemporary cultural practices?
	Does the resource use racist terms (uncivilised, primitive) for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples?
	Are there diverse representations of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples through images?
NOUNS	Are accepted descriptions/names for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples used in the resource?
	Are capitals used correctly in the resource?
	Is the language used contemporary and does it reflect contemporary language guides?
SENSITIVITY	Does the source name all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples pictured or group them into a homogeneous group?
	Is there cultural information that may not be appropriate to re-present (for example men's business or women's business)
	Does the resource have images of Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander peoples who have deceased and is there a warning about this?

▼ Table 10.2
YARNS tool in practice

YEAR	When was the resource written/made? Is it up to date? Does the year reflect contemporary Indigenous Australia? What contextual information would you need for students to understand the resource?	The resource was produced in 2019, making it quite recent. Students would need to understand the location of each language group for context and if not teaching in these contexts explain that there are knowledges like this in their areas.
AUTHOR	Does the author identify themselves as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander? Were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples consulted in the making of the resource and were they recognised for their contribution? Does the author identify the traditional owners of the country on which the resource was produced? Does the author (if non-Indigenous) clearly name their cultural standpoint and position they are writing from?	The resource is produced by the CSIRO, a non-Indigenous group. However, it does state that Traditional Owners were consulted in the creation of the resource. This is clearly stated on the website. Overall, the authors go to great lengths to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the information.
REPRES-ENTATIONS	Are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people presented in a balanced way, showing both historical and contemporary cultural practices? Does the resource use racist terms (uncivilised, primitive) for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples? Are there diverse representations of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples through images?	The resource uses present-day language, explaining that Aboriginal people 'hold' knowledge, rather than held. This shows the user of the resource that Aboriginal people are still holders of much knowledge. No ethnocentric terms are used.
NOUNS	Are accepted descriptions/names for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples used in the resource? Are capitals used correctly in the resource? Is the language used contemporary and does it reflect contemporary language guides?	The resource shows the diverse knowledge of country across language groups. No derogatory names are used.
SENSITIVITY	Does the source name all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples pictured or group them into a homogenous group? Is there cultural information that may not be appropriate to re-present (for example men's business or women's business) Does the resource have images of Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander peoples who have deceased and is there a warning about this?	No Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples are pictured. All cultural knowledge shared is done so with permission from Traditional Owners.

small fraction of traditional knowledge around weather systems, land management, animal migration, and food availability. The YARNS tool is unique, in that teachers may also use it as a way of framing resources. In the example below of using YARNS to analyse the CSIRO calendar, when considering the author, many frameworks would not allow this resource as it is not authored by an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person. The YARNS tool allows the teacher to see that the Traditional Owners have been consulted and properly recognised. When presenting the resource to the class, this understanding would allow the teacher to discuss the importance of Indigenous knowledges and knowledge holders (Table 10.2).

From this analysis, we can see that this resource is very appropriate for use in classrooms. Teachers may choose not to write out their analysis using the framework in this way, but it is a way to employ a critical framework for the selection of resources and materials.

Conclusion

Ideally, in the future, Indigenous knowledges and perspectives will be an integral part of the Australian Curriculum, rather than just an add-on as happens in many classrooms in present-day Australia. It is crucial that educators have a firm understanding of Australian history from diverse Indigenous perspectives, as well as the many Indigenous knowledges. Furthermore, an understanding of language, cultural protocols, and the influence of the media and how these are implicated in the ways in which Indigenous knowledges and perspectives are portrayed, is critical in providing all Australian students with quality information. These understandings, when paired with the YARNS tool, will hopefully lead to increased confidence for educations to embed Indigenous perspectives across their teachings.

Reflective questions

1. We discussed concerns raised to us by teachers who struggle to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives. Do you have any concerns about your ability to do this as a future teacher? Who could you go to for help with embedding?
2. Think back to when you were a student at school. What were you taught about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives? If so, how was this done?
3. After reading this chapter, how do you think could you embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives within your subject area?

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