Possum Skin Pedagogy:

A Guide for Early Childhood Practitioners

'Women Drumming' by Annette Sax, Taungurung artist. This image reflects a special ceremony on Taungurung Country. Women are beating on their Walert Walert (possum skin drums).

Sue Atkinson

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this document contains the names of people who have passed on.

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the Aboriginal people of Victoria as the traditional custodians of the lands and rivers on which this document was written. This document is inspired by the voices of Elders past, guided by the voices of Elders present and aims to strengthen the voices of Aboriginal children as future Elders. In this we honour and acknowledge Aboriginal Elders past, present and future.

Sue Atkinson and the Action on Aboriginal Perspectives in Early Childhood Possum Skin Pedagogy subcommittee, Annette Sax, Mindy Blaise, Melodie Davies, Sandra Dean, Denise Rundle, Kylie McLennan, Brinda Mootoosamy and Maree Sheehan would like to thank the following Elders and other respected Aboriginal community leaders who contributed their knowledge to this project; The Late Uncle David Tournier (Narrindjerri, Yorta Yorta and Wathaurong), Aunty Fay Stewart Muir (B.A Education) Boonwurrung and Wemba Wemba, Uncle Colin Hunter Jnr Wurundjeri, Dr Aunty Doris Paton (PhD Education) Ngarigo Monero and Gunai, Vicki Couzens (M.A Education) Kirrae Wurrong/ Gunditjmara, Lee Darroch (BSW) Yorta Yorta, Annette Sax (Taungurung) and Mandy Nicholson (BA. Indigenous Archaeology Hons) Wurundjeri.

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Contents

Introduction

On the land and waters that is now known as Victoria, possum skins had a central place in Aboriginal society.

A possum skin was an Aboriginal child's first blanket. The underside of the skin was incised using a shell or stone with symbols that were significant to the clan group and connected the child spiritually to the land and the spirit ancestors. Over time pelts and symbols would be added so that the skin would grow with the child. During their lifetime children would experience the many uses of possum skins in everyday and ceremonial life. At the end of life people were often buried in the possum skin that had been their cloak, their mattress and their blanket and significantly their link to their sense of place and the spiritual realm.

Kiella's Walert Walert by Annette Sax, Taungurung artist

As Aboriginal people were dispossessed of their land, culture, language, their children and life itself the possum skin was replaced by blankets distributed by the missionaries. These blankets did not provide the warmth and protection from the rain that the possum skins did and contributed to the ill health of Aboriginal people on the missions. The European blanket can be seen as a symbol of the dispossession of Aboriginal peoples in South Eastern Australia as its use parallels the forced decline in the making of possum skin cloaks with the cloak symbolising Aboriginal culture.

Image supplied by Annette Sax, Taungurung artist

Against great odds Aboriginal culture has survived and the making of possum skin cloaks has been revived under the guidance of the Elders. In Victoria today Aboriginal babies and young children are 'Welcomed onto Country' in ceremonies lead by Elders wearing a possum skin cloak who gift a possum skin to babies to begin their own cloak. Children may wear possum skins themselves at graduation ceremonies in Aboriginal early childhood spaces. Aboriginal children and young people have created cloaks at workshops lead by Elders and Artists and Aboriginal children across Victoria have learnt more about their culture as Elders share with them the meaning of the symbols on their cloaks through story telling. In Wurundjeri culture girls go through the Murrum Turukuruk ceremony, which is a Coming of Age ceremony where they are given two possum skins to create a belt that can either be worn at special occasions throughout their life, or while they dance. The revival of possum skin cloak making once again gives our children the opportunity to be wrapped in culture.

Embedding Aboriginal perspectives in early childhood programs

As Aboriginal peoples in Victoria are on a proud and empowering journey to reclaim culture many non-Aboriginal early childhood practitioners are also on a journey that may intersect with this revitalisation as they embed Aboriginal perspectives in their programs.

For many years a dedicated group of early childhood practitioners have been embedding Aboriginal perspectives into their programs across Victoria. More recently embedding Aboriginal perspectives in the curriculum continues to grow as a mainstream movement as The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework recognises that 'learning about and valuing the place of Aboriginal people will enhance all Victorian children's sense of place in our community.' (State of Victoria, Department of Education and Training, 2016, p. 4)

The Aboriginal early childhood community in Victoria has long called on non-Aboriginal early childhood practitioners to move beyond an Aboriginal inclusion that can be tokenistic and fleeting.

Artwork by Annette Sax, Taungurung artist, displayed at Boroondara Kindergarten

Embedding is a practice that suggests a position beyond inclusion in that Aboriginal perspectives are fixed firmly, deeply and centrally within the program. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal early childhood communities may be troubled by this concept. Aboriginal early childhood communities may be concerned about cultural appropriation or cultural theft as expectations of non-Aboriginal early childhood practitioners grow without the understanding of cultural protocols. Non-Aboriginal early childhood educators, aware of their lack of 'cultural competence' may be frozen into inaction in not 'wanting to do the wrong thing.'

This raises uncomfortable and complex positions across the early childhood sector as a whole. It is also a recognition of the reflection involved in making ethical decisions when embedding Aboriginal culture in the program and the partnerships and protocols involved in its authentic application.

This document aims to address some of the complexities around embedding Aboriginal perspectives and provide a framework for a way forward. Most significantly this framework is constructed in consultation with Victorian Aboriginal Elders and other leaders of the Victorian Aboriginal community through the lens of a 'Possum Skin Pedagogy'.

This is a timely topic as teaching Aboriginal children about and through possum skin cloaks is re-emerging in Aboriginal communities across Victoria. Their use in ceremony including births and deaths, signals the primacy of their spiritual significance in Aboriginal communities. This raises questions about the position of non-Aboriginal practitioners in teaching about spirituality through exploring possum skins and the limits and boundaries that the local Aboriginal community puts on this. Although the spiritual realm was an integral part of everyday life for Aboriginal people teaching about this domain is central to the place of Aboriginal people as educators in early childhood spaces. For the purposes of this framework I have attempted to address Possum Skin Pedagogy from two interrelated positions, the secular/every day and the spiritual/sensitive.

Protocols and Aboriginal perspectives

Before moving onto the framework I would like to note the protocols that must inform the construction of embedding Aboriginal perspectives in early childhood programs.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

WITH THE LOCAL ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY

CONSULT

WITH YOUR LOCAL ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY

IN THE

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

OF YOUR PROGRAM

RECOGNISE

THAT YOU ARE IN THE POSITION OF 'THE LEARNER' IN THESE CONSULTATIONS

BE AWARE

THAT CERTAIN TOPICS MUST BE DELIVERED WITH THE DIRECT INVOLVEMENT OF AN ELDER OR ANOTHER ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY LEADER

ACKNOWLEDGE

ABORIGINAL CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

SEEK OUT RESOURCES

THAT HAVE BEEN CONSTRUCTED BY OR IN PARTNERSHIPS LED BY ABORIGINAL PEOPLE FROM SOUTHERN EASTERN AUSTRALIA IN GENERAL

AND

YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY IN PARTICULAR

The seven narratives of the framework

From my consultations with Victorian Elders and other leaders of the Victorian Aboriginal community I have identified seven overlapping narratives. The first three narratives are based on spiritual or sensitive material and must be presented with the direct involvement of an Elder or another Aboriginal community leader.

1

The narrative of journey and healing

(e.g. tradition, loss, survival and regeneration)

Knowledge that community members may wish to share with children at an age appropriate level:

- From skins to blankets, how possum skin cloaks were substituted for blankets after colonisation.
- How reviving the making of possum skin cloaks reconnects people to culture and helps heal communities affected by intergenerational loss.

Follow up activity

Looking at images of Aboriginal babies and children in cloaks with children, talk about the emotions and sensations these children may be experiencing.

Adrian and Loren, Taungurung girls. Image supplied by Annette Sax, Taungurung artist.

2

The narrative of ceremony/spirituality

(with emphasis on the ceremonial place of skins in Aboriginal communities e.g. the place of skins in Welcome to Country, in births and deaths)

Experiences that community members may wish to explore with children

- Learning about totems and symbols of place and connection on cloaks.
- Exploring the place of possum skins in ceremony such Welcome baby to Country, and Aboriginal children's graduation from preschool.

Follow up activity

Find out about the traditional custodians of the land on which your centre stands and construct an Acknowledgement of Country with the children and use within the program.

The following example on page 12 is reproduced with the permission of Kylie Mc Lellan, St Peter's Early Learning Centre.

St Peter's Early Learning Centre Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land and waterways
On which we live, learn, meet and play.

Adapted from Wheatley Nadia, 2007, Going Bush

The philosophy of St Peter's Early Learning Centre (ELC) strongly influences the centre's pedagogy and practice. It gives a clear vision and direction, particularly the section "….value of respect for self, others and the environment; and to develop a strong positive self-image as well as the understanding of the rights and feelings of others" and "…integrated play-based programs…place(d) within our local as well as the Australian context".

From when the children commence in January they are immersed in an environment which is rich in experiences, offering a range of materials, resources and resonating opportunity to go deeper in understandings and learning, both for the children and adults, including educators.

One example is the Acknowledgement Card, showing the words (as above). This is displayed in the children's indoor environment. Educators hold daily 'Group Meetings' with the Kindergarten/3 Year Old Group and the Pre-Prep/4 Year Old Group. At a time that is relevant this is introduced to the younger, Kindergarten Group. This may be after they have begun to explore Aboriginal symbols in their play or following an incursion/excursion. The Acknowledgement is said prior to our meeting commencing. We explain the importance it holds, and is said before meetings as thanks from us to be able to be on this place, in this space and connected to this land.

We acknowledge to the children that the land we meet on is Boonwurrung land. That Boonwurrung people were the first people of this land. The children meet Aunty Fay Stuart Muir, Boonwurrung Elder, who shares stories and culture with our children and we acknowledge that Aunty Fay has given permission for our educators to continue to share this with our children throughout their time at the ELC.

The children acknowledge and use 'Womindjeka' as Boonwurrung language for welcome. In 2014 they created a Womindjeka sign which sits at the entrance of the centre to welcome everyone.

3

The narrative of Aboriginal literacy

(e.g. how children learnt the meaning of symbols through story telling)

Experiences that community members may wish to explore with children

- Reading the symbols on the cloaks, reading cloaks as a map.
- Learning what possums and other animals are called in the language of the local Aboriginal community.

Follow up activity

Sharing stories with children around possums by Aboriginal authors.

Image supplied by Annette Sax, Taungurung artist.

Children can make a 'cloak' from individual paper panels or pieces of paper bark joined together for display. The children can represent images from their environment that are important to them such as animals, people and places. If you intend to use ochre with the children check the protocols around its use (see Appendix 1).

The remaining narratives ideally involve the direct participation of Aboriginal people but could be considered to lay in the 'secular' realm. Non-Indigenous practitioners could explore these narratives after researching websites where they can hear the voices of the Elders in the virtual realm while waiting to connect with their local Aboriginal community.

4

The narrative of nature

(e.g. connections to Country, how our people got everything they needed from the land)

Suggested experiences

- Looking at possum skins as waterproof and warm in their use as blankets, cloaks and carrying babies. Looking at the variety of uses of possum skin such as drums. Exploring the life cycle of the possum. Exploring the habitats and lives of possums in urban/rural areas today.

5

The narrative of the family

(e.g. in the catching and uses of the possum skins the roles of men, women and children)

Suggested experiences

- Taking children to Bunjilaka to view possum cloaks and the tools used in their production.
- Explore the tracking skills employed in the hunting of possums by men and boys.
- Explore the preparation of the skins; skinning, curing, stretching, drying and treatment with animal fats by men.
- Explore the role of women in shaping, stitching and decorating the cloaks while being watched by young children of both sexes and girls of all ages.

6

The narrative of science and technology, continuity and change

(e.g. the use of tools in the construction of possum skins cloaks past and present)

Suggested experiences

- How can we join panels of paper or paper bark together to make 'a cloak' for display? Experiment with natural materials in the playground that can be used to join paper or bark together. Experiment with 'man made' materials that can be used to join paper or bark together.
- Explore how possum skin pelts were joined together using sinews by Aboriginal people in the past. Explore what materials are used today such as linen thread.
- Explore how designs were etched on skins using shells, bones and stone tools in the past.
- Explore how designs are burnt into the skins today using wood burners.
- Experiment with mixing ochre with binding materials to make paint using natural materials such as wattle sap, water, honey and eggs yolks.
- Experiment with 'person made' materials such as PVA glue.

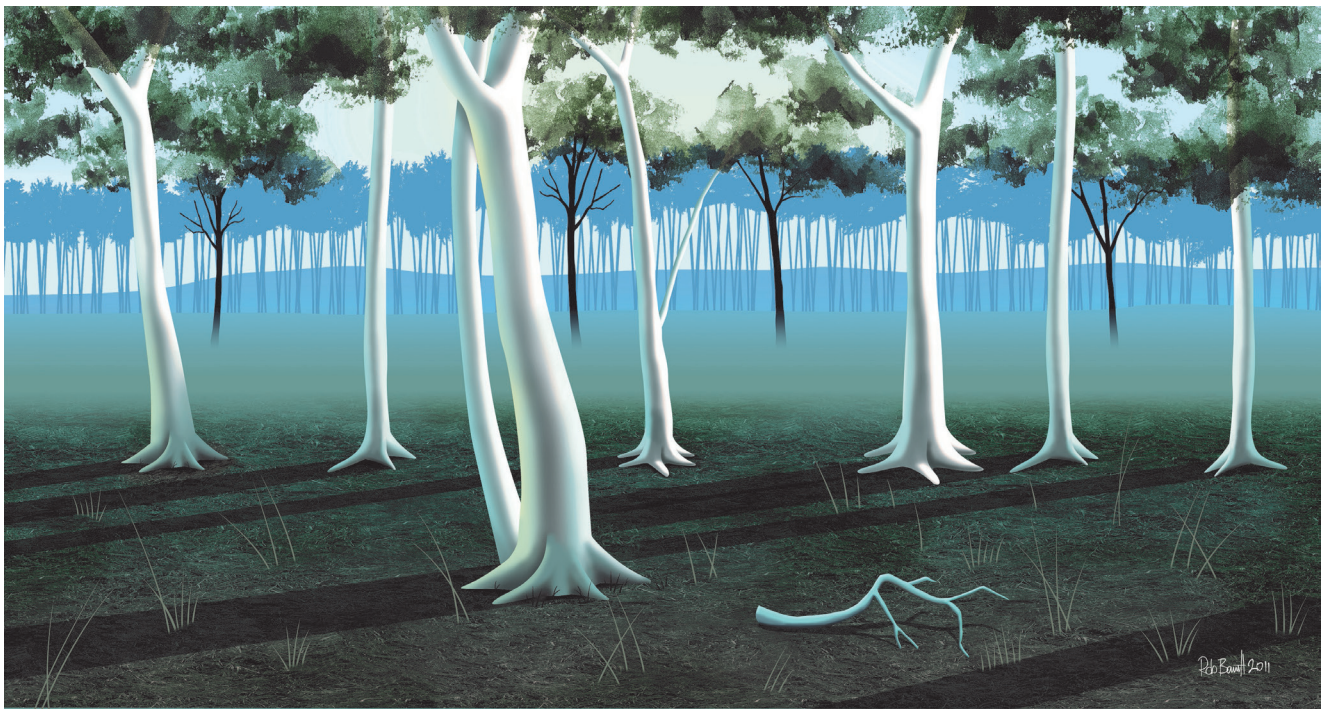
7

The narrative of recreation

(e.g. how Aboriginal children and adults constructed games for sport and education)

Suggested experiences

- Making/talking about possum skin balls and playing/talking about Marngrook which means 'game of the ball' in Gunditjamara language. Do some research on 'Deadly Questions you ask Aboriginal Victorian's Answer' website i.e. Did Aboriginal people invent football?
- Talk about Aboriginal footballers. Link Marngrook into discussions around AFL. Watch The Marngrook Footy Show on NITV.
- Play traditional Aboriginal children's games such as making and recognising the tracks of animals such as possums, recognising and imitating the sounds animals such as possums make.
- Watch out for the Wurundjeri Traditional games day on their Facebook page.



Ghost Gums by Robert Barnett, Yorta Yorta artist.

Questions you may have about this document

Why do I need to build relationships with my local Aboriginal community in particular?

Aboriginal communities across Victoria are diverse in culture and language. What may be suitable to teach about in one area may differ from what is seen as appropriate in a neighbouring community.

How do I go about building relationships with my local Aboriginal community?

Contact the following organisations/people for advice:

- Your local Aboriginal Lands Council
- Your local Aboriginal Cooperative
- Your local Koorie Education Support Officer
- Your local Municipal Council may have an Aboriginal Liaison Officer
- In particular reference to advice on building partnerships around the teaching of Aboriginal languages contact Aunty Fay Stewart Muir at the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages (VACL)

Ask practitioners who already have built these relationships in your community to introduce you to Elders and other community members.

Exercise patience, especially when building relationships with Elders as they have many ongoing commitments within the Aboriginal community as well as the non-Aboriginal community.

What can I do while I am waiting to make these contacts?

- Use materials developed by the Victorian Aboriginal community such as books, always acknowledge the author and the clan to which they belong.
- Educate yourself by listening to the voices of Elders online (i.e. Culture Victoria website, as they talk about the significance and the making of possum skin cloaks.
- Implement parts of this pedagogy - as outlined above in the last 4 narratives - to develop your knowledge, skills and experience.

What do you mean by acknowledging Aboriginal Intellectual property rights?

For example, Aboriginal symbols are easily accessed on the internet often without acknowledging their origin. Instead, use symbols that you have been given permission to use by an Elder or other Aboriginal community leaders.

Purchase authentic resources as described in Appendix 2: Indigenous resources – Buying the real thing.

What do you mean by being in the position of the learner?

When consulting the Aboriginal community, you need to take the position of an active and respectful listener. This may mean that you need to change what you had initially planned or expected to do within your program.

How is the term pedagogy used in this document?

Broadly, this term is used as the practice of teaching along with the knowledges, philosophies and protocols that underpin it. The possum skin cloaks at the centre of the 'Possum Skin Pedagogy' embody this concept as practice, knowledge, philosophy and protocol in place.

Issues that may concern children

The concept of killing possums by clubbing may distress some children especially as possums are often humanised in children's picture books.

You could explain there were no shops to buy meat or clothing so Aboriginal people took everything they needed from the land. Possums were killed quickly and humanely and nothing from the possum was wasted. Aboriginal people looked after possums while they were alive by making sure that they had a good place to live and healthy food to eat by looking after the bush they lived in.

Recommended resources and references

Resources with a focus on the themes identified in this project

Children's books

Deans Footy Song by Aunty Wendy. Blake Education, 2009.

Dreamtime at the 'G by Alinta Hayes & Andrew Nelson. Indij Readers, 2007.

Marngrook: The long ago story of Aussie Rules by Titta Secombe; illustrated by Grace Fielding. Magabala Books, 2012.

Possums on the Roof by Sue Briggs Pattison & Bev Harvey; illustrated by Elaine Russell. Scholastic Australia, 1998.

Scaly-tailed Possum and Echidna by Cathy Goonack; illustrated by Katrina Goonack, Marlene Goonack & Myron Goonack. Magabala Books, 2010.

Welcome to Country by Aunty Joy Wandin Murphy; illustrated by Lisa Kennedy. Black Dog Books, 2016.

What I Wanna Be, Indij Readers for Little Fullas: Series 3 by Chasity Prior, Kelli Mcintosh, Phillip Murray & Sharon Hughes; illustrated by Peter McKenzie. Indij Readers, 2007.

What We Count: Then and Now, Indij Readers for Little Fullas: Series 1 by Helen Empacher, Bianca Briggs, Tu Roper, Nioka Doolan & Ernie Blackmore. Indij Readers, 2003.

Yurri's Manung by Sue Atkinson & Annette Sax. Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages, 2013.

Adult books

Lady of the Lake: Aunty Iris's Story by Aunty Iris Lovett Gardiner. Koorie Heritage Trust, 1997.

Mildura Welcome Baby to Country: A strength based approach to Aboriginal community wellbeing, story told by Rose Gilby & Jill Antoine; edited by Karen Adams. Monash University, Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Science, Gukwonderuk Indigenous Engagement Unit, 2015.

Wrapped in a possum skin cloak: The Tooloyn Koortakay collection in the National Museum of Australia by Amanda Jane Reynolds in collaboration with Debra Couzens, Vicki Couzens, Lee Darroch & Treahna Hamm. National Museum of Australia, 2005.

Additional resources

Children's books

Adventures of the Little Black Trackas resource kit (four books, poster and CD) by Hall, M & Saunders, G Neenann. SNAICC. VIC, Australia. N.D.

At the Billabong (2009), People and Places (2008), Animals (2008), small board books series written by Debbie Austin. Discovery Press.

Big Rain Coming by Katrina Germein; illustrated by Bronwyn Bancroft. Puffin Books, 2002.

Fair Skin Black Fella by Renee Fogorty. Magabala Books, 2010.

How the Murray River was made: A Bangerang Story by Irene Thomas & Robert Brown. The University of Melbourne's Early Learning Centre, 2007.

Kuppi's Clever Surprise Plan by J. Ruhle & N. Lewis. Brotherhood of St Laurence with the assistance of AXA, 2011.

Sorry Sorry by Anne Kerr. Boolarong Press, 2014.

The Hairy One by Wendy Notley; illustrated by Elaine Russell. Blake Education, 2009.

Wilam: A Birrurung Story by Aunty Joy Murphy Wandin and Andrew Kelly; illustrated by Lisa Kennedy. Black Dog, 2019.

Adult books

First People: The Eastern Kulin of Melbourne, Port Phillip and Central Victoria by Gary Presland. Museum of Victoria, 2010.

Koorie Plants Koorie People: Traditional Aboriginal Food, Fibre and Healing Plants of Victoria by Nelly Zola & Beth Gott. The Koorie Heritage Trust. VIC, Australia. 1992.

Meereng-An-Here is my Country: The Story of Aboriginal Victoria Told Through Art edited by Chris Keeler & Vicki Couzens. The Koorie Heritage Trust. VIC, Australia. 2010.

Myernila – Listen Continuously: Aboriginal Creation Stories of Victoria by Arts Victoria with Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages.

Nganga: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Words and Phrases by Aunty Fay Muir & Sue Lawson. Black Dog Books. NSW, Australia. 2018.

People of the Merri Merri: The Wurundjeri in Colonial Days by Isabel Ellender & Peter Christiansen. Merri Creek Management Committee. N.D.

The Aboriginal Early Childhood Practice Guide by Jessica Staines & Red Ruby Scarlet. MULTIVERSE Publishing, 2018.

The Little Red Yellow Black Book: An introduction to Indigenous Australia (Third Edition) by Aboriginal Studies Press, 2012.

The Melbourne Dreaming by Meyer Eidelson. Aboriginal Studies Press, 1997.

The People of Budj Bim by the Gunditjmara people with Gib Wettenhall. emPRESS Publishing, 2010.

The People of Gariwerd: The Grampians Aboriginal Heritage by Gib Wettenhall. Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, 1999.

Voices and Visions: Aboriginal Early Childhood Education in Australia edited by Karen Martin. Pademelon Press. NSW, Australia. 2016.

Welcome to Wurundjeri Country: The Wurundjeri History of Yarra by Emily Fitzgerald & Daniel Ducrou. Yarra City Council. VIC, Australia. 2014.

Where Were You? Book commemorating the National Apology by Link-Up Victoria. 2013.

General books for older children and adults

The Rabbits by John Marsden and Shaun Tan. Thomas, C Lothian Pty Ltd. VIC, Australia. 1998.

Took the Children Away by A. Roach & H. Hunter with P. Hudson. One Day Hill Pty Ltd. VIC, Australia. 2010.

Websites

Culture Victoria
www.cv.gov.au/stories/aboriginal-culture/possum-skin-cloaks

Dadirri Inner Deep Listening and Quiet Still Awareness
www.miriamrosefoundation.org.au/about-dadirri

Days of Significance in the Indigenous Calendar - VAEAI Koorie Education Calendar 2018
www.org.au/-uploads/rsfil/000403-bdcc.pdf

Deadly Questions - You Ask, Aboriginal Victorians Answer
https://deadlyquestions.vic.gov.au/

Kooramook yakeen: possum dreaming by Vicki Couzens
www.cv.vic.gov.au/stories/aboriginal-culture/possum-skin-cloaks/kooramook-yakeen-possum-dreaming-by-vicki-couzens

Little Long Walk
www.youtube.com/watch?v=zcHcmPKDLcs

Lou Bennett
https://youtu.be/g5YhRhjOBo

Marngrook Footy Show
www.sbs.com.au/nitv/marngrook-footy-show

Naghlingah Boorais: Beautiful Children
www.museumvictoria.com.au/bunjilaka/visiting/birrarung-gallery/artist-profiles/naghlingah-boorais-beautiful-children

Narragunnawali
www.narragunnawali.org.au

Story by Uncle Larry Walsh (Australian Centre for Contemporary Art)
https://soundcloud.com/acca_melbourne/story-by-uncle-larry-walsh

Tanderrum - 2018 Melbourne International Arts Festival
www.festival.melbourne/2018/events/tanderrum

The Eight-Way Frame of Aboriginal Pedagogy
https://vickidrozdoowski.files.wordpress.com/

Yarn Strong Sista
2/88-96 Western Avenue, Westmeadows VIC | www.yarnstrongsista.com

Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA)
www.vacca.org/wrapped-in-culture-exploring-identity-through-possum-skin-cloak-making

Wurundjeri Traditional Games Day Facebook Page
https:www.facebook.com/events/wurundjeri-traditional-games-day

Organisations

Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre, Melbourne Museum
www.museumvictoria.com.au/bunjilaka

Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Childcare (SNAICC)
www.snaicc.org.au

State Government of Victoria, Department of Education and Training, Aboriginal Early Years Support
www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/aboriginal/Pages/aboriginalsupport.aspx

Koorie Engagement Support Officer (KESO)
www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/wannikregional.aspx

Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI), Early Childhood Unit
www.vaeai.org.au

Teaching resources

Koorie Heritage Trust
Levels 1 and 3, Yarra Building Federation Square, Melbourne VIC | www.koorieheritagetrust.com.au

Yarn Strong Sista
2/88-96 Western Avenue, Westmeadows VIC | www.yarnstrongsista.com

Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages (VACL)
70 Hanover Street, Fitzroy VIC | www.vaclang.org.au

Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA)
340 Bell Street, Preston VIC | www.vacca.org

References

State Government of Victoria (Department of Education and Training) Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework. 2016.

Appendix 1:

Protocols around using ochre

Ochre an earth pigment has been used for tens of thousands of years by Aboriginal Victorians in ceremonies and in art on bark, caves and possum skins. This tradition continues today as Victorian communities continue to practice their culture. An example of this is The Kulin Tanderrum, a revival of a ceremony practiced since time immemorial by the five clans of the Kulin Nation: the Wurundjeri, Boon Wurrung, Taungurung, Dja Dja Wurrung and Wadawurrung peoples. The ceremony is led by Elders of these clans and honours the Lore of Bunjil the great creator spirit. Dancing is central to this ceremony with young male dancers being 'painted up' with ochre by adult males and young female dancers 'painted up' by adult women. Dancers also wear ornamentation significant to such ceremonies on their heads and bodies.

In respecting the spiritual significance of ceremony, we ask that 'mainstream' early childhood centres do not paint children's bodies with ochre or pretend to be Aboriginal children.

Photo of Iluka dancing at Tanderrum Ceremony, by Ruby Gayle used with permission of Annette Sax.

Using ochre in art is also built on respect for Aboriginal culture. Keeping in mind ochre's spiritual connection with the land, ceremony and the arts the gathering of ochre continues to reflect the protocols and respect with which it has been gathered over millennia.

Younger artists may be shown by their Elders the special places to gather ochre on County where their ancestors would have also gathered ochre. This is done sparingly in accordance with the principles of sustainability that guided our ancestors. Don't expect Aboriginal visitors to your centre to share this knowledge with you, but you may be gifted ochre by an Aboriginal visitor to your centre. Please use sparingly when children are using this in their art and reflect on how the Aboriginal visitor worked with and spoke with the children about the ochre then apply this respectfully to your program.

Appendix 2:

Indigenous resources – Buying the real thing

Reproduced with permission of the author, Brian Newman University of Melbourne (2016).

As early childhood educators we work hard to find ways to make Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures visible in our programs. This may often involve purchasing resources such as posters, puzzles, play mats and books with Aboriginal designs and motifs. But have you thought about whether the designs are the real thing?

Aboriginal art is important, both here and internationally, and the use of symbols and designs is an expression of aspects of culture significant to particular communities. Artists paint from their stories and often have to get permission from elders to use particular designs that tell particular stories. As the art and designs depict stories and have spiritual meaning, they remain important cultural symbols for Aboriginal people, and are not simple commodities to be traded or copied. It is not appropriate for anyone to steal these designs and particularly to use them for gain.

So when buying resources to use in your teaching about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia, do ensure that the resources you buy are authentic. This doesn't necessarily mean only buying things direct from Indigenous organisations, but only buying items that depict Aboriginal art and design when an Aboriginal artist has given permission – and has been paid - for their work to be reproduced or copied. Not only are you helping to establish economic independence for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and communities, but you are also ensuring the integrity of your teaching resources.

On the other hand, don't simply assume that any 'Aboriginal' style item sold by a major company is not authentic. Companies will often do the right thing and buy licences from the original artists to use their art work on commercial products. For example, you can buy umbrellas depicting Aboriginal art that are properly licensed, and there are even mobile phone covers – produced from the US – that use authentic licensed art.

Indigenous art represents cultural history of Australia's First Peoples and should be displayed and used respectfully. In the same way that we have learned that getting children doing 'dot painting' or cutting out boomerangs, may not be the most authentic way to present Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures to children, using unauthorised or unlicensed art work is cultural appropriation. The motifs and symbols used in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and design will hold special cultural significance to the artist and their community. These expressions of cultural heritage – including stories as well – belong to the community, who have the right to control their use. And there is added value as money raised goes back into communities, rather than to external parties.

Unfortunately there is no widely recognised symbol or tag that tells you whether Aboriginal art or designs used on goods are authentic. There have been efforts to establish a system, but so far with little success. The Indigenous Art Code is probably the most recognised accreditation system but it really only covers art and crafts, so when you buying in the broader market there aren't signs to look out for. This means that we have to use our own judgement when buying resources, so here are a few pointers to guide your decisions:

- When buying equipment, if the designs are labelled as or 'look' like they are Aboriginal, see if an artist is acknowledged. If the artist and their country or clan is named it is more likely to be authentic and ethically used.
- Look for some indication that the use of the design is licensed.
- When buying books with Aboriginal designs, read the illustrator's biography.
- Buy from reputable sources, such as specialist organisations (e.g. SNAICC) or businesses that specialize in Indigenous education and resources (e.g. Yarn Strong Sista).
- Art gallery shops are often a good source of appropriately sourced books.
- Buy local resources. Try to find resources from your local area as stories, traditions, language and ways of living vary from place to place. For example, it is more relevant to focus on your local Aboriginal languages, whilst still using books that have other languages. In general, it's easier to find picture books in languages that are more used.
- If in doubt, ASK!

Don't be afraid to ask a stockist if something is authentic, and if it isn't, tell them why you won't buy it and suggest they do it correctly. It's a small step, but an important action to support the artists that have shared their stories with us. Here is an example of what you could write or say:

> *Thank you for your response. As the Aboriginal designs depicted on the equipment are not authentic, we will not purchase them. We ask you to withdraw this product from sale and consider engaging Aboriginal artists to design such equipment as the motifs and form of Aboriginal art is the cultural heritage owned by the various communities.*

Having resources that reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander peoples, histories and cultures can help early childhood services embed Indigenous perspectives into our programs. Taking care when buying these resources not only helps us be more authentic in our work, but also contributes to the economic futures of Indigenous communities.

For more information about Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property:

www.artslaw.com.au/info-sheets/info-sheet/indigenous-cultural-and-intellectual-property-icip-aitb/