

# Early years practice using Aboriginal learner cultural strengths? Culturally responsive pedagogies in dialogue with Reggio Emilia

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Distinguished Professor Lester-Irabinna Rigney BEd, MEd, PhD,  
MACE  
Kings College, London  
University of South Australia





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What is the place of the child in society?

What is the purpose of schooling? [teleology/telos]

Whose in

Whose out

What are we going to do about?

The lion and Liberty

What say you defender of the child



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# What we know: Practitioner practice & shift

Distinguished Professor Rigney  
Longitudinal Research

**Zubrick, S. et.al, Improving the educational experiences of Aboriginal children WA. 2006-2008**

**\$12M, Footprints in Time - The Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children (LSIC) 1,759 children, 1,200 parents, 2008-2018.**

**\$535K, Australian Research Council, Towards An Australian Culturally Responsive Pedagogy. 2017-2020.**

**\$250K, Learning to live together - How educators enact culturally responsive pedagogy & Reggio Emilia principles in early learning with Aboriginal students & students from diverse backgrounds. 2018-2019**

**\$500K, Australian Research Council, Centering Aboriginal Voices In Culturally Responsive Pedagogies For Rural Areas, 2020-2023**



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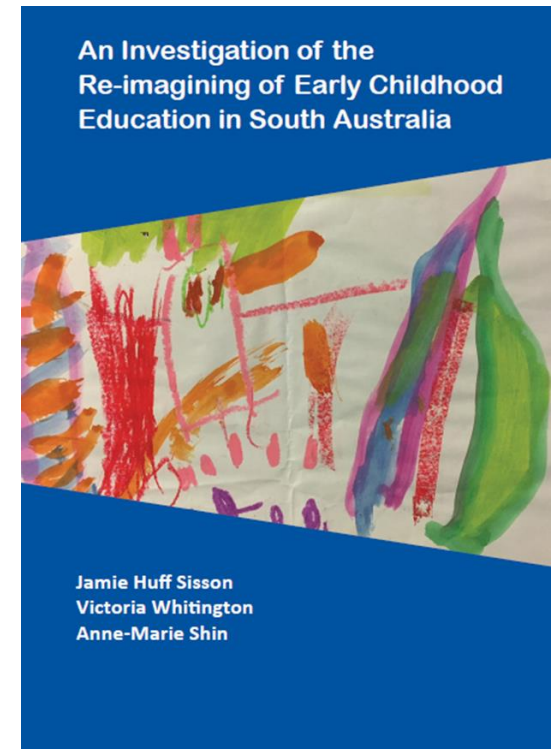
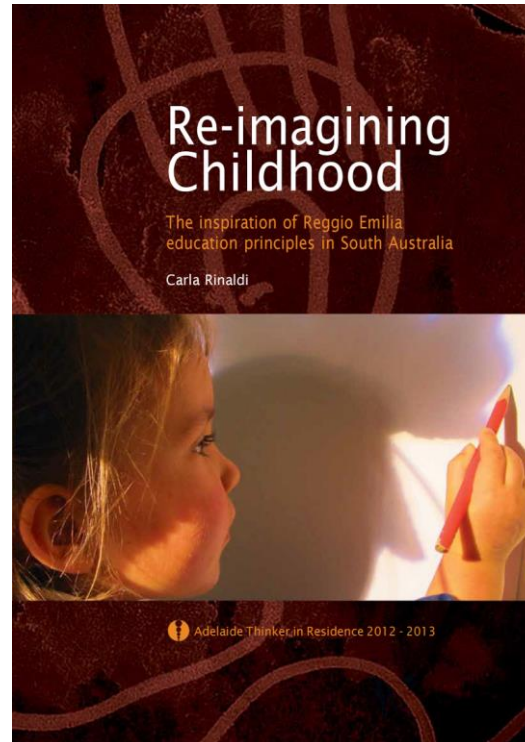
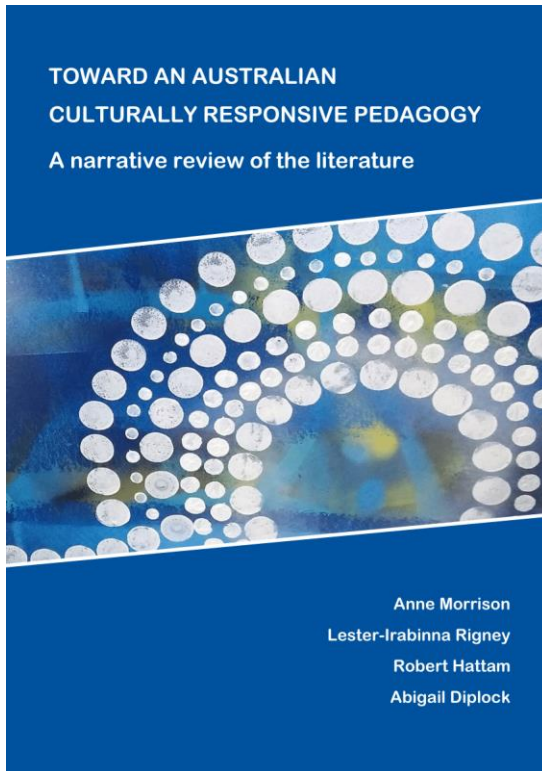
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# Reimagining ECE in SA 2012



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What is happening practitioner work?  
What does it mean for educators to redesign relationships?



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**The South Australian Collaborative Childhood Project**  
Trish Tranfa, Anne Marie Hayes & Kate Ryan

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# How educators enact culturally responsive pedagogy & Reggio Emilia principles in early learning with Aboriginal students & students from diverse backgrounds 2018-2019

Engaging teachers as co-researchers

Engaging students as researchers and linguistic ethnographers of their own cultures, language & literacy practices

Enhancing Learning by building on children's linguistic Repertoires to enrich learning

Child as knowledge producer

EC centre as knowledge producer

**8 ECE centres** [5 Metro Adelaide, 3 Regional SA]

**Years 1-5** with high enrolments of children Aboriginal, EAL/D Learners, Govt Card holders

**8 Directors, 16 EC staff**, Approx **370** children total: **1/3** Aboriginal



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**Rigney, Sisson & Hattam 2019**

**Research partnership between University of SA  
& SA Department of Education 2018-2019**

## Aims

- Investigate educator enactment of CRP & RE in early learning Indigenous & diverse backgrounds
- Engage students as inquirer using their linguistic & cultural repertoires
- Develop pedagogies based on that mapping to address curriculum outcomes
- Trial pedagogy & practices that incorporate this knowledge into learning
- Evaluate the impact of these practices and processes on learning

## Data Sources

<b>Teacher reflections</b>	Notes, journal, audio-journal
<b>Significant teaching moments</b>	video, audio, observer, photos
<b>Student understandings</b>	student journals, interviews, focus groups, class meetings, surveys
<b>Evidence of student learning</b>	attendance data, samples of student work, test results
<b>Artefacts</b>	assessment plans, assignments, rubrics

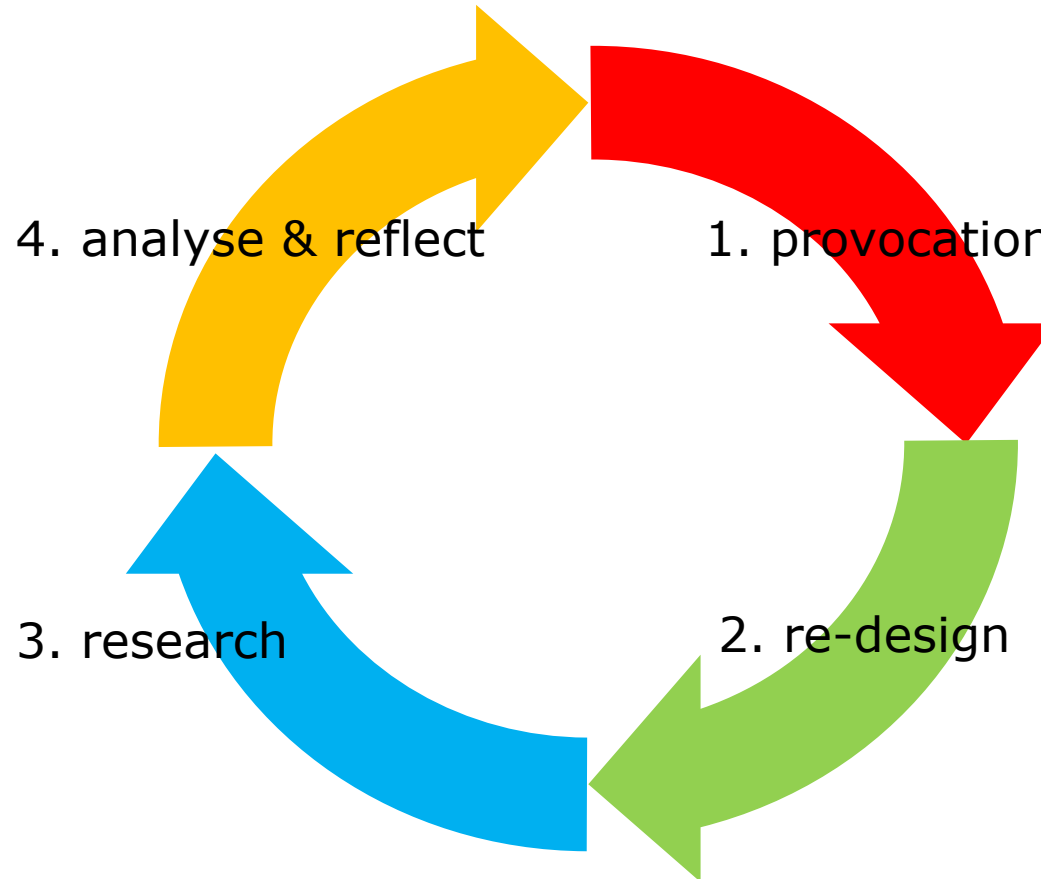


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**Rigney, Sisson & Hattam 2019**

**Research partnership between University of SA  
& SA Department of Education 2018-2019**

# Action research cycle: Practitioner inquiry



**We are investigating Practice & co constructed context strength place based Pedagogy using provocation through Practitioner as competent inquirer to capture shift from transmission to dialogue. NO GURU Professional Develop**



Culturally  
Responsive  
Pedagogies

Aboriginal  
Knowledges  
identity



**Democratic  
Pedagogy**



Reggio  
Emilia

Constructivism  
Pedagogies



# Rationales

1. Appalling delivery of Aboriginal outcomes (Prime Minister 2018)
2. Rapid rise of super-diversity and super complexity in sites of learning (Vertovec 2007)
3. Few practice examples of pedagogies undertaken in super-diverse ECE (Rigney 2010)
4. The urgent need to support professional growth of EC workforce to being responsive to the strengths and needs of all learners. (Comber)
5. Prevailing discourses and narratives that position the child as the problem who is deficit, weak & needy (Rinaldi 2013)





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Simple strategies that reinforce a students sense of  
belonging can boost individual achievement and  
sharply reduce the achievement gap  
**(Yeager and Walton 2011)**



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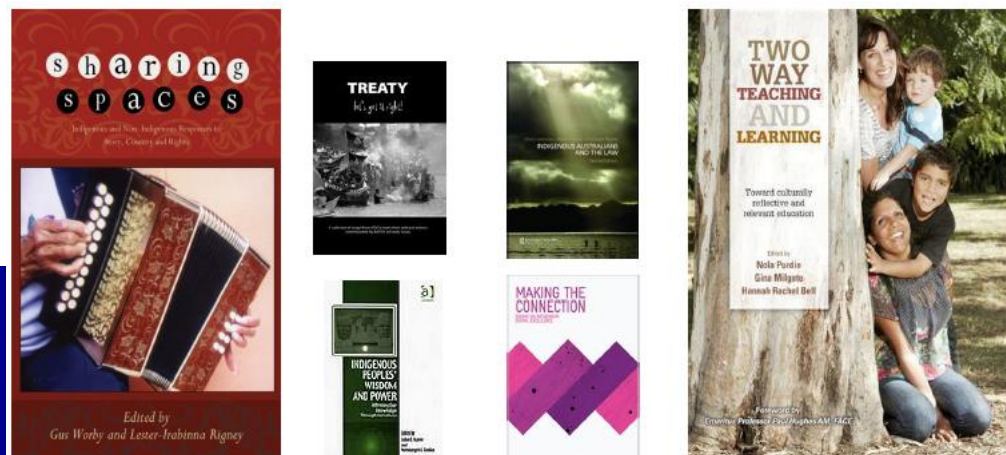
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**EC must embed Aboriginal knowledges, skills, language, culture, and ways of learning  
(Rigney 2008)**

**Effective learning requires the child and Adult share cultural values and patterns and  
that they communicate effectively  
(Trueba 1988)**

**Cultural connection plays a key role in successful  
educational outcomes for Indigenous peoples.  
(Karen Martin 2005)**



# Our focus on redesigning curriculum and pedagogy

- **Focusing on practitioner shifts in pedagogy and curricular**
- **Sustain professional learning communities for practitioners**
- **Taking seriously localized pedagogical challenges of practitioner**
- **Unsettling deficit views of students and their communities**
- **Treating students' lifeworlds seriously in a curricular and pedagogical sense**
- **Getting past highly scripted over prescribed models and developing contemporary models of negotiating learning curriculum**



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What is the Aboriginal child?

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# The Search - First Child Art in History from the Oldest Culture in the World

## Aboriginal Australians Are Humanity's Oldest Civilization



George Dvorsky

9/22/16 10:15am

Filed to: ANTHROPOLOGY ✓

158

29



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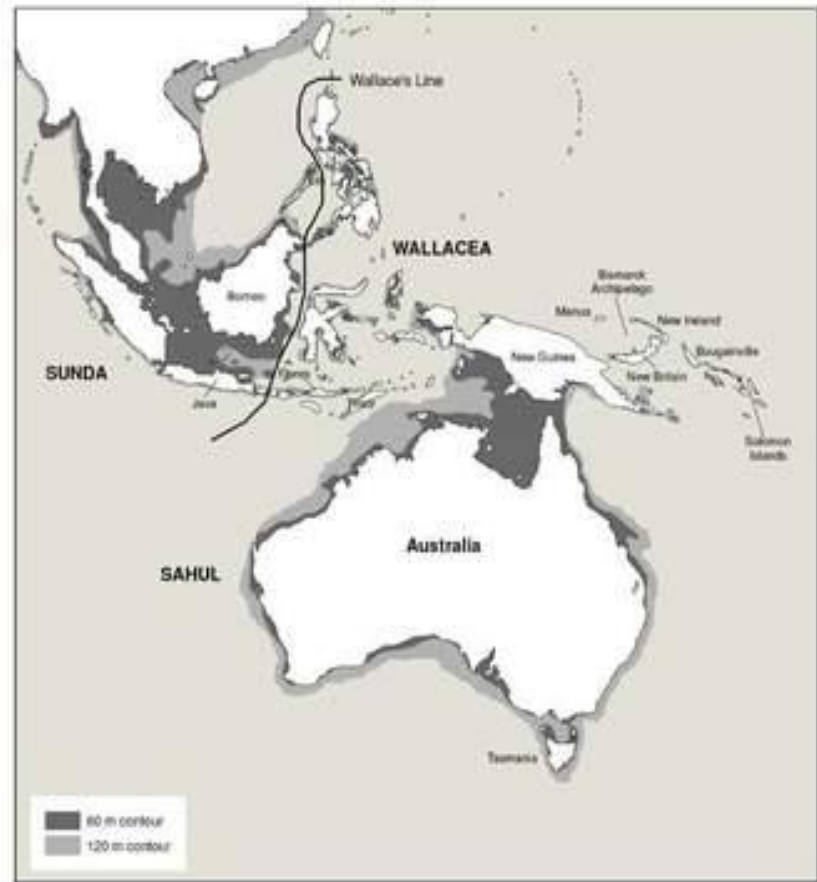


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**Professor Chris Clarkson  
University of Queensland  
2017 Published in *Nature***

***First occupation 65,000  
18,000 yrs earlier than  
thought.***



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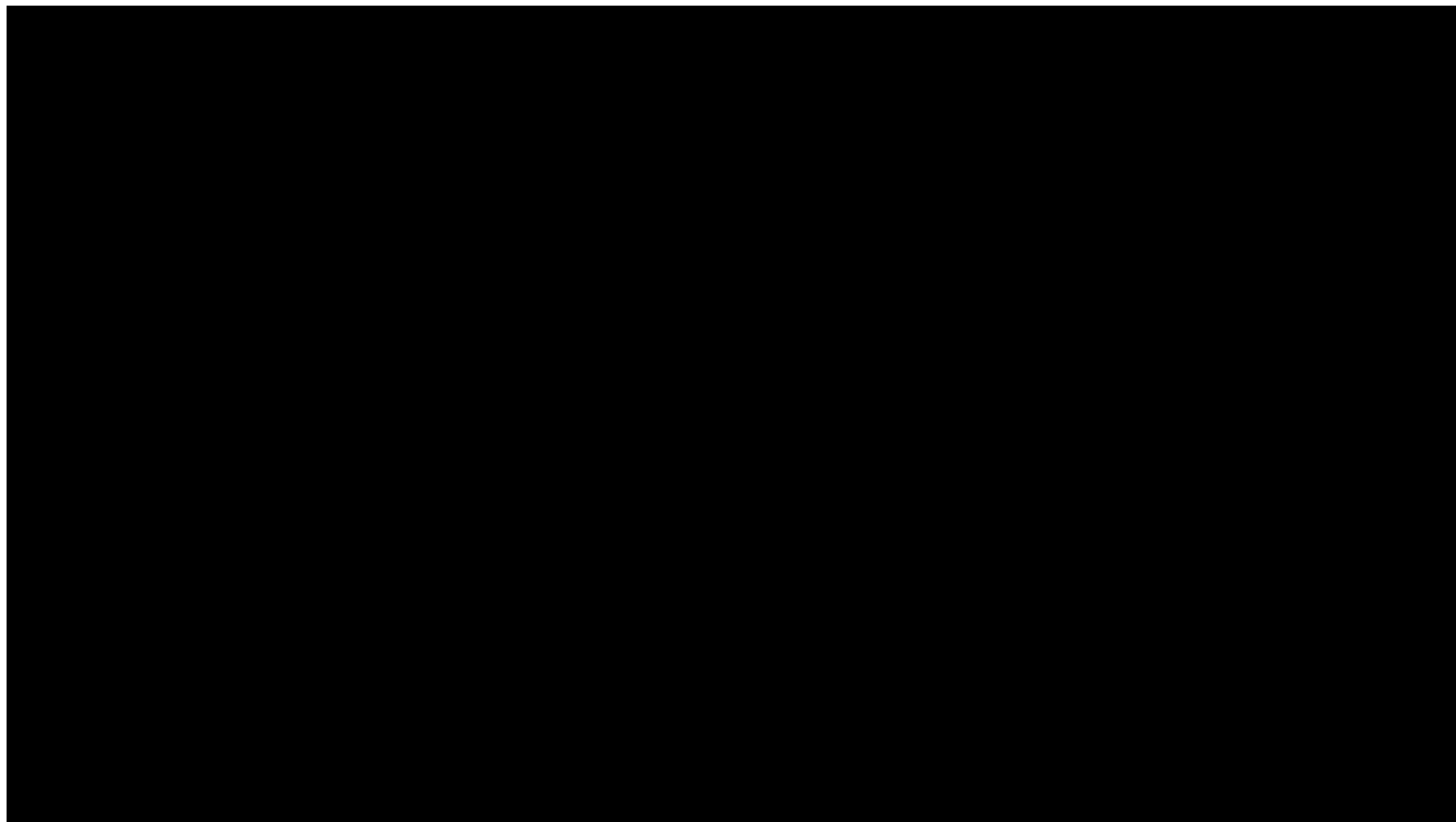


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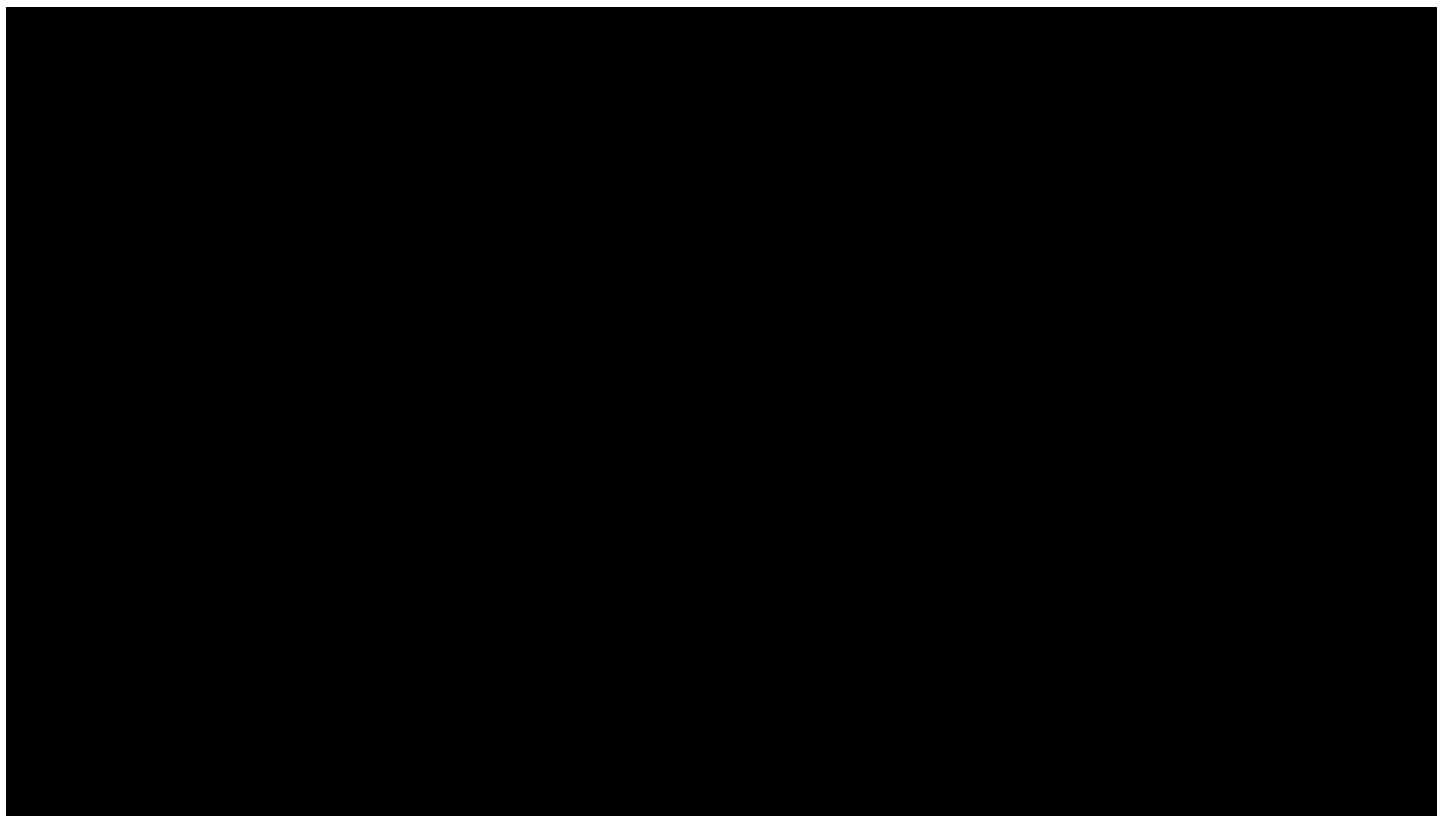
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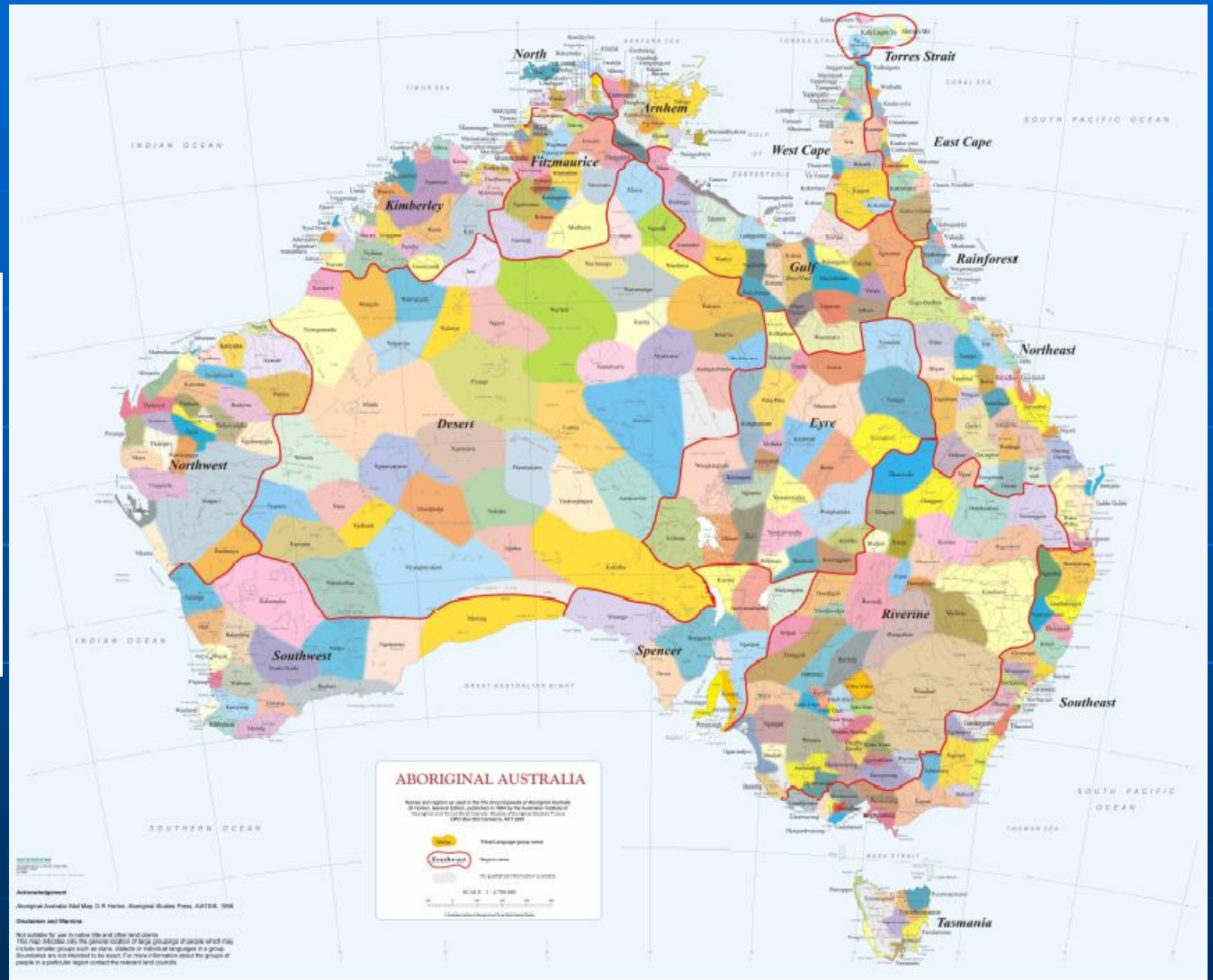


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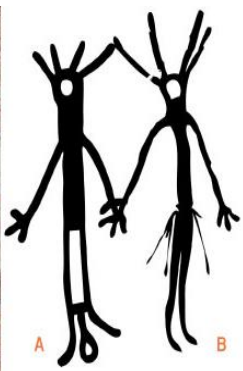
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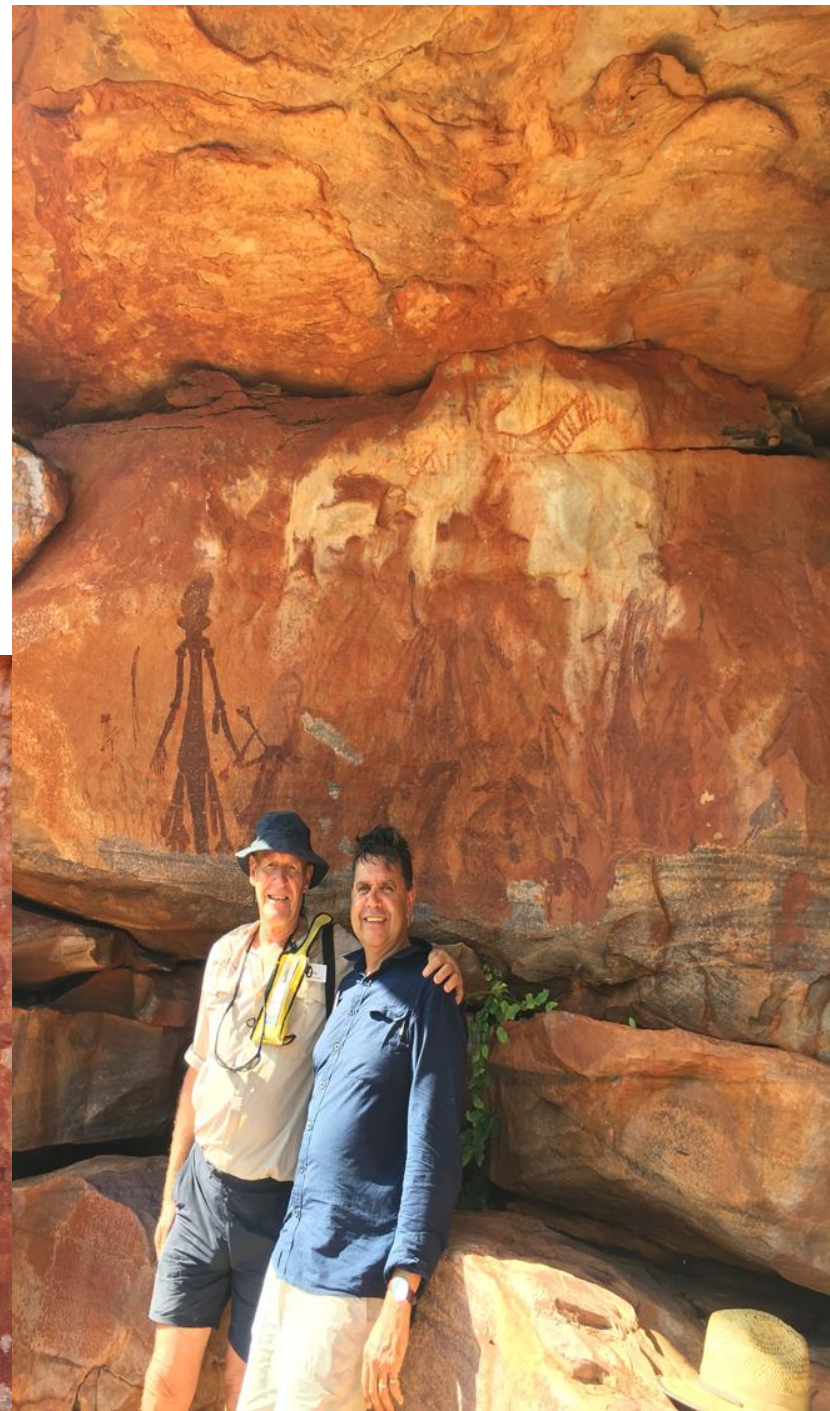
Most teachers do not know this Map  
but all Aboriginal children do



Every colour Represents an Aboriginal Nation

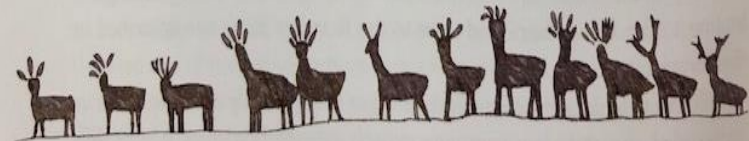
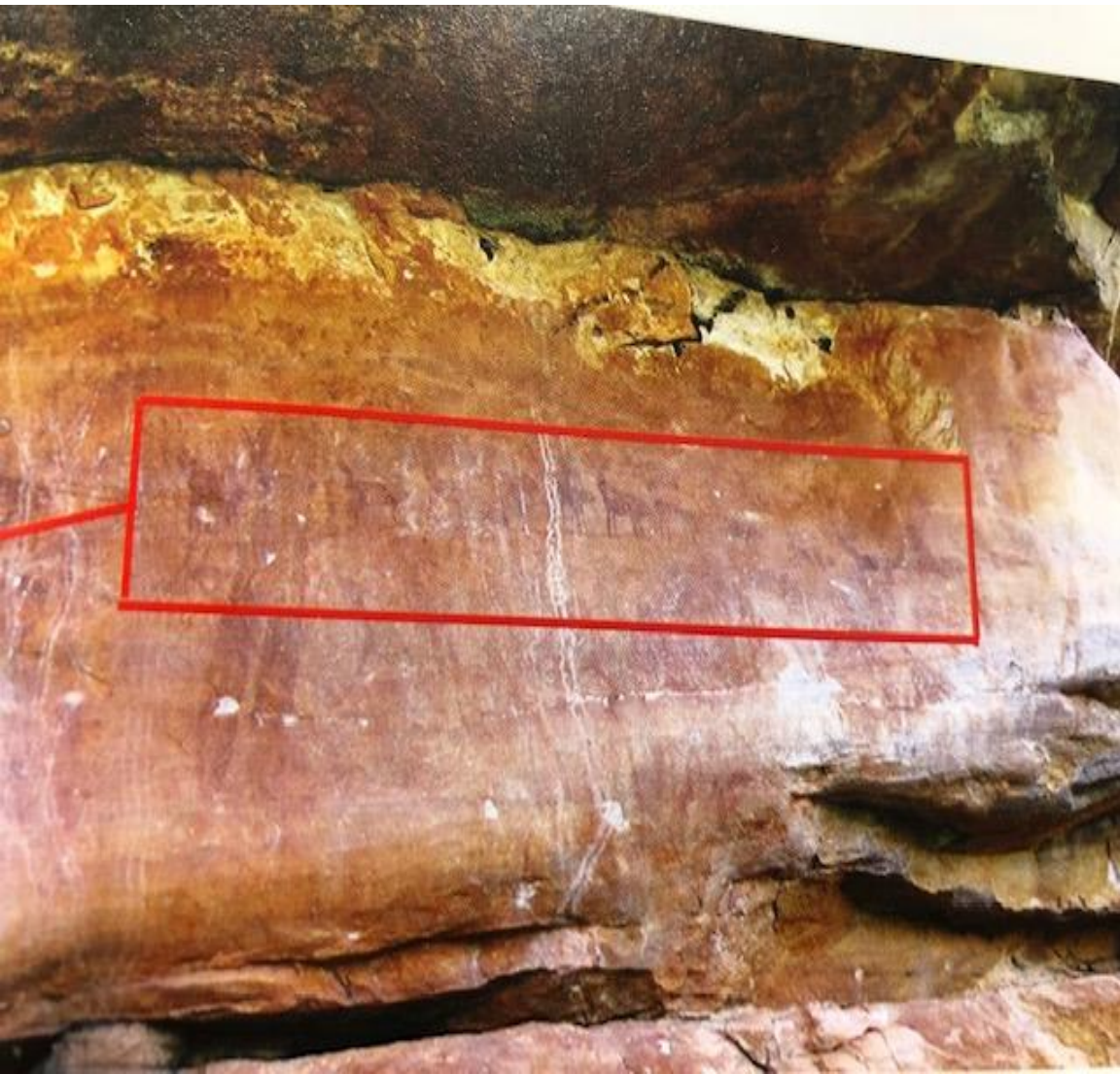


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POSSIBLY THE FIRST CHILD ART IN THE WORLD.  
ABORIGINAL ROCK ART (0-6 YEARS OF AGE)  
10,000-20,000 YEARS

when the community found out that some children traveling to Mt Barnett, 85km away down the Gibb River Road, by bus each day weren't getting lunch at school and decided to pay for and supply lunch for all the children, attendance rose from 42 per cent to 56 per cent, John says. The lunches will now be supplied by Emily Stone.

In the money An Centre, Edna shows me through her work. She paints the Wandjina (TRAIOR spirit associated with this area.

"I try to teach the kids, too. Sometimes they will be here, telling their stories," she says and explains that for nganjin people, "the Wandjina is our creator".



Edna Stone is a Wandjina artist. She has been painting Wandjina for over 20 years. She is a member of the Nganjin people, who live in the area around Mt Barnett.

But one of her pictures is of a baby drawing, and she tells the story of a couple who had been trying unsuccessfully for children, having a picture in their house, and the picture soon became pregnant.

When paintings, on canvas and not on paper, are given from \$250 to \$400, and there are well-earned book fees for about \$80.

Edna likes to acknowledge the importance of father Jack of the, and the community, and award-winning artist Betty Walker, who has done

in Aboriginal culture, the carrier of the deceased and when the spirit goes to rest, but Edna thinks it's important to "baby them along".

And there is a real story of life in money - in local language, "to paint to be alive".

Edna Stone

Edna Stone is a Wandjina artist. She has been painting Wandjina for over 20 years. She is a member of the Nganjin people, who live in the area around Mt Barnett.



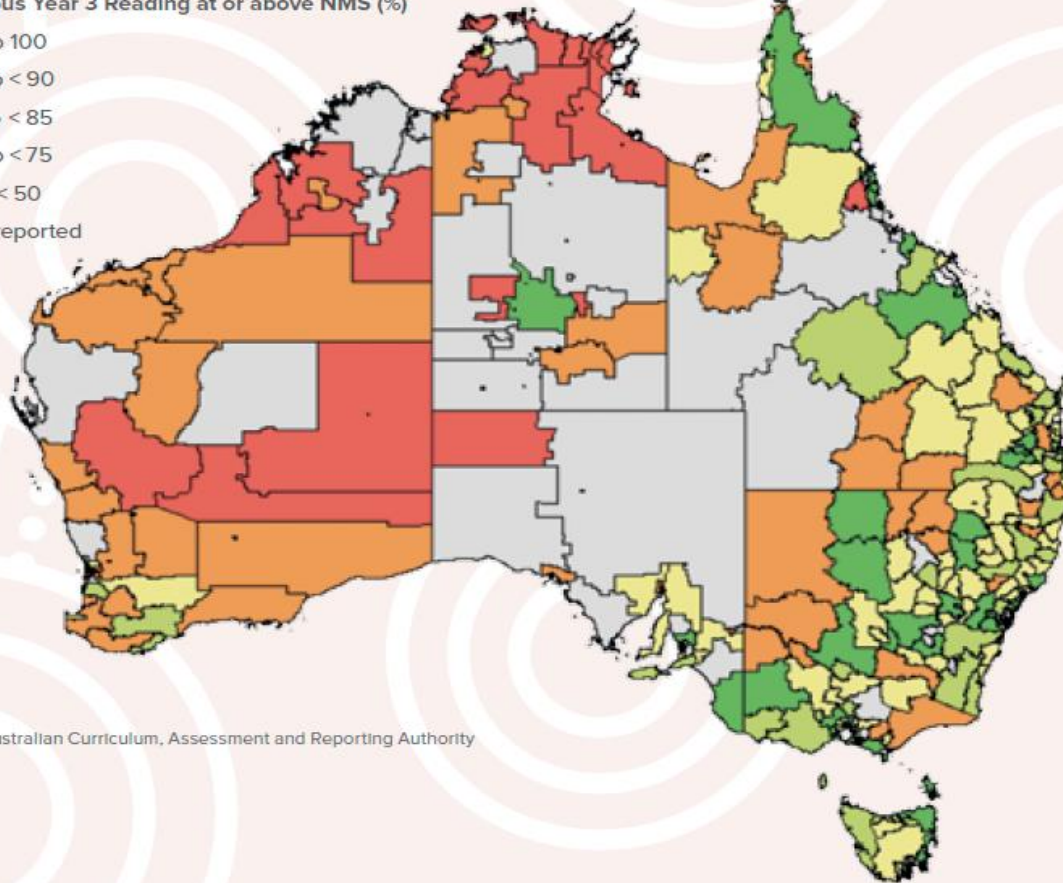
# **If Aboriginal Child been here for 80,000 years why are their rights not recognized?**

- 1. Child's land stolen, school trespassing. (Invited visitor)**
- 2. Not recognised in Australian Constitution [ no treaty, excluded from voting]**
- 3. Aboriginal child's languages not official languages of Australia**
- 4. 2 Types Public school - Assimilation or a culturally responsive (Cannot opt out)**
- 5. “English only” literacy testing in a multilingual country**
- 6. The multilingual child and the monolingual teacher**
- 7. Homogenised Aboriginal child favoured of ‘super diverse first child’.**



Map of the proportion of Indigenous Year 3 students at or above the National Minimum Standard in reading, by IARE, 2015

Indigenous Year 3 Reading at or above NMS (%)



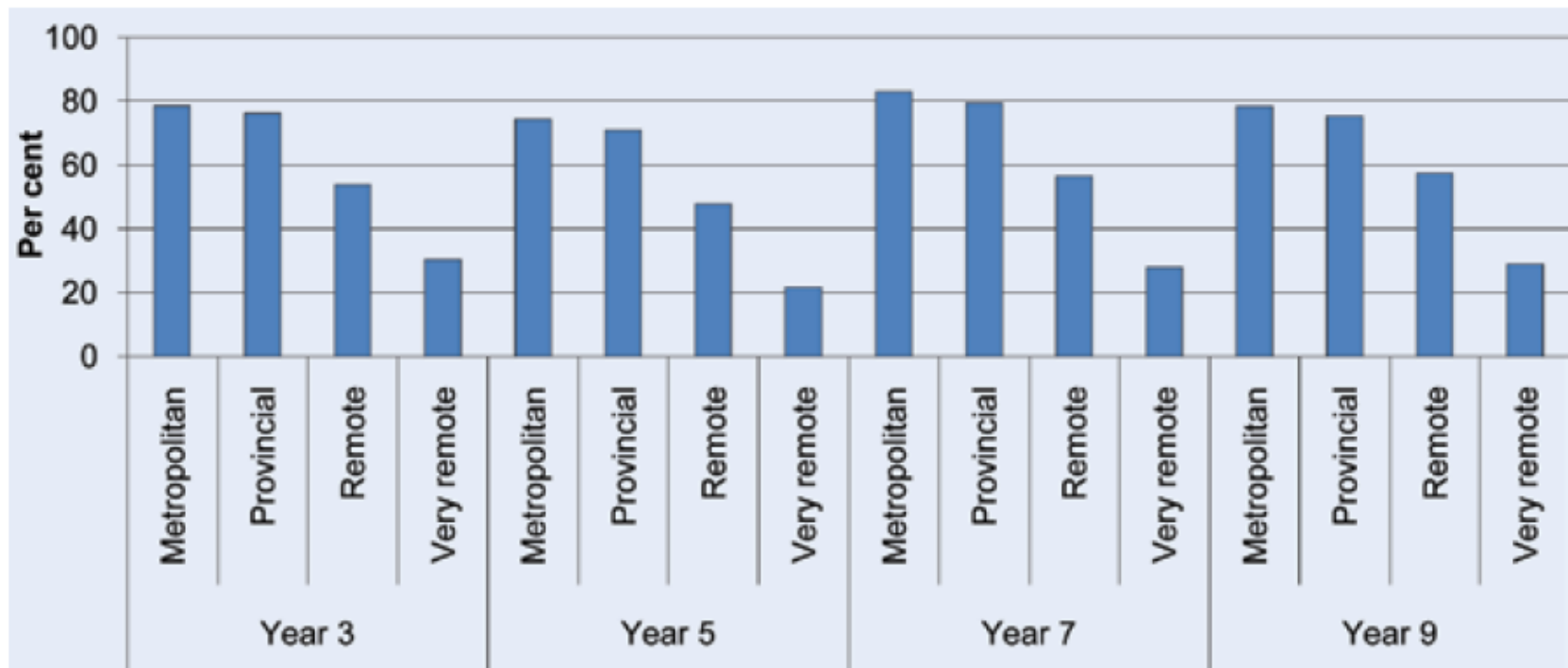
Source: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority

## The Geography of Enactment



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## Productivity Commission (2009) *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage*



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Indigenous Students who achieve the national  
Minimal Standards for English reading

# Cultural Diversity



**AUSTRALIA IS HOME TO THE WORLD'S OLDEST CONTINUOUS CULTURES.**



Australians identify with more than  
**270**  
ancestries.

46%

26%

**1 in 4**  
AUSTRALIANS  
WERE BORN  
OVERSEAS

**1 in 2** HAVE AN  
OVERSEAS-BORN  
PARENT.

Nearly **20%** of  
Australians speak a  
language other than  
English at home.

It is estimated that migrants contribute over  
**\$10 billion** to the Australian economy in  
their first 10 years of settlement.

**2013**  
OVERSEAS MIGRATION  
REPRESENTED 60% OF  
AUSTRALIA'S POPULATION  
GROWTH.



**5.3%**

UNITED  
KINGDOM



**2.6%**

NEW  
ZEALAND



**1.8%**

CHINA



**1.6%**

INDIA



**0.9%**

VIETNAM

**Top migrants to Australia**

**\$10 Billion**  
in 10 years



**1 in 5**  
AUSTRALIANS HAVE EXPERIENCED  
RACE-HATE TALK



**86%**  
of Australians  
support action  
to tackle racism

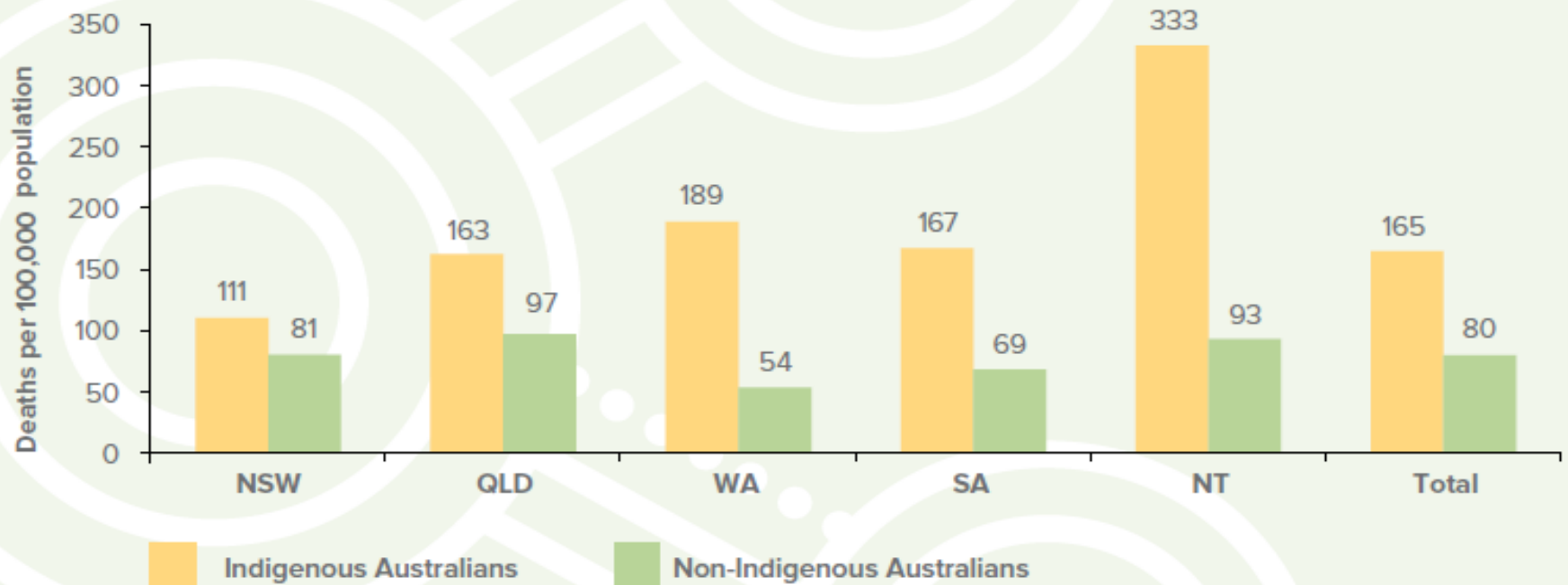
2014 Face the Facts [www.humanrights.gov.au/face-facts](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/face-facts)

Australian  
Human Rights  
Commission



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**Figure 2: Child mortality rates (0-4 years) by Indigenous status: NSW, Qld, WA, SA and the NT, 2011-2015**

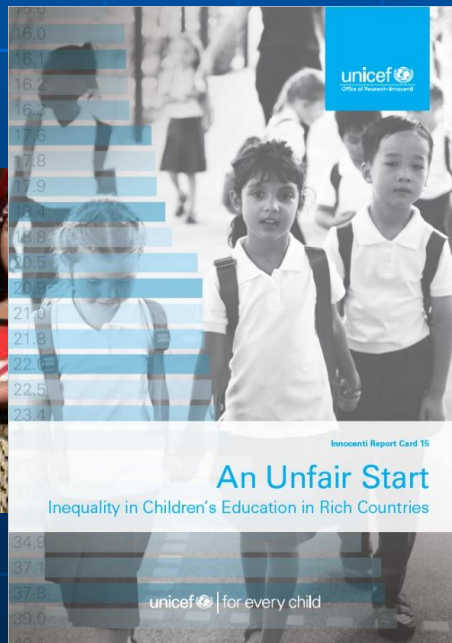


Source: ABS and AIHW analysis of National Mortality Database



# Inequality in Rich Countries: The Pacific is home to some of the most unequal education systems in the world

- Finland, Latvia  
top education systems
- Australia, New Zealand  
bottom third



# What is CRP? (Gay 2010)

“Teaching to and through [students] personal cultural strengths, their intellectual capabilities, and their prior accomplishments” (p.26).

“Student of color come to school having already mastered many cultural skills and ways of knowing”...that teaching builds on these capabilities, academic success will result” (p.213)

“Teachers become students of their pupils communities” (Mitchell 2010: p.626)

# Why?

- Aligned to AITSL
  - » 1.2, 2.4 Aboriginal
  - » 1.3 Diversity religious/Muslim
  - » 1.6 Disability
  - » 3.7 Parent engagement
  - » 6.4 improve student learning
- National Curriculum
  - » CCP, CORE,
- Teachers Registration Board of South Australia



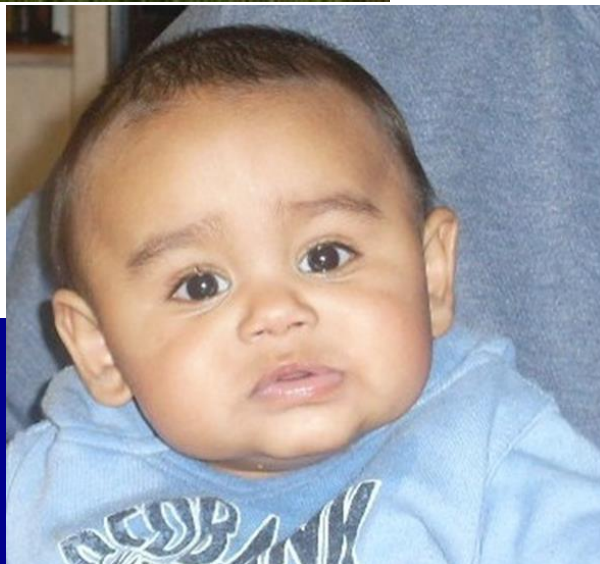


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## Toward an Australian Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Dr Lester Rigney, Dr Robert Hattam & Dr Anne Morrison

1. High Intellectual challenge
2. Strongly connected to student lifeworlds
3. Recognition of cultural difference as a positive asset
4. Critically engaging, Activist oriented
5. Performing learning &/or multimodal literacies



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# Teaching for cultural diversity: pedagogical approaches

E

Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995:160) CRP for improving learning outcomes for African-American children.

Students must

1. Experience academic success
2. Develop/maintain cultural competence of self & others
3. Develop critically to challenge status quo of current social order.



# Teaching for cultural diversity: pedagogical approaches

Villegas and Lucas (2002a, 2002b) CRP for Native American children.

## Six characteristics of CRP educator

1. is socio-culturally conscious,
2. has affirming views of students from diverse backgrounds,
3. is capable of bringing educational change toward being responsive to all students;
4. is capable of promoting learners' knowledge construction;
5. knows about the lives of his or her students; and
6. builds on what children already know while stretching them beyond the familiar



# Teaching for cultural diversity: pedagogical approaches

Bishop (et.al 2007. p.15) Kaupapa Maori children

## Education for Maori

- power is shared,
- Culture is normative in Mainstream and Maori sites
- Maori to be Maori
- culture counts,
- learning is interactive and dialogic,
- connectedness is fundamental to relations, and
- common vision of excellence for Māori in education



# Teaching for cultural diversity: pedagogical approaches

Eight Alaskan Culturally Responsive Teacher Standards  
(Assembly of Alaska Native Educators 1999).

1. teaching philosophy encompassing multiple worldviews;
2. learning, theory and practice knowing how students learn;
3. teaching for diversity;
4. content related to local community;
5. instruction and assessment building on student's cultures;
6. learning environment utilising local sites;
7. family and community involvement as partners; and
8. professional development'



# Indigenist Epistemologies & Aboriginal Education Theory

## Pedagogy

1. To live as Aboriginal;
  2. To actively participate as citizens of the world; and
  3. To enjoy a high standard of living and good health.
- School engaged local Aboriginal epistemologies (Rigney 2011a);
  - Relational centred pedagogies and ontologies (Martin 2007)
  - Stronger smarter high expectations (2016)
  - Anti-racism pedagogy (Arber 2012)
  - Indigenous Studies (Rigney 2011a,b, Aveling 2012; Moreton-Robinson 2000)

**Aboriginal concepts, values & practices are critical to learning But must be  
Made normative to enable Aboriginal learner success.**



# **INDIGENOUS PACIFIC: Mapping the pedagogical Field for Teaching through Indigenous cultural linguistic repertoire and Worldview**

1. World - Reggio Emilia (Rinaldi 2015)
2. World/Pacific- Kaupapa Maori (Linda Smith 1999)
3. Australia, NZ,USA, Fiji, PNG, Taiwan, Hawaii – Culturally Responsive Pedagogies (Irabinna Rigney & Robert Hattam 2018)
4. Australia – Learning through linguistic repertoire (Dwarte 2014)
5. Australia – Relational ontology (Karen Martin 2002)
6. Australia – Stronger Smarter (Sarra 2016)
7. Australia – 8 Ways Aboriginal Pedagogy (Yunkaporta 2008)
8. Australia – Fiji - Thaman (2004)
9. USA – Ladson Billings (1995); Castagno & Brayboy (2008);
10. South America – Funds of Knowledge (Moll & Gonzalez 2014)
11. Canada - Story Pedagogy (Archibald 2007)
12. Alaska - Assembly Alaska Native Educators (1999)
13. Hawaii – Hawaiian Pedagogy (Schonleber 2014)



# Dialogue between two perspectives for cultural diversity<sup>E</sup>

## **Culturally Responsive Pedagogies**

- 1. High intellectual challenge**
- 2. Connected to the lives of learners**
- 3. Recognition of cultural as Asset**
- 4. Performing learning &/or multimodal literacies**
- 5. Critical thinking, Action, Activism**

## **Reggio Emilia principles**

100 languages

Pedagogy of Listening

Learning as Process of individual & group construction

Educational Research

Documentation

Environment, spaces, and relations

Professional Development

Child as Competent

Democracy

Progettazione

Creativity



# Teaching for cultural diversity: pedagogical approaches

F

Illustrations of pedagogy	Reggio Principles	CRP Principles
The creation and value of the outdoor nature play learning environment.	Environment as 3 <sup>rd</sup> educator	Connected to the lives of learners Recognition of culture as asset
Open schedule with long stretch of uninterrupted free exploration.	Environment, space and time Listening	Recognition of culture as asset Connected to the lives of learners
Curriculum developed with children-reflects their cultural backgrounds, interests, wonderings, strengths and aspirations.	Competent child Co-construction Democracy Listening	Connected to the lives of learners High intellectual challenge
Children and educators involved in authentic problem solving, emergent inquiry-based projects and research	Progettazione Competent child Democracy Listening Research	Critical thinking, action and activism High intellectual challenge
Children, families and educators are valued members of the learning community who are active agents for change	Research 100 languages Listening Competent child, parent, educator	Critical thinking, action and activism Connected to the lives of learners Recognition of culture as asset
Learning is made visible through pedagogical documentation and authentic forms of presentation	Competent child 100 languages Documentation	Performing learning



# Dialogue between two perspectives for cultural diversity<sup>E</sup>

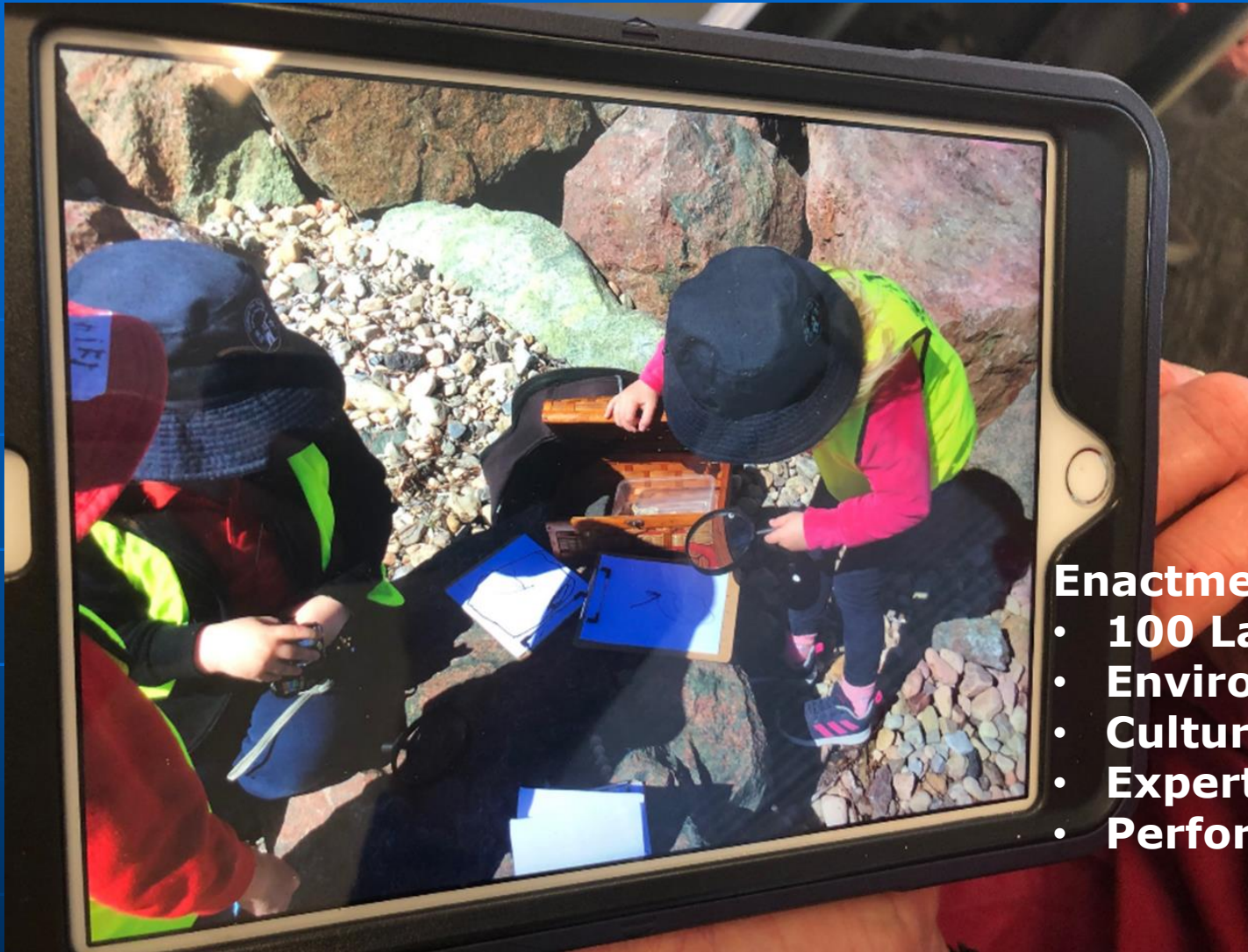
Reggio Emilia  
Education  
Principles

**Provocation for educators to critically reflect upon beliefs and values about education and how they are enacted through pedagogy:**

- Image of the child, educator and parent and their roles in education
- Role of the environment
- Role of research and inquiry
- Assessment and making learning visible
- Knowledge construction
- Significance of relationship



# BEACH KINDY - Action Research Journey



## Enactment

- 100 Languages
- Environ 3<sup>rd</sup> Teacher
- Culture as Asset
- Experts Life worlds
- Performing learning

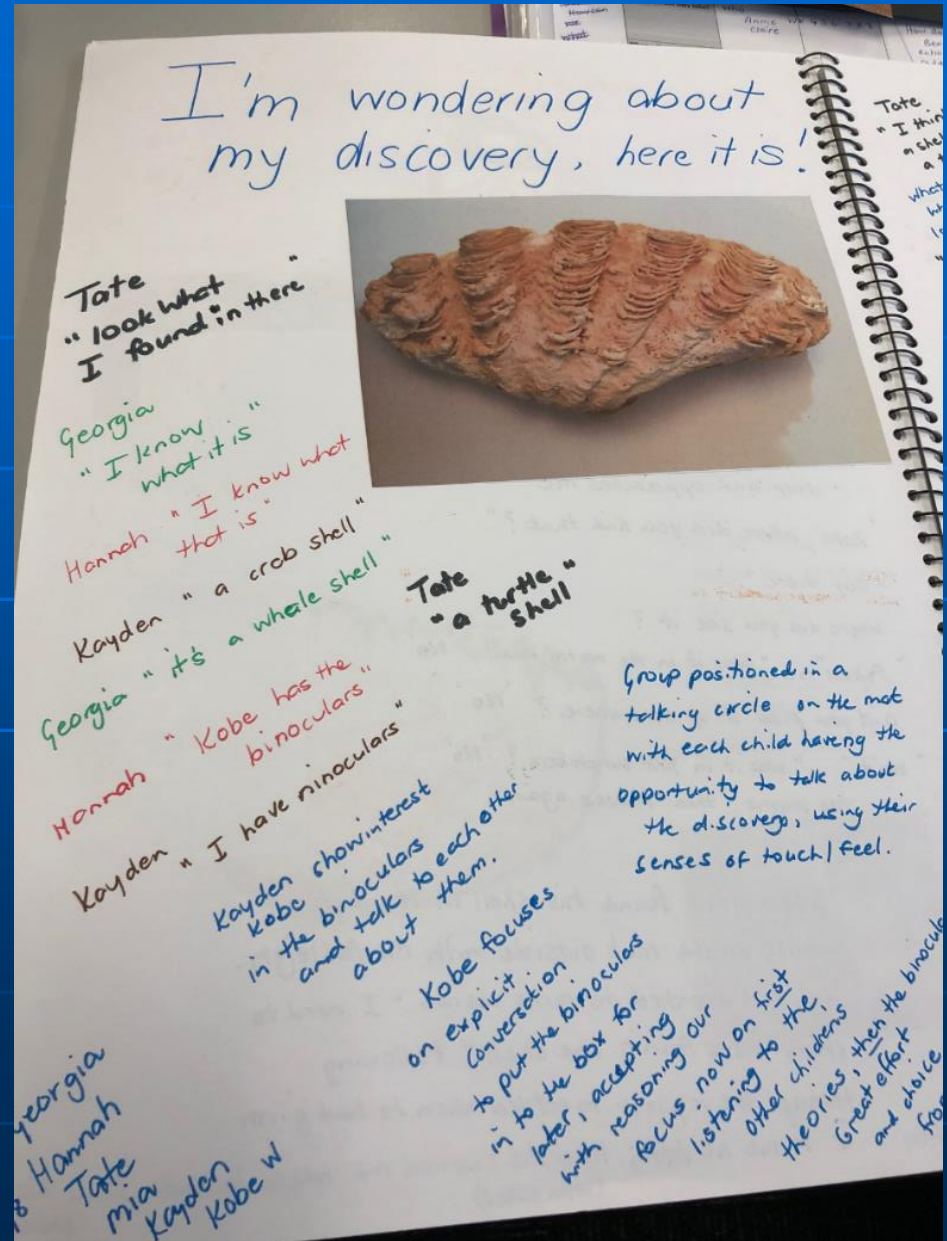
How does CRP and Reggio Emilia Principles improve oral language development & Collaboration?

# BEACH KINDY

## Action Research Journey



How does CRP and Reggio Emilia Principles improve oral language development & Collaboration?



## WHAT EDUCATOR PEDAGOGICAL SHIFT LOOKS IN THE CLASSROOM



**What changed?**

**VALIDATE – Affirm - Build - bridge (VABB)**

### KEY COMPONENTS

- Relationship shift
- Planning shift
- Listen to students experiences as Valid and authentic
- Creation of safe spaces for dialogue, voice
- Local connected to global knowledgges
- Include students cultures in literacy instruction
- Cultural safe and awareness yes
- cultural competency paralysis
- Normalising cultural connected to learning for improving learning for all students
- Place and culture matter
- Recognition All education structures cultured



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# Early Findings

# What CRP is NOT

Shift from Simplistic ways CRP is often used and understood.

- Cultural Celebration as an end in its self
- Essentialising cultures (Identity fixed & homogenous)
- Trivialisation
- Delinking students culture from academic learning
- Delocalising school



# Early findings

Understandings of schooling success must be broadened

All students must feel welcome, respected and valued

Students must feel free to bring their cultural selves into the classroom, if they wish to do so

Teachers need time and resources to develop their praxis

Teachers need quality professional learning opportunities

CRP 'works'





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# Practitioner challenges

1. Regular staff turnover
2. Planning and time increased
3. Staff ambivalence
4. Building pedagogical Confidence takes time.
5. Professional Development
6. Letting go of not wanting to getting it culturally wrong
7. Whole of site reluctant to work together eg. Child care, occasional care and early learning staff



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# Conclusion

1. Optimistic CRP interventions can be taken to scale.
2. Doing so will require hard work.
3. Not quick fix - cannot be administered broadly without consideration for local contexts or the meaning students make of them.
4. In context many Aboriginal ECE reforms have produced at best uneven schooling results.
5. CRP interventions have a demonstrated potential to address fundamental problems, including low student engagement and achievement at low cost and over significant periods of time.



# **VISION** is not enough. Pedagogical **ACTION**

**Can all students especially Aboriginal children see a positive sense of their identity reflected in your centre?**

**How much prior knowledge and intelligences of the child are your pedagogies capturing?**

**How does your teaching establish an environment for them to realise their democratic rights?**

**How do you sustain family and Elder relationships?**

**How do you connect cultural and linguistic repertoire to learning?**

THE END