

**Submission to Yoorrook Justice Commission**

**From:** Deone West, Pajong, Wiradjuri, Gundungarra, Beechworth

**Dated:** May 2024

**Submission:**

First People's culture could be taught by First Nations people. I think it's really good that there's so much education, teaching and professional development being put into educators about Aboriginal history and where it fits within the curriculum. But I think if you don't have black voices underpinning that, you're still giving that history or teaching through a colonized lens because there's things you just understand as an Aboriginal person that you don't as a non-Aboriginal person. But without that sensitivity or the implicit understanding of what has happened in this country (and I don't mean it being a horror show presentation) I think it needs to be taught by black people, basically.

The barrier is funding. And funding and funding and also people acting with the best of intentions, thinking that this can be provided. So if the funding is not there, instead of fighting for the funding, another Ave may be taken that does not involve black people. To present the same program if you like, but it isn't the same program because it's not presented by black people, so it needs to be culture taught by people from culture to other people, from culture and so further that I think we need to really focus on. Educating our First Nation students about First Nations topics, without a performative aspect, so they don't need to go back and retell their story. They don't need to share. Sometimes it doesn't need to be a whole class discussion because it might be mob business. They need to know what mob business is. We need to look at teaching our First Nations children's culture just for them. There are other programs that happen for whole school communities and for all Australians walking together, which is fantastic. But if our children of our communities can't walk, then we can't walk together. We're just running down a back street blindly.

Aboriginal children could be better supported by having increased access to community Elders and Gathering Places and black people. Because in our students families, there is not always access to cultural knowledge, cultural learning, connection with culture, and it needs to be with black people.

I have discovered a human called Tyson Yunkaporta who has written a book called Sand Talk that talks about First Nations perspectives and looking at things, particularly education through First Nation lenses, the way that the curriculum is taught in all schools in our country, for everybody does not fit every student. But I think that there are many lessons we can take from traditional practice. In the way that we teach even just maths for example, making it physical, making it a dance thing that's got numbers attached to it. There are ways that we can take our classes outside. And look at mnemonic devices and using song line theory to teach better education. I think for our First Nation students that it's imperative they should be given the option to go outside, just get outside. I'm often asked how we embed First Nations perspectives into education and my first answer is go outside, just go outside.

**END OF SUBMISSION**