

Submission to Yoorrook Justice Commission**From: Anonymous 1481****Dated: November 2024****Submission:****What do you know about the colonisation of Victoria and its impacts on First Peoples?**

I have a broad understanding of colonisation, settlement, occupation, genocide and the government policies applied to First Peoples. I do not have an extensive knowledge about the impacts on First Peoples, however I know about the post settlement dispossession, the diseases, the inability to vote, the loss of language and culture and the inability to care for and live on Country.

What has been your experience learning about First Nations history and culture in Victoria's education system? Do you feel it was comprehensive?

My schooling about First Nations history and culture in Victoria's education system was extremely limited. I was at school from 1981-1993. I read Sally Morgan's 'My Place' as part of the school curriculum, and I visited Ricketts Sanctuary as a child. I don't recall much more than that. I never knew Aboriginal words were used for places around Melbourne like Tullamarine, Nunawading or Maroondah. I certainly did not understand any cultural practices although I feel that I knew about the custom warning before deceased First Peoples photos were shown when I was young. I also watched Storm Boy as a child, although this was not part of school (as I recall). As a side note, I have since re-watched Storm Boy and I re-read My Place during lockdown as an adult and am actively learning about First Nations history and culture as part of life long learning.

What changes would you like to see in Victoria to promote better understanding and respect for First People?

Place based knowledge. I came back from Kakadu in 2019 keen to learn about the native flora, fauna, geography, geology traditional names, First Peoples knowledge and history etc for the area I live in. I've lived on Wurundjeri Country all my life, but I know so little about it from a First Peoples perspective. So much native, natural heritage knowledge is missing from Victorian's understanding. Caring for Country and Indigenous knowledge systems should be the framework for everything! Understanding First Peoples connection to the land would require Victorians to unplug/untether/uncouple from the capitalist system. Understanding and respecting First Peoples mindsets/connection to land is paramount to better understanding and respect. Celebrating incredible historical monuments and moments ie the flooding of the Port Philip grassy plains / Naarm, Budj Bim, astrological sky reading on the salt plains (Sea Lake), seasonal knowledge that goes beyond autumn colours in introduced species for example. Respect for Elders - there is so much Victorians can learn from First Peoples. Sharing culture, respecting culture, celebrating culture. Shifting from capitalist imperialist system to an economic democratic system would benefit all, especially First Peoples if it was based on a Caring for Country model. Normalisation of First Peoples First. Treaty is important and self-determination is important, I'd love to see First Peoples led practices for Victoria.

In what ways do you think non-First Nations Victorians can contribute to the process of truth-telling and treaty?

I am the keeper of the family archives. I have studied history and heritage, and professionally work in history and heritage aligned fields. I am committed to history and truth telling. I seek to expand my understanding of settler and imperial colonisation and the processes for decolonisation. I research and write history to place my family and its activities in the wider context whether it be local history, state, or national history both here in Australia and internationally. As I share each story, potentially, I will increase knowledge of those who read my work on truth telling, treaty, colonisation and understandings of decolonisation.

In what ways could First Peoples history and culture be promoted in Victoria?

If our society could be serious about life-long learning, then First Peoples history and culture would be always promoted in everything. I am a strong believer in Indigenous models for Caring for Country. We need to create new foundations. We need to build from the ground up not just undertake a little bit on the side. If a whole of government mandate or treaty conditions noted that we must always be learning, then we can supplement our formal education (primary, secondary and tertiary) through general history, with an emphasis on local history, tourism, art and culture, agriculture, health, fourth estate, food, nature.

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