

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

I know that First Nations people were forced off their ancestral lands and that their culture and way of life was catastrophically disrupted by settler colonialism, with them being forced away from community, and starving because of removal of access to food sources. I know that resistance resulted in massacres, and that murders occurred regardless of First Nations peoples' actions. Government policy included rounding people up, separating families and moving people away from Country onto missions, removing the human right of freedom of movement and association. People were punished for speaking their languages. Abuse was very common. As a non-First Nations person, I am careful not to speak for First Nations people about impacts on them, but I know that impacts of colonisation were and continue to be enormous. The racist rhetoric we see on a daily basis is one demonstration of the legacy and ongoing impacts of colonisation.

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

I am 56 years old. I learned very little about First Nations history and culture when I was young. At university I did an elective subject on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, and I remember the content had no relationship to Countries near Naarm, where I was studying, but seemed to be all about Countries in the centre of the continent. No First Nations people were involved in delivering content, and I suspect, nor were they involved in creating it (apart from having it stolen from them without permission I suspect).

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

I think that this is primarily a question for First Nations people. But I do think that if government or other non-First Nations organisations address this issue, First Nations people and organisations should be involved very early in any planning or process. Matters of cultural load should be considered. First Nations knowledge should be privileged throughout any process. The fact that First Nations organisations are asked to contribute to or consult on many projects and initiatives should be acknowledged, as well as that fact that First Nations organisations are often stretched for resources and must prioritise community wellbeing.

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

Non-First Nations Victorians should make it very clear to the opposition that withdrawing support for Treaty is a craven political move and is reprehensible. They must reverse this highly regrettable position.

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

I think it is vital that First Nations people, organisations and communities are in control of how history and culture are promoted. Cultural safety in any processes is paramount. There is a real risk that if First Nations people are not afforded the agency to determine how history is represented, existing trauma would be added to. Self-determination in how history and culture are represented and promoted will be key. I understand that there may be difference across different communities and groups, so different approaches may be taken on different Countries.

**END**