

Submission to Yoorrook Justice Commission**From:** Steph Tashkoff**Dated:** November 2024**Submission:**

Working as a teacher, I see first-hand the ongoing impact of colonisation and stolen land on young Koorie people. Instead of benefiting from inheriting generational wealth, communities don't have financial security. Land was stolen from clans and nations and given to 'settlers'; land was stolen from missions in order to be given to WWI returned servicemen as long as they were white. Structural racism continues to disenfranchise Koorie people. Trauma is experienced by young people, passed on from parents, carers and grandparents who have inherited the trauma of being Stolen from their families, not learning parenting skills. All of this means that young people are distrustful of white institutions, frequently alienated from education and often find self-medication to be the most readily available means of pushing their trauma down, without being able to heal. I have benefited from the invasion of Gulidjan Country.

My great-great-grandparents moved into the Colac area, with family legend being that my great-great-grandmother was the 'first white woman in the district'. There was never any recognition in those family stories about whose land it was that my family 'settled' on. However, mention is made of how, after my great-great-grandmother became a young widow living in a home close to Lake Colac, she developed friendships with local Gulidjan women, exchanging food and other items. 2 generations later, in the mid-1940s, my uncle employed Jim Crough, a Gunditjmara man who lived at Elliminyt and worked with him on the family farm at Yeo - my mother remembered meeting him when he was sitting at the dinner table with her brother and his family. My mother also spoke of attending the Melbourne Conservatorium in 1946, alongside Harold Blair, and how she would make sure he could see her answers in exams, because she didn't think it was fair that he risk failing just because he hadn't had the chances to learn music theory and history, etc. With recognition and respect for the Old People of the Country I live on, I thank the commission for this chance to add to the truth-telling process with hope for a more positive community.

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