

Reconciliation Seminar 7: Engaging Your Inclusion Heroes – Koorie Workforce

Transcript from the Reconciliation Series 1 2022

• 0:04 – 0:35

Okay guys. Welcome. It's 6:35, so I'm going to start the workshop tonight. Just before I do start, I would like to acknowledge traditional owners of the land that I'm currently on. I'm here in Balwyn Kew and wish to acknowledge the land of people past, present, and emerging. I send that acknowledgement to the lands that you are currently calling in from, knowing that you're coming from all over Victoria, I also pay respect to their elders, past and present. I'd like to acknowledge any other Aboriginal people here tonight.

• 0:35 – 0:58

I also acknowledge the lands where you may have come from and grown up on, that might be completely different. I pay respect to your elders past and present because they help shape who you became today. For people who don't know me, my name's AJ Williams. My background's Wiradjuri Wotjobaluk, my family come from Horsham to New South Wales.

• 0:59 – 1:32

I was a nurse at one stage, a maternal child health nurse. I am now a mental health, social worker, and I'm part of AGECS's reconciliation ambassador team and I'm also here to present the series of workshops. Tonight, we're up to seminar number seven. The previous six have been recorded and are up on the AGECS website for you to actually have a look at, at any time.

• 1:32 – 2:03

This workshop will also be uploaded onto the website. But tonight, we've actually got another one of my friends. You know, I've been inviting my friends along. I've got another one of my friends, Zoe Upton. Zoe is the Koorie Education Coordinator at the Department of Education Training. And she's going to talk to us a little bit about how we can engage our inclusion heroes, which are the Koorie work course.

• 2:04 – 2:08

So, I'm just gonna throw to Zoe and you can take it from there.

• 2:08 – 2:42

Thanks, AJ. My name, as AJ said, is, Zoe Upton. I'm a proud Bunnerong woman, which is on the other side of the country. I'm the Koorie education coordinator. I look after Northeast Melbourne metro area under the Northwest Victoria Banner.

• 2:42 – 3:14

I have a team of 11 KESOs. I love to talk. That's why I, AJ decided to engage me in this space. I'm open to any questions whatsoever. I am very thick skinned. I've heard it all. I want you to feel safe. This is a safe place for everybody to be open and honest about what's actually happening and how they can actually, engage us in a better way or engage families in a better way.

• 3:15 – 3:52

In saying that, I also have to do a disclaimer. I have three toddlers. Um, they have already entered naked, that was before everybody came in. So at least they're dressed, but they may enter again, harassing me. They've already entered a couple times, but at least they'll be dressed this time, so that's good. If you have any questions, please pop it in the chat or if you interrupt me, you know, I am not precious at all.

• 3:52 – 3:54

<laugh>

• 3:54 – 4:02

So, I'll monitor the chat and I will, slow down at the end for a couple of questions.

• 4:02 – 4:03

Deadly.

• 4:03 – 4:04

Thanks AJ.

• 4:05 – 4:41

I want to do an acknowledgement to country. I'm standing on the land of the Wurundjeri people. Uh, I can see that, um, Marie is on Wurundjeri, country and we've other people on, Wurundjeri country. I'd like to acknowledge Elders past, present and also the emerging ones. The reason why I do say emerging is because we're all educating our future leaders.

We are creating that safe, you guys are creating that safe and encouraging educational journey, and it starts with you fellows.

• 4:41 - 4:53

So, I know it's a bit of pressure, but, you know, it does <laugh>. I'd like to acknowledge any other Aboriginal people that are here today.

• 4:57 - 5:39

There's a purpose of today's meeting, and I've done this for a network meeting. We can create those connections in our networks and each area does work a lot different. What I do at the moment is run some cultural inclusion practices and how to engage us in the career workforce. Also, to have those really transparent and safe yarns with mob, and with our educators to actually sit there and engage families in the reasons why times are challenging.

• 5:40 - 6:10

I'd like to introduce Ryder to the group, Ryder is my shadow. Do you wanna say hello? Hello, <laugh>, but he's the reason why we're here, you know, three year olds in our early childhood services.

• 6:13 - 6:46

Okay, so for those people who do, acknowledgements to country, if you're coming along to these workshops, I'm assuming that you are doing these acknowledgements to country. It could be nothing that you haven't learned before or know why. I think it's really good to just, sometimes to reflect, on your acknowledgement of country, especially as you are moving through your inclusive journey.

• 6:47 - 7:03

You know, why we do it? AJ's explained why. Does anybody have any questions as to why we do an acknowledgement of this country?

• 7:07 - 7:42

So, back in the old times where we would travel and barter and negotiate marriage and talk about ceremony with other mobs or you know, have to walk through other people's countries, we would sit on the outskirts of country and the borders. So, they would be either, marked by a scar tree or a river or a mountain and things like that. And we would sit there and light a fire and, um, wait and wait for people to come, the allocated elders to come around.

• 7:42 - 8:06

And when they finally did get there, it could be, you know, lucky that we got to see them in a day, but it could have been a couple of days, is explain our purpose of going through country. So, all the reason to visit and have a yarn, and then they would smoke us to ensure that there were no spirits or anything bad attached to us as we walked through.

• 8:06 – 8:50

And then they would either leave us alone, give us permission to go on as colonization occurred. Obviously, we don't have that same luxury of doing that, but we are amazing people and we've evolved and it probably became more prevalent in the 1996, 1997. So, we've evolved and after long walks we started doing those acknowledgements to country in government and wherever we are.

• 8:50 – 9:08

So, it's really nice to actually know the reasons why we actually do acknowledgement to country. Of course, everybody knows you can do an acknowledgement to country and what the difference is between acknowledgement and welcome. Yeah.

• 9:10 – 9:48

Um, so that's fantastic. So, I'm standing on Wurundjeri country. Obviously while when we follow our protocols and when you know a bit more about protocols and engaging with them, inclusion in your services, you know, we do try and engage our traditional owners as much as we can.

• 9:48 – 10:30

We can talk about more of that later. Here's an early years example of an acknowledgement to country. Anybody ever seen these acknowledgement plaques? These are the old school tin ones from Antar, which about 40 bucks back in the day. Um, and then we've got our, um, contemporary artists like Kinya Lerrk and they've got these incredible, laminated ones and they can actually tailor their acknowledgements to your service.

• 10:30 – 11:03

They're a little bit more expensive, but they do range in sizes. It's always good to see examples. There's, other acknowledgements that you can do by engaging local artists and they don't always have to be, the written version, but they can be one that's made. So yeah, and that was okay, all, approved by local elder.

• 11:04 – 11:08

The Koorie families worked together with the actual artist.

• 11:10 – 11:45

So, we all sit under the Department of education and training. I'm not sure if anybody is aware of the Marrung educational plan. It's not a strategy, it is a plan. It's the very first educational plan that the Department of Education has ever consulted with our trailblazing organizations like VACCA.

• 11:46 – 12:22

They all fit really perfectly into the education state targets. So, we've got the rich and thriving culture of knowledge and experience of our First Nations people set out and celebrated by all Victorians. So that includes you, even if you don't have any koorie students attending your early year services, it's educating our mob, educating our future leaders regardless of whether or not they are koorie or not. Our universal systems are inclusive, responsive, and respectful to koorie people at every stage of their learning and development journey.

• 12:22 – 12:54

And of course, that is, you know, referring back to breaking the link, it doesn't matter where you come from or what your upbringing is, we want you to succeed. Every koorie person achieves their potential succeeds in life and feels strong in their cultural identity, which refers back to their resilience. And we are a pretty resilient mob. You know, it's just about whether or not, you know, people feel confident and safe in your services to divulge that.

• 12:54 – 13:22

So, I do like to ensure that we do, highlight my room. There's some amazing things occurring in the department.

• 13:25 – 14:03

Alright. we are halfway through this plan. So, we've got another four years to go. Within that, we do have some scholarships that are available for our kindergarten teachers, for aboriginal people to get our aboriginal teachers in the kindergarten services and become part of part of the system to teach. And then we won't have to necessarily worry about engaging koorie workforces because you've already got it within your services, and ultimately want to do myself out of a job.

• 14:06 – 14:29

So VAEAI would've come in. I know that they came in a couple of sessions ago. Is that right AJ? So, obviously VAEAI is our overarching peak body of the education for koorie learners and they work towards the targets and the roles.

• 14:29 – 15:01

But also, we work in partnership with VAEAI. We've got a really strong governance structure where our chairs, which are volunteers, usually elders within our community sit at the table with the KESOs and community at our meetings, then goes up to our area implementation team.

• 15:01 – 15:35

And that sits with our area directors. And then it goes up to our regional partnership forum, which sits with our regional director, and then it goes up all the way up to the secretary and it just shows that, you know, our voices are finally being pulled to the table and being heard. It's still a lot of work to do in that space. I think it's really important that we do acknowledge that we've come a long way, especially in the Marrung plan.

• 15:36 – 16:10

We also deliver the community understanding and safety training initiative that it's actually been mandated through every single Victorian government school. In my area I have four schools left to do out of 160. So, we are starting to now look at our early year services and how we can actually help improve our connections into our early year services to create that same space.

• 16:10 – 16:45

But in my area, just alone, there's 300 early years services, so we need to be a bit more strategic in the way that we actually deliver it instead of a four hour face-to-face training. Um, uh, you know, I've only got a team of 11 people and I'm five down at the moment. It is an amazing initiative. Now we're seeing schools implement NAIDOC days and NAIDOC events and sorry day events and these particular murals and things like that, that deadly education plans, which is amazing.

• 16:48 – 17:29

I want to acknowledge that we do have a lot of resources out there and in particular, there's someone on Facebook that does the Koorie curriculum which has amazing, there are resources on her Facebook page and her website. I will acknowledge though that she's New South Wales. So, I wanted to share our Victorian childhood cultural early childhood protocols. And there are some differences and because of the different mobs and the way that, consultation has occurred with VAEAI and our koorie community, our protocols are slightly different.

• 17:29 – 17:58

I encourage you to, to read through it. If you have any questions, please reach out to myself or someone like Kim Powell who can actually step you through those protocols as well. And we can deliver, you know, the KESO can actually say yes. You know, I think that's a really great idea or maybe we might need to get a bit of permission on that. And one of the things I do explain to schools and to early years services, you offend when you don't.

• 18:00 - 18:37

I always say you can always apologize for saying we're under the wrong way. Or not a hundred percent knowing what country you're sitting on, but try to acknowledge that you're standing on Aboriginal land. If you don't acknowledge us, that's more offensive it's like we don't exist.

• 18:37 - 19:14

You know, we acknowledge her for all of her incredible work that she's done, you know, for 25 years. So if you don't know, if you haven't got a copy of this, um, it is on our website. If you have any questions I'll also send you through the link.

• 19:15 - 19:21

So, I will send that list off, if you don't know, just contact your local DET office and they will connect you.

• 19:25 - 20:02

I just wanted to show you, this is, our pre-contact and each colour represents different language group and different laws, different cult customs. And this reflects back to even things like in Victoria we use possum skin cloaks, but up north they use more of the kangaroo cloaks. We traded and we utilise our services really, you know, our resources really well and shared them as well.

• 20:02 - 20:11

So, that is apparent from the discovery of the Victorian greenstone all the way up north.

• 20:14 - 20:49

I always try and make sure that everybody understands this training, it is a two hour training, so, you engage with your local inclusion heroes and to be able to give you some context, for 60,000 years in an hour. So, excuse me if I'm just running through, if you have any questions, and of course I'm more than happy to share, this content with everybody as well, the more people know, the better we all are.

• 20:50 – 21:08

We know Mungo man was found and he's about 68,000 years old

• 21:15 – 21:52

We know that there's digs have found Aboriginal habitation for 80,000 years. And I think there's been a recent discovery which actually has been predated beyond any of those. I can't remember off the top of my head exactly what that is. We know that self-determination is a really big direction for our government at the moment, and really been a determination for us as aboriginal people for forever.

• 21:53 – 22:27

We want be able to decide and have voices heard at the table, especially when it comes to government policies around our people and ourselves and our lives. Oh, thank you. I just wanted to capture, you know, when we've got our mob being removed from our own countries. The policies and procedures that were put in place, throughout the 17 hundreds through to the 19 hundreds to today even.

• 22:28 – 23:00

We also know that our men struggle with this a lot because you know, culturally they were here to provide us with, you know, our food, our laws and you know, keep us safe, as mob and we've displaced them. Our mob, our men don't really know where they fit in, in, in the society, you know, through our DNA. Transgenerational trauma has been proven to be in our DNA.

• 23:00 – 23:44

Being a grandchild and a child stolen generation and a sibling of stone generation, this is very prominent for my life. So, again, this is talking about those particular policies and procedures, policies that protected us. It also meant that we actually had to ask permission to actually leave our missions and coop, our missions and reserves, but also if we wanted to get a job, try and provide for our family, we actually had to get permission for that.

• 23:44 – 24:18

But also, also we had to sign a waiver that actually made us exempt from all the curfews and things like that, and to get a job and live off the mission. But it also meant that we had to sign away any acknowledgement of who we are. And it also meant that we weren't allowed to associate with family, community or any of those things. And that's why, you know, a lot of time people may come out last moment that, you know, they just found out and that's because actually no one told them.

• 24:18 - 25:11

They had to pretend for such a long time and these policies and procedures you know, really imbed today's society, just those particular policies that enabled government to remove children. You know, a lot of the time it says things like, illegitimate children or if there was proven to be mistreatment or physical welfare of the children. Sometimes the physical welfare of the children was deemed to be at risk because they were aboriginal or because even today you look at it, so I'll give an example of a contemporary issue.

• 25:14 - 25:49

We worked with a family, a young mother who had an intellectual disability and she would be feeding her baby. And one of our references is, oh, you know, we'll just chuck the baby on the tit and that's just the way that we talk. Child protection and all the officials involved with this young woman, because she did have an intellectual disability, found that her to be speaking sexualized to the child.

• 25:51 - 26:23

So, when we look at those sorts of things because that child was removed. Now for us, as aboriginal people, that just wouldn't have happened if they had a consulted appropriately with people around her. I'll also note that these policies were stopped in 1957 in Victoria, but the last, YBI was closed in the nineties. So, we've still got very young stolen generation people out there.

• 26:23 - 26:31

My brother is not yet 50. Um, how much time have we got, is there any questions thus far?

• 26:32 - 26:49

I've got three that have been thrown at us already. Yes. the first one is, I wrote down here, when you talked about the acknowledgement. How do we ensure that we do an acknowledgement from the heart rather than just reading it?

• 26:50 - 27:22

I did show you different ways of personalizing it to your service. So, you know, personalizing it with the values of the service. So, you know sustainability or, there is some examples where, here is the sun, here is the earth, here are my friends and here am I, and then you're thanking the country. But also, I think it's about understanding why you do it.

• 27:22 - 27:57

And that's why I try and explain to people, you know, the reasons why it's important for us as aboriginal people. Because once you understand that, you actually feel more

empowered to tailor it to your service. Also, I think it's not just about the children doing it in your classrooms, but it's also about having it on your websites or on your newsletters or when you are doing your family days and Mother's Day stalls and all of those sorts of things, or carols or any of those things is actually doing it there as well.

- 27:58 – 28:32

It may feel tokenistic at the start and you may need to read it at the start, but as you become more confident in that and you understand that tokenism is the start of it, you're always gonna feel tokenistic when you start something. It's when you start doing it without even thinking about it, that you take those next steps or, you know, you start then embedding it into your everyday. That's how you make it authentic.

- 28:32 – 28:37

That's how you make it genuine and, and with heart. I hope that answers it.

- 28:39 – 28:46

The second question was how do we, how can we start to incorporate indigenous perspectives into what we do?

- 28:48 – 29:07

So, I think it's about, okay, for instance, when we are looking at the VEYLDF and you are acknowledging and you are thinking about, does someone throw me, um, a chart, this little boy is interested in this today. Can someone throw me something that this little boy is interested in?

- 29:13 – 29:44

Dinosaurs. And so, we then look at dinosaurs and then we look at, well what does that look like back when aboriginal people were around before colonization, and then you can look at things like the crocodile and that was a food for aboriginal people. And then you can then incorporate what does that look like when you're eating crocodile or you know, you're going up north and you're actually looking at these waterholes that look absolutely pristine.

- 29:44 – 30:13

But if you speak to the locals, you will get eaten <laugh>. So, you can actually then refer it back to those, you know, crocodiles we're around through dinosaur ages, and then you can actually associate all of that into that space as well. So, it's just about, having that confidence and utilizing the resources that are available.

• 30:14 – 30:53

I'll give you the VAEAI website with the curriculums and things like that. There is an early childhood space there, come along and have a yarn with our KESOs. You know, it could be just doing one little thing a week and then you say, okay, well that was much easier than what I thought. Yeah. So yeah. Okay. When I'm trying to teach and embed our aboriginal culture within the kindergartens, when I was teaching, we'd have sort of the colonized version of something.

• 30:53 – 31:09

So, for example, buildings, and then we'd also have the resource that was of what aboriginals would have back in the days, you know, those straw hats, those stone huts but, also the tools, you know, whilst they didn't have knives and forks, they had sticks and spears and that sort of stuff.

• 31:09 – 31:45

We always had it available so that it's not just a learning experience, it's there, it's always available. You could use your knife and fork if you wanted to, or you could use, maybe not quite in a childcare setting, but you could use, a stick to eat with, or, you know, build it onto those different cultures as well. Yeah. But just having the, the two that you can sort of compare to is one way of doing it, but different clothing, different materials, the paints, rather than having your acrylics, it's, you know, go out and crush up some mud and leaves and make paint through that way.

• 31:46 – 32:04

That's how we sort of did it in our services and that's amazing. And even just having more earthy tones, even just your signing sheets and, and welcomes and, and things like that, walking in and, and having your local language.

• 32:04 – 32:39

So, you know, in more countries, Womindjeka, but also understanding what does that mean? Like, it's not just welcome, there's another meaning behind Womindjeka and I can't remember it. I know that you know AJ so I'm gonna hand it over to you. Come with a purpose. Yeah, come with a purpose. So, it's about welcoming but coming, coming with a purpose. And I think that's really important. Like when I walk into services as an aboriginal woman, I wanna see my colours being represented, I wanna see you using bark and all this sort of stuff.

• 32:39 – 33:14

I've got three toddlers, all attend, a childcare service out where I am. And I just, I literally just said to them, 'can I take your reception over?' And they said, absolutely. So, I had Aboriginal colour streamers, the flag streamers across there, the flag that the kids made, I sat down with the kids and they'd done well, both the Torres Strait Islander and the Aboriginal flag and then have Torres Strait Islander streamers.

• 33:14 - 33:55

This didn't cost anything by the way, so it's smaller cost. Then I got old boxes and painted them black, then took her to another room where I've got the kids to actually put their feet in white paint and walk along the blackness. It was like this big trail and the kids wanted to say we walked together. It's those sorts of things that end up being, that's part of your curriculum, because we did activities, utilizing books that are out there because we have got an abundance of books out there now.

• 33:55 - 34:28

Back when, you know, 10 years ago when I first started as a KESO, there just wasn't that much books. And now, influx with it everywhere and it's beautiful, beautiful books. So, I hope that helped start your fire, that certainly is not the ending or anything. I just thought as well, because we've talked about stolen generations, you know, and I want you to think and reflect where you were and I can't see everybody, I can only see a few people.

• 34:28 - 34:43

I'm hoping some most people were alive, when the Rudd apology occurred. If not, and you haven't seen this video then hopefully you'll be able to hear it. Let me just check first.

• 34:46 - 34:47

Tell me if you can hear it.

• 34:59 - 35:05

No, I can't hear. Okay. You can't hear that.

• 35:06 - 35:09

Hey Zoe, we'll put up a copy onto the website -perfect.

• 35:11 - 35:12

I do have some other questions for you.

• 35:13 - 35:13

Oh, perfect.

• 35:14 – 35:38

So, one of them is, and I think you've answered this before, but it'd be really good asking this. Victorian government has been saying, do not, you don't have to acknowledge future and emerging elders. You mentioned in your speech about acknowledging them

• 35:38 – 35:40

Yes.

• 35:40 – 35:42

What is emerging in future as well.

• 35:43 – 36:23

The reason why I do it is because we are in the education sector and we are educating our future leaders, that's why I do, I do acknowledge our emerging leaders, I don't find it offensive.

• 36:23 – 37:09

Some people do, I don't really understand why. I'm sure there's a full good reason for it, but I do, and I explain why. I do know that's the reason why I explain that I'm working with our future leaders. I am working with our emerging leaders and, but also that doesn't displace our past, you know, leaders, AJ can you elaborate?

• 37:10 – 37:25

I'm not exactly sure, but I've seen a couple of government Victoria statements coming out saying it can be a really offensive to current elders by acknowledging emerging elders because they're not elders.

• 37:25 – 37:26

Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>.

• 37:26 – 37:56

During NAIDOC, I did two events, one that I was moderating, but at one of them a girl was talking. And she, she was kind of shocked when she said, well, why wouldn't we be, why wouldn't we? And at the next event, a guy was talking and someone mentioned as well, the same thing, we've been told not to use emerging. And a guy said if you're on Wurundjeri Land, we would want you to acknowledge our emerging elders, because they're our future.

• 37:56 – 37:57

Yes.

• 37:57 – 38:06

So, I'm not exactly sure where the Victorian government's come up with a policy of who they consulted with about not using it.

• 38:06 – 38:07

Yes. Yeah.

• 38:07 – 38:12

But I've always grown up, acknowledging emerging leaders at the same time.

• 38:13 – 38:48

I've always done it as well. I always say to people, if someone tells you off all you have to do is say sorry, can you educate me why. You can say sorry, and please if you, do it with an open heart.

• 38:53 – 39:03

Another question someone's went through is, can we use language in our service or do we need permission to use language?

• 39:04 – 39:39

Really amazing question there. If you're standing on if you're on Wurundjeri country, Mandy Nicholson has gifted to the early years services some language, so you can always find them. That was gifted to the early childhood sector, in relation to Womindjeka.

• 39:40 – 40:12

That word actually welcomes into, into different towns and things like that. You can always double check, but you know, it is at that particular word has been gifted to, to basically everyone. And, and it has it, it has been published on, you know, townships and things like that.

• 40:12 – 40:23

And you are standing on, country, what country? So those, those particular words, not a problem.

• 40:24 – 40:55

If you're wanting to let's say name your rooms in language, and things like that, I would always consult and just have a look at making sure that number one, you're using the right language and right word for that particular room and just do that engagement process with the traditional owners of the language that you're actually wanting to do it.

• 40:56 – 41:09

And, and sometimes it will be just a matter of sending an email. Sometimes it might be a bit more of a consultation of why you want to do it. Is it part of your RAP? Is it part of this?

• 41:09 – 41:11

Well, isn't there Zoe, sometimes there's a cost.

• 41:11 – 41:42

Sometimes there is a cost. Yes. So, I know that, in Wurundjeri there is a cost, for those sorts of naming buildings and things like that. And again, it's about engaging with your KESO, myself or, you know, someone, my equivalent.

• 41:43 – 42:15

So sometimes there is a cost to it. I, I have found that if you engage your traditional owner and really explain what you're doing and what your purpose is and things like that, they're really open to have that negotiation. So, I know that an early childhood centre out in Lilydale, they engaged a KESO.

• 42:16 – 42:29

And they were really amazed at that they got to use those words that Manti had actually gifted them, gifted the, the community and endured that.

• 42:29 – 43:16

That mean, just a quick question. Should you think if the words are being gifted by a particular elder that comes to your service to make sure that's clearly understood? Because I do know that over time, workers come and go and elders come and go as well. I've actually heard elders say to people, and this is where they might get played against each other a couple of times when one of the Elders questions who's giving you permission to use this word? Oh, we don't know. We've been using it for a number of years. And they go, well, unless, you know, I'm saying, everybody would need to know in the service who's gifted these words because some of the elders found it quite upsetting that organizations are using these words, say that they're gifted, but not saying who they're gifted by.

• 43:16 - 43:48

Yeah. So, basically, it's about I suppose, you know, what I would always think, like with aboriginal children, doing your individual education plan is that you're doing individual, like services inclusion plans where you are actually documenting, you know, the curriculum that you're embedding or, you know, the elders that you're engaging to do those dream time story times and things like that.

• 43:49 - 44:21

Also, you know, if you've had an indigenous garden, you're gonna wanna know the plants that are in there, so that you can pass it on to the next person. Hopefully, you know, not everybody's gonna be in the same role forever or be in the same service. Things happen. So, it's about really sitting and, and acknowledging it. I think as well, documenting the process and if you are utilizing the cultural protocols, you are engaging with particular people of the community.

• 44:22 - 44:53

And then you're getting the permission. If you know you are confident that the service has actually done the cultural protocols, then you are getting the right permissions. But I agree if say Uncle Roy Maynard, I'm just talking about one of my uncles who would do this, he'd come in and say, Hey, yeah, you can have this, this, this, this and this.

• 44:53 - 45:26

And then, um, you know, Eddie may not came in, you know, 10 years later and said, oh, I don't know why he would do that. It's just about actually really sitting down and saying, well, I consulted with them, they said that was fine. I engaged with the career services and career workforce at department and that protects everybody involved. Not just you, but also, you know, the elder that's involved and you know, things like that.

• 45:26 - 45:28

Cause we do have some way with elders too.

• 45:28 - 45:41

Yeah. So, Nicole's just put up, I would wonder, would it be appropriate to have professional signage to celebrate the gift of language and state the elder's name, I would say. Yeah.

• 45:41 - 45:45

Absolutely. Absolutely. I think that's beautiful.

• 45:49 – 46:01

I think Denny sent a message. I think sometimes this can be, this can make educators fearful to embed aboriginal perspectives into curriculum because they might feel they're doing it wrong with disrespect to aboriginal people.

• 46:04 – 46:15

I agree.

• 46:31 – 47:06

I do think some educators are scared to embed it. It's kind of mandatory to embed it. So, we gotta look at how do we start to get through that uncomfortableness, because I think part of the learning is for us to learn how to be uncomfortable. How do we then be uncomfortable so that we can become comfortable in the future? Now we don't want to do it as in, you know, make it tokenistic. I'm not saying all of a sudden you're teaching a little bit of maths and you go, well, Johnny has four boomerangs and Peter has seven boomerangs.

• 47:06 – 47:16

How many boomerangs do we have now <laugh> or start doing some cooking, little cooking segments with kids. And you go, well, let's just let add lemon myrtle for everything. And all of a sudden, this dish.

• 47:17 – 47:17

<Laugh>.

• 47:19 – 47:50

So, but it's, it's actually thinking, well in the long term, how are we going to make this as part of our ongoing curriculum? And I think in the early stages, it's a bit what Zoe said before, it's okay to get it wrong, have a go, how does it work? How did the kids engage with it? How did I as a, an educator engage with it? How did the other educators engage with it? And if we engage with it really well, then that's something that we'll keep in that particular curriculum.

• 47:50 – 48:32

If it doesn't go well, then sometimes it's actually looking at, well, why didn't it go well? Was it because of attitudes of other people? Was it because of certain practices that we were doing or we really didn't know what it was that we were doing? We found this activity and thought we knew how to implement it, but then we've tried it and then it didn't work. I think that's when it's, it's kind of important sometimes to, you know, engage the KESOs or there's

a number of consultants out there as well that will have a look at some of the policies or some of the teaching areas to have a look at some of the activities that you do to actually go, how do I make it more culturally appropriate, I was gonna say inappropriate, but culturally appropriate.

• 48:33 – 49:00

<Laugh>., I think as well, it's just starting little, so I know that it is, even if it's just things like learning the colours of the flag, learning the colours of the Torres Strait Islander flag, how many people know the Torres Strait Islander flag colours and what they represent.

• 49:03 – 49:35

That's a good point Zoe. I, I just went out and did cultural awareness training at, four services that all belonging to the one umbrella. And I would say half the staff did not know what the flags meant, honestly. So even though they said, yeah, we got the flags, we promote them, it's about cultural safety, I kind of had to throw back in their face in a polite way, how culturally safe do you think I feel now knowing that you don't know what they are and they stop for a second. I never thought of that.

• 49:35 – 49:42

It's not what you don't know. It's what you actually need to know.

• 49:43 – 50:15

Yeah, yeah. And I think, you know, I suppose for those people who don't know about the Torres Strait Islander flag and the colours that it represents, the green is for the land and the Green Islands. Black is for the people. Blue is for the ocean. The five-pointed star represents each and every island in the Torres Strait Island. And then that horseshoe looking symbol is actually called a Dhari.

• 50:16 – 50:48

It's beautiful. It's ah, amazing. It's intricate in detail, but that's actually a ceremony, headdress. And then the white represents peace because Torres Strait Islanders actually experienced colonization and settlement in a much different way nearly a hundred years later. They saw as a bringing of the light, where you know, they weren't invaded as such. They were just, the missionaries came, they came across.

• 50:49 – 51:07

So yeah, I think it's starting little, just start little, you know, it doesn't matter, like if you get it wrong at the start, if your intention is with an open heart to learn, then aboriginal people are gonna be so kind in that space.

• 51:07 - 51:42

I know that you know, a lot of educators are a bit fearful because a lot of the time there was like, I think it was probably about when my teenagers were at kindergarten, everything was dot painting, absolutely everything. And then community came in and said, actually no, this is not local. This is actually not our mob, if you're doing the artwork, we want our local artwork done, so we don't just do dot painting, we want you to do line work, we want you to do symbols, we wanna do all those sorts of things.

• 51:42 - 51:54

If you do, do dot painting, acknowledge that it's not Victorian. And I think that put a lot of fear in our educators.

• 51:58 - 52:07

I'm just watching the time. Does anyone have any final questions for Zoe? You can just take your microphones off and just yell 'em out.

• 52:07 - 52:14

You like yell 'em out to me. I could talk underwater. So you know, <laugh>.,

• 52:15 - 52:16

I can talk.

• 52:16 - 52:19

<Laugh>. Yes.

• 52:20 - 52:22

I've been pretty good the whole hour.

• 52:22 - 52:29

I know you've been very quiet. I was like, you know, me and AJ are gonna be like, you know, bouncing off each other. You lifted all in my arena.

• 52:31 - 52:46

So, if you could give services, three tips to start the reconciliation journey or to start embedding culture into practice, how, what would you recommend? What three tips would you give us?

• 52:47 - 53:19

I wanna just reassure that you're not teaching culture. You are teaching perspectives in curriculum. You're not teaching culture. So, you know, if you were teaching ceremony, that would be different. It'll be a No, no. But, if you are just looking at you know, singing some songs that are on YouTube and things like that, that is perfectly great.

• 53:19 – 53:56

Get those colours in, get really going with you know, just those simple little things and get some books and represent us all. Like, you know, we are all diverse, you know, in our colours. And, just be, I'm doing more than three tips by the way, I do it my way <laugh>. If you do it with an open heart as well, like do it with an open heart and you know, I think that's the only tips I can give or consult us.

• 53:57 – 53:57

Talk to us.

• 53:59 – 54:17

No thanks Zoe. I know some of you got your sound off, it would be good to take mute off for a second to give, Zoe a big round of applause for joining us tonight. Hear the clapping now. Sometimes we can't hear the clapping, so.

• 54:17 – 54:42

<Laugh>. Yeah. Thank you for your patience and kindness with toddlers. thank you so much. You did well Zoe. You did very well. <laugh>. Thank you. I take my hat off to you, <laugh>. Thank you.

• 54:42 – 54:55

Thanks Zoe.