### Assignment 1

I'm focusing on a grade 3/4 composite class, most born in Australia, half with different cultural backgrounds and five born overseas. They have various learning styles and abilities, and four are on independent learning plans.

I chose 'Took the Children Away' (Roach, 2010), originally a song by Archie Roach, later putting his song words to a picture book. The theme relates to the importance of family, and how Indigenous people were put into missions and their children taken away. Roach describes being taken from his people, surviving the ordeal, and later finding his way back to his people and the land. Flanagan (2010) professed the song would 'change how nations see themselves'.

Promoting a supportive environment for culturally diverse learners begins with the important role teachers plays in choosing texts and their pedagogical choices for text delivery. The Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2013) outlines learning outcomes, but doesn't consider context and student diversity, which is where the teacher's role is emphasised. Developing relationships with students and their families to understand their needs (Doecke et al., 2014, p.95), provides insights into what activities we plan and texts we choose. By utilising the rich cultural and linguistic resources, or 'funds of knowledge' in our classrooms we recognise the diversity in them (Doecke et al., 2014, p.84). Creating a safe classroom environment, where students feel they belong and are comfortable to discuss themselves is also important for culturally diverse learners (Doecke et al., 2014, p.88). Teachers should put inclusive values into action (Moss, 2013, p.149) by restructuring participation structures that consider diverse worldviews (Au, 2009, p.180) and use texts that are multi-modal, supporting different ways of learning and meaning-making (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012a, p.2).

#### **Justification**

Justification for embedding intercultural understanding including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) perspectives begins with The *Melbourne Declaration on Educational*  *Goals for Young Australians* (2008) identifying the critical responsibility education holds in constructing a society that's 'cohesive and culturally diverse, and that values Australia's Indigenous cultures' (MCEETYA, p. 4).

Intercultural Understanding emphasises communication and engagement between individuals from different cultures and involves being supportive and accepting of similarities and differences (Doecke et al., 2014, p. 86). Embedding intercultural understanding in pedagogical practice allows students to feel their knowledge, experiences, languages and beliefs they bring to the classroom are valued and respected. It encourages students to feel comfortable with whom they really are, exploring their own cultures and identities in a safe environment. The expected outcome is to connect our students with others, preparing them to live in the diverse world, so they become responsible local and global citizens (ACARA, 2013a). By embedding intercultural understanding we foster cultures to co-exist in the classroom. Nakata (2011, p.6) states everybody's history should count and be appreciated in the classroom by managing it as an 'intercultural learning space'. In the 21st century it's necessary to integrate intercultural understanding into curriculum because Australia has become more globalised and today's workplaces are diverse. Without intercultural understanding some students may inherit their parents' xenophobic attitudes to people from other cultures due to mistrust or misunderstanding of their predicaments (Mudiyanselage, 2014, p.81).

Including ATSI perspectives in a classroom where there aren't any ATSI students demonstrates the significance we place on the first culture of this land, valuing and positioning indigenous content in the curriculum as something enriching the education of all students (Nakata, 2011, p.6). This provides opportunities for students to explore similarities and differences between themselves and ATSI people, and develops multiple perspectives to our country's history. Nakata (2011, p.7) reinforces that inclusion of indigenous perspectives assists teachers in their overall teaching of intercultural understanding with students.

Teachers support culturally diverse learners by constructing effective learning environments that develop intercultural understanding by:

- Using inclusive language and fostering negotiation skills to reach open-minded conclusions when points of view differ. Encouraging students to address prejudice and racism
- Using resources that consider multiple perspectives and authentic voices.
- Expanding on students' interpretations of human rights, recognising societies have diverse views and may not value the views of others.
- Using a critical literacy approach confronting stereotypes and misconceptions, questioning 'Who created this text?', 'Whose voice is present/missing?', 'Which culture is positively framed to questions being asked?'
- Learning to create connections for students from one culture to another by thinking critically on your own attitudes, beliefs and values (Global Education Project, 2012a)

#### **Rationale**

'Took the Children Away' (Roach, 2010) highlights themes of: importance of family, Australian history, cultural differences, racism, human rights and social justice. Mudiyanselage (2014, p.77) states interrogating these issues has become necessary for children living in diverse societies today.

This text responds to the plights or misfortunes of others, which these students, with midupper class backgrounds, haven't had much exposure to. It also considers issues of racism -a good fit to these learners as I've observed racist 'name-calling' in the playground and students not respecting others due to perceived differences. Teachers can reinforce school values as incidences occur in the playground, however this can be strengthened inside this classroom through this text to change attitudes. This text highlights the devastating results of what can occur without 'intercultural understanding'. Craven and Price (2011, p.43) describe racism occurs when a group of people are treated less favourably because of their race. This text demonstrates how a dominant culture believed their ways were better, or correct, and how another culture was deemed inferior. Rogoff (2003, p.24) advocates we become more culturally conscious and informed, recognising there are many truths to understand social life. This text is also suitable due to its age appropriateness for this group, examining how racism can be overt like 'name-calling' in the playground, or disguised as something good. For example, 'the welfare and policeman said you've got to understand, we'll give them what you can't give, teach them how to really live' (Roach, 2010). The portrayal of the relationships and interactions between people and their societies (ACARA, 2013c) are evident in this story supporting students to learn about cultural inequalities that pervaded Australia historically, and persist today. In this way they are encouraged to 'question the attitudes and assumptions of cultural groups in light of the consequences and outcomes for others' (ACARA, 2013b). Mudiyanselage (2014, p.90) proposes by including both intercultural understanding in conjunction with ATSI perspectives in the Australian curriculum, mainstream students' exposure to marginalised groups thereby decreases the likely racial prejudice resulting from ignorance about other ethnic and racial groups.

This text is suitable for these learners because it's multimodal –song and picture book, providing an engaging format to explore meaningful concepts. The need for multiliteracy has increased in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, therefore adopting and encouraging multiple literacies exhibits a powerful way to support the valuable inclusion of all students into education (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012b, p.380). This text is linguistic, visual, written and aural appealing to different learning styles, accommodating Gardner's multiple intelligences by differentiating the learning for students' diversity (Godinho, 2013, p.240). This classroom is diverse, not just culturally, but with different learning styles and range of abilities, necessitating to 'multimodality' to accommodate meaning-making. Godinho (2013, p.240) reiterates this permits students to learn the same subject matter and skills, but manage their learning in different ways. Most of this class are in the school choir, so including the song with the picture book appeals to students' interests. Visuals in this text support the needs of these learners with one-quarter born overseas, different family backgrounds and four students on ILP's, the importance of visuals and utilising visual literacy skills becomes imperative to make-meaning and interpret the story. Strong visuals like the picture of the people fenced in like sheep allows students to visualise the meaning of the words being read. Mudiyanselage (2014, p.80) discusses how sometimes pain or emotion is not provided by words in picture books, but is expressed via illustrations, and the reader's interpretation of the visuals.

Text selection was based on the author being an indigenous person, creating an 'authentic voice', providing a different perspective to Australian history. Mudiyanselage (2014, p.81) suggests by exploring a picture book depicting the lived experiences of ATSI people that

their 'real voices' are embedded in the text and deemed authentic. This text delivers historical information, stimulates curiosity, fosters reconciliation, empathy and transforms thinking utilising rhyme as the delivery mode, which students in this class have found particularly engaging in the past. Without any Indigenous students in this class, or school, it's a 'good fit' as it's necessary for students to analyse multiple perspectives of our country's history. Nakata (2011, p.7) discusses the first step towards integrating indigenous perspectives is to embrace stories and picture books. This book provides a valuable means to explore complex topics acting as a launching point into sensitive discussions and assisting with students' perceptive understanding of the experiences of ATSI peoples, fostering a level of tolerance and empathy. Nakata (2011, p.6) expresses a useful way for students to develop intercultural understanding is just by including or talking about the continuing presence of indigenous knowledge as this helps develop understanding for the challenges in contemporary Indigenous Australia.

Choosing a text with strong and overt themes was deliberate, as I thought these students would benefit from the impact the story has in creating empathy for ATSI people. Using critical literacy skills to analyse the narrative we see Roach (2010) begins by earning the reader's trust – "This story's right this stories true, I would not tell lies to you", then seeks to discredit the colonisers with 'like the promises they did not keep' (Roach, 2010), using language that personally engages his readers as they relate to how they feel when promises are not kept. He uses symbolic language -'fenced us in like sheep' (Roach, 2010) which portrays to readers that they were treated like animals. When they read 'took the children away, snatched from their mother's breast' (Roach, 2010) reader's feel empathy because they can relate to emotions felt if they were taken away from their mothers. When students' read 'breaking their mother's use of strong words like breaking, tearing and snatched creates strong visions. This text promotes 'deep literacy' allowing what students have learnt to influence behaviours and attitudes towards others, and foster an awareness of human rights and social justice (Winch, 2010, p.541).

This text makes curricular links with the Australian Curriculum through general capabilities of literacy, intercultural understanding and ethical understanding, and learning areas of

English and Humanities -particularly history and civics and citizenship, and cross-curriculum priority of ATSI perspectives. Civics and Citizenship level 3 examines 'How and why people make rules (ACHCK002)' (ACARA, 2013d). Through this text students explore why particular rules were made for ATSI people whilst considering ethical understanding relating to complex issues such as human rights. This text explores history through its consideration of the fundamental issues of everyday life, power and authority, and relationships between people, land and time (Global Education Project, 2012b). Level 4 examines 'The nature of contact between ATSI peoples and others, and the effects of these interactions on families and environment (ACHHK080)' (ACARA, 2013e). This text concentrates on relationships between ATSI people and colonisers and how this affected ATSI families.

Via the English learning area students explore how language in the story is used to express opinions and make evaluative judgments about people and places. Level 3 examines 'how evaluative language can be varied to be more or less forceful' (ACELA1477)(ACARA, 2013f). Referring to 'they fenced us in like sheep' could be evaluated to assume sheep aren't very bright animals and ATSI people were treated like animals. Level 3 discusses the 'nature and effects of some language devices used to enhance meaning and shape the reader's reaction, including rhythm and onomatopoeia in poetry and prose' (ACELT1600) (ACARA, 2013f). We explore the rhyming nature of the story and the part this plays in creating meaning and effect. Finally, at level 3 students 'identify the point of view in a text and suggest alternative points of view' (ACELY1675)(ACARA, 2013f) which is explored in the teaching strategy section.

#### How text considers ATSI perspectives

As the author is indigenous therefore the text explicitly considers ATSI perspectives, particularly the suffering of indigenous people is explored through author's memories of his childhood. The text examines ATSI perspectives on the promises of white people and the outcomes that eventuated. It explores the indigenous emotions of finding their way back to their families as adults, and to their homeland - 'back where their hearts grow strong, back where they all belong', returning to a place where everything makes sense – 'back where they understand, back to their mother's land' (Roach, 2010). It makes connections to family,

to people and to land – 'back to their mother, back to their father, to their sister, their brother, their people, their land' (Roach, 2010). Roach focuses on connections to the elements and to Country, reflecting on the 'relatedness' between elements of land and people, each element being respected as equal to all the others (Martin, 2008, p.61). His return supports the rediscovery of Aboriginal worldviews, and identity -his reason for being, exploring important themes about their spirit and endurance and resilience of ATSI people in the face of displacement.

This text is thought-provoking because of its stereotyping of white people, and interesting for students to consider alternate points of view. They can analyse the colonisers' behaviour, whilst reflecting and unpacking their own thoughts on why they act in particular ways to different people. Students can also draw upon similarities they have to ATSI people, for example, close links to family, with the text promoting empathy via its dialogue about families being torn apart.

#### **Teaching strategy**

Using a critical literacy task recommended by Winch (2010, p.544), students are put into groups of four. I've chosen to utilise student-led groups to vary participation structures observed in this class. Working together co-operatively reflects diverse worldview values and utilising 'culturally responsive instruction' allows more students to succeed academically by building on their home experiences (Au, 2009, p.179). Each group represents a different person with a different point of view from the story. They're encouraged to give the person a name, explaining reasons for why they think that way. Students critically analyse behaviour by stepping into someone else's shoes. Each group writes a script of what their person says. Each person is responsible for a task during their script presentation to the class. Tasks are:

- 1. Set the scene
- 2. Explain who the person is
- 3. Present the script
- 4. Describe how a point of view changes how you see things

A benefit of 'student-led' groups is they all work together to complete the task, with students organising and assigning their own roles. Au (2009, p.182) explains some cultural groups have considerable experience working with siblings and extended family to accomplish tasks and know how to organise a small group to reach a common goal.

Things for students to consider:

-What sort of attitudes, values and beliefs does your person hold?
-Do they make assumptions or have preconceived ideas on other people in the story?
-What motives do they have?
-Why do you think they feel the way they do?

This teaching strategy highlights how students have interpreted and made-meaning from the text. It allows for development of 'cultural literacy' via examining Australian history through an indigenous perspective, thereby exploring their knowledge of the world and its people, and how we all have diverse ways of being (Winch, 2010, p.535). Analysing the text and alternate points of view allows students to consider:

How the text makes them feel? What is it trying to make them do and why? Do they now hold a particular belief? Do they like/dislike particular groups in the text? (Winch, 2010, p.534)

Each person from the group then joins another group, with a person from each group represented in these new groupings. Each person discusses their own point of view – whether they agree/disagree with their character's position. This dialogue promotes intercultural understanding with students contemplating sometimes we act in particular ways without fully considering another person's/group's point of view. This learning activity is narrative-based reflecting the 'story-sharing' Aboriginal pedagogy that Yunkaporta and Kirby (2011, p.207) describe as a two-way, back and forth, communicative process.

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#### Table 1: School Context

| School   | 'East' Primary   |  |
|--|--|--|
| name/pseudonym   |  |  |
| School Motto   | Core Values of Respect, Responsibility, Resilience and Compassion  |  |
| Location   | Eastern suburbs Victoria   |  |
| School Type  | Metropolitan Government Primary  |  |
| Enrolment  | 245  |  |
| Socio economic   | School ICSEA value 1084 (ACARA, 2013) which is higher than the average   |  |
| factors  | indicating that parents' occupation, school education, geographical location<br>have an influence on socio economic factors and in this locality put this school<br>in a mid-high class bracket with a high socio-educational advantage<br>Percentages are recorded as: Bottom quarter 8%, lower-mid 19%, mid-upper<br>34% and top quarter 39% (ACARA, 2013) |  |
| % Born in other<br>countries (ABS<br>data)                 | 31.5% (ABS, 2013)- this figure is the percentage of people in this suburb born overseas, but is not indicative of how many children from this school were born overseas, which I believe would be closer to 15-20%   |  |
| Special programs   | Gateways (extension program – independently run, but done during school<br>hours). Junior Chef – run by parents at lunchtime once a week. The Marimba<br>Band, There are 3 Choirs – Junior Jammers, Music Makers & Super Seniors,<br>Basketball Club   |  |
| Language(s) taught   | Mandarin   |  |
| Diversity  | No indigenous students – however backgrounds are quite diverse – Australian,<br>Italian, Greek, Chinese, English, Syrian, Russian, Indian, New Zealand   |  |
| The traditional<br>owners of the<br>land (The X<br>People) | The Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation (Yarra Valley from the catchment area down to Heidelberg)(aiatsis,2015) are acknowledged as the traditional custodians of the land now known as Manningham (Victorian Government, 2015)  |  |
| Community<br>Aboriginal sites                              | -Mullum Mullum Creek -Bolin Bolin Billabong (located in the area now<br>known as Doncaster/Bulleen) used to fish for eel or hunt for food<br>-Yarra River & surrounding bushlands – which they refer to as 'Birrarung'<br>meaning river of mists & shadows (Victorian Government, 2015)  |  |
|  | In the local area there are more than twenty-five sites of Aboriginal significance including tree scarring and artefact scatters, protected by state   |  |

|  | and federal legislation. There are also sacred ceremonial sites (Victorian<br>Government, 2015)<br>A Wurundjeri Stories interpretive sign is located at Wittons Reserve in Wonga<br>Park, sharing the Wurundjeri history of this site, considered to be Sacred<br>Women's Country. The sign marks the beginning of the scenic Mount Lofty<br>walk, a section of the Wurundjeri Songline route, the major Wurundjeri<br>travelling route to the Yarra Valley (Victorian Government, 2015)   |
|--|--|
|  | Wurundjeri Stories is an interpretive signage trail at Pound Bend that explores<br>the Wurundjeri history, culture, traditional life, spirituality, historical events<br>and the people linked to this sacred site. It's an excursion ideal for schools and<br>groups escorted with the guidance of a Wurundjeri Elder (Victorian<br>Government, 2015).  |
| Local Aboriginal<br>community<br>relationships | Selected students from the SRC were involved in an indigenous tree planting initiative supported by local council & Landcare in the Mullum Mullum Creek area<br>Cultural Event: The Melbourne Didgeridoo & Cultural Festival held in this area on Sat 11 <sup>th</sup> April 2015. Permission was granted by the traditional custodians of the land for the festival to take place and for women to be allowed to perform so long as they do not do so in N.E. Arnhem Land and respect Yolngu traditions (Aboriginal Artists Development Fund, 2015) |
| Other features                                 |  |
| as important to                                |  |
| context  | ARS data ACARTA (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority)   |

Refer to: My School, ABS data, ACARTA (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority), ICSEA (Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage), AIATSIS (Aboriginal Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies) map and school website, Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc

#### Table 2: Classroom Context

| Grade/Year Level              | Composite 3-4   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Learning Area/ Subject/ Topic | English   |
| Number of students            | 23  |
| Ratio of boys/girls           | 11:12   |
| Cultural diversity            | Interesting to note that when I did my practicum at<br>this school in 2013 the school's website actually<br>noted the school as 'mono-cultural' stating:<br>'The majority of students are born in Australia and<br>the school is generally mono-cultural. However,<br>there has been a slight increase of students from<br>non-English speaking backgrounds in recent years.'<br>('East' Primary, 2013). When I was researching for |

|  | this assignment I noticed that this has been<br>removed from the school website indicating quite<br>an increase in diversity at this eastern suburbs<br>school<br>Places of Birth for class – majority Australian<br>born,<br>1 X China, 1 X New Zealand, 1 x Syria, 1 X England,<br>1 X Argentina |
|--|--|
| Languages spoken                             | English, Greek, Syrian, Mandarin, Russian, Indian,<br>Maori  |
| Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people | 0  |
| % Languages other than English               | 26% (ACARA, 2013)  |
| Other  | 4 x Independent learning plans   |

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