
Special issue: *Decolonising the School Curriculum*

Research article

Decolonising the school experience through poetry to foreground truth-telling and cognitive justice

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Abstract

While attempts to decolonise the school curriculum have been ongoing since the 1970s, the recent Black Lives Matter protests around the world have drawn urgent attention to the vast inequities faced by Black and First Nations peoples and people of colour.

Decolonising education and other public institutions has become a front-line public concern around the world. In this article, we argue that poetry offers generative possibilities for the decolonisation of Australian high school (and university) curricula. Inspired by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander approaches to knowledge creation as *intergenerational*, *iterative* and *intercultural*, and by postcolonial and decolonial theories, we explore ways in which poetry events can begin decolonising and diversifying the school curriculum. We suggest that poetry creates spaces for deep listening with the heart (*dadirri*) that can promote truth-telling about colonial histories and the strengths, achievements and contributions of First Nations Australians. These decolonising efforts underpin the *Wandiny* (Gathering Together) – Listen With the Heart: Uniting Nations Through Poetry research that we discuss in this article. In these ways, we argue that decolonised curricula create the conditions for cognitive justice in schooling that is an important precursor to other forms of social justice, such as equality, diversity and inclusion.

Keywords decolonisation; school curriculum; First Nations Australians; poetry; truth-telling; cognitive justice

Introduction

While attempts to decolonise the school curriculum have been ongoing since the 1970s in many countries, the recent Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests around the world have drawn urgent attention to the vast inequities faced by Black and Indigenous peoples and people of colour. Decolonising education and other public institutions has become a front-line public concern around the world. The death of George Floyd in the USA was the most recent catalyst that has brought instances of gross injustice against peoples of colour around the world to the forefront of public attention. In June 2020, there were mass protests supporting the BLM movement on every continent (except Antarctica), at a time during the COVID-19 pandemic when people were strongly discouraged from attending mass gatherings because of the risk of infection, especially among First Nations, minority and Black populations. People felt the immediate need to demonstrate solidarity, despite the risk of infection (Isaacs et al., 2020).

Globally, we are at a critical turning point in the fight against institutional and all forms of racism and unconscious bias (Isaacs et al., 2020; Phoenix et al., 2020). As Isaacs et al. (2020: 1327) argue, 'the time for nice words and good intentions is over.' The killing of George Floyd and subsequent BLM action has ignited 'fury and urgency' that must be harnessed to achieve real change (Phoenix et al., 2020: 521). Academics and teachers have gained renewed strength from the BLM movement to foreground ongoing 'anti-blackness and liberal white supremacy' (Bell et al., 2020: 39) in universities and schools. Many have adopted kihana miraya ross's (2020: n.p.) definition of anti-Blackness as 'a theoretical framework that illuminates society's inability to recognize our humanity – the disdain, disregard and disgust for our existence'. Bell et al. (2020: 42) characterise White supremacy as 'an institutional system of power that normalizes, privileges, and maintains whiteness and white advantages in all spheres of life, including higher education'. It is clear that long overdue challenging conversations about the history of colonialism and slavery must be had, and real 'acts of decolonisation' must be adopted in schools and universities (Phoenix et al., 2020: 521).

In the Australian context, the Black Lives Matter movement has focused particularly on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths in custody, which remain a shocking record of shame in our country. Australia continues to have an over-representation of First Nations peoples in prison. Australia has its own earlier tragic story of a young Aboriginal man dying after repeatedly saying 'I can't breathe'. David Dungay Jr, a Dunghutti man from Kempsey, died in Sydney's Long Bay jail in 2015 when prison guards stampeded into his cell to stop him eating biscuits. The prison guards dragged him to another cell and injected him with a sedative while holding him face down (Stansfield, 2021). At the time of writing this article, there have been at least 474 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths in custody since 1991, when the Royal Commission's deaths in custody report was released (Allam et al., 2021). No Australian

police personnel have ever been convicted for any of these deaths. These First Nations deaths in custody are symptomatic of an Australian state system that remains profoundly racist.

Schools (and universities) represent significant institutions within this state apparatus. Very often these educational institutions have remained sites where inequalities, unconscious bias and racism are perpetuated (Sharma et al., 2019). However, they could also be transformed into sites of radical intervention where we could seek to decolonise future generations and raise young people who can put an end to institutionalised racism and injustice. Indeed, as will be explored in detail below, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA, 2021) Review highlights the urgent need for significant curriculum reform in cross-curriculum priorities about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and culture. Colonial agendas and positions can be unpacked and problematised as part of a systematic overhaul of truth-telling in all levels of education. We want future generations of teachers, social workers, lawyers, police and other professionals to be informed and able to see past racist negative narratives about First Nations Australians and to bring about change on the ground for our communities. We write of decolonising from a position of practice that the problems lie not within pathologising narratives of Aboriginal people, but rather with systems that perpetuate these stereotypes.

In this article, we argue that poetry, as a powerful form of storytelling, offers a range of generative possibilities for the decolonisation of high school (and university) curricula. Storytelling is a key First Nations pedagogy that 'sustains communities, validates experiences and epistemologies, expresses experiences of Indigenous peoples, and nurtures relationships and the sharing of knowledge' (Iseke, 2013: 559). Inspired by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander approaches to knowledge creation as *intergenerational*, *iterative* and *intercultural* (Williams et al., 2018; Grieves-Williams, 2019; Moreton, 2006; Martin, 2003; Ford, 2010), we explore ways in which poetry events can create an interface between upper secondary school (post-15 years to adulthood) and universities that can decolonise and diversify the school experience. Intergenerational knowledge creation is key to our emerging approach. We draw on the knowledge, wisdom and life experiences of Elders who work powerfully with younger people. This learning is not static and fixed, nor is it based on a single truth approach to knowledge sharing. Instead, it is iterative. The generosity of our Elders is acknowledged by their willingness to share the old knowledges that are held across a diverse range of Australian cultures in forms of intercultural exchange. The knowledge shared is received and translated differently across individuals' cultural identities. These shared moments of understanding change the debilitating condition of Australia's collective amnesia and refusal for truth-telling in meaningful ways.

Australian First Nations' poetry has been at the forefront of the Indigenous political protest movement for land rights, recognition, justice and Treaty since the British settlement/invasion. Poetry has provided Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with a powerful vehicle for speaking back to colonial power. In this article, a team of First Nations and non-Indigenous researchers argue that poetry can be a powerful vehicle for decolonising the school curriculum and learning experiences for students. We suggest that poetry can create spaces for deep listening (*dadirri* – Ungunmerr-Baumann, 2002), and that listening with the heart can promote truth-telling and build connections between First Nations and White settler communities. These decolonising efforts underpin the *Wandiny* (Gathering Together) – Listen With the Heart: Uniting Nations Through Poetry research that we discuss in this article (Manathunga et al., 2020). In these ways, we argue that decolonised curricula and experiences can create the conditions for cognitive justice in schooling and learning that is an important precursor to other forms of social justice, such as equality, diversity and inclusion (de Sousa Santos, 2014, 2018).

Our standpoints

We will first explain the political and cultural standpoints from which each of us write (Nakata, 2013). We are a large team of First Nations and non-Indigenous researchers from universities, the school sector and community Elders and Traditional Custodians. In Australian contexts, we acknowledge the breadth of our world views, which begins with Kabi Kabi Elder Aunty Hope O'Chin and Kungarakan Elder Associate Professor Aunty Sue Stanton. We acknowledge our great privilege that these two Elders share their knowledge from the main two worksites from which we write – the Sunshine Coast in Queensland and Batchelor township in the Northern Territory. In acknowledging our privilege to be able to walk and talk and earn our livelihoods on the traditional lands of Kabi Kabi and Kungarakan people, we also acknowledge the breadth of knowledge of the other lands and knowledges that are represented among

the team – Kalkadoon-Thaniquith/Bwngcolman (North Queensland) social market researcher, Maria Raciti, and Alyawarre (Central Australia) education researcher Kathryn Gilbey.

Vast areas of land and knowledge from across Australia are married uniquely with our global and intercontinental experienced team. Catherine Manathunga is an Irish Australian historian, who has a transcultural family. Shelley Davidow is a Jewish South African creative writer and immigrant to Australia, who grew up during apartheid in a family of mixed races. Paul Williams is a British-Italian former Zimbabwean creative writer and immigrant to Australia. Alison Willis is a European-Australian education researcher with experiences of growing up in Central and North Queensland (Ghungal Country and Bindal Country) and conducting research among the Acholi people of Northern Uganda. Alison Chan is a mixed-race Australian school teacher of Papua New Guinean, Chinese and British-Australian ancestry.

Decolonisation

Our approach to decolonisation draws on a postcolonial/decolonial theoretical positioning that encompasses the work of postcolonial theorists and subaltern studies (for example, Chakrabarty, 2007), as well as empowering decolonial theories proposed by Southern and First Nations scholars (de Sousa Santos, 2014, 2018; Williams et al., 2018). Postcolonial/decolonial theories take as their central premise the argument that ‘colonialism did not end with the end of historical colonialism based on foreign territorial occupation. Only its form changed’ (de Sousa Santos, 2018: 109). In the Australian case, despite the overturning of *terra nullius* with the Mabo case, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sovereignty remains an unfinished business.

As a result, there can be ‘no global social justice without global cognitive justice’ (de Sousa Santos, 2014: 42). Cognitive justice involves the full and equal recognition of *all* of the world’s knowledge systems, languages and cultural practices, not only Northern science. This is a particularly urgent issue, given that it is becoming very clear that Eurocentric Northern science may have contributed to some of the challenging global environmental conditions that we are now experiencing (Cutter, 2008), such as the unprecedented bushfires of the 2019/20 Australian summer.

Boaventura de Sousa Santos argues that the first step towards cognitive justice is to include, value and extend Southern, transcultural and Indigenous knowledge systems in education and reinstate local, land-based knowledge. These knowledge systems are what de Sousa Santos (2014: 1) calls ‘epistemologies of the South’. He argues that the epistemologies of the South are centred around the principle of ecologies of knowledges. The concept of ecologies of knowledges challenges the current monocultural focus on (Northern) scientific knowledge by instead locating scientific knowledge within a broader ecology of knowledge systems. In such an ecology, *all* knowledge systems are accorded ‘equality of opportunity’ to build ‘a more just and democratic society as well as one more balanced in its relations with nature’ (de Sousa Santos, 2014: 190). Such knowledge systems would be used in dialogue with each other, and would accept the partiality and incompleteness of each knowledge system.

We combine these theories about cognitive justice with two key First Nations Australian theoretical frameworks. Williams et al. (2018: 48) have developed an Indigenous knowledge global decolonisation praxis framework which involves ‘cultural remapping in both an embodied and discursive sense ... [which] incorporate[s] being on the land, arts-based approaches and dialogical experiences’. This framework is centred on Indigenous leadership, epistemologies, ontologies and research methods (Williams et al., 2018).

Second, we sought to create an immersive, liminal space where arts-based learning could occur through ‘encounters’ with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators’ histories, experiences and ways of knowing (Snepvangers and Bulger, 2016). Our learning liminal space was our manifestation of Nakata et al.’s (2014: 13) cultural interface theory, drawing attention to the complex entanglement ‘of Indigenous and Western knowledge and practice, and its discursive positioning effects on our thinking and actions in contemporary spaces’. The poetry presented and created in our *Wandiny* learning liminal space was our expression of Nakata et al.’s (2014: 14) notion of convergences of Indigenous and Western epistemologies ‘and meanings that come to constitute understandings of Indigenous people and social realities’.

Nomenclature is contentious, as collective nouns are polarising. In taking these postcolonial/decolonial approaches, we seek to challenge the problematic use of acronyms such as BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnicities) and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of colour). Acronyms have the discursive

effect of dehumanising and homogenising the communities that they are designed to represent. They are also often more specific to the ethnic demographics of particular countries. For example, the term BAME¹ is sometimes used in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, where there does not seem to be much concern about First Nations perspectives. In our work, we use the terms 'First Nations Australians' (ACARA, 2021), 'Indigenous peoples' and 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' interchangeably on the advice of the First Nations Elders with whom we work. This is not an attempt to erase the diversity and intersectionality among and between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, but rather to recognise the prior and unceded sovereignty of the First Nations peoples of Australia. We have also used the term 'people of colour' in our work to represent Black, culturally diverse and minority peoples.

School as site of intervention

For both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, school presents a unique time for young people, which can be a positive experience of personal and academic development; for some, unfortunately, it can be one of disconnectedness, anxiety and stagnation. Late adolescence, when students are in high school, is 'a time when feeling a sense of belonging or connectedness with one's school is critically important' (Gillen-O'Neel and Fuligni, 2013: 678). Opportunities that decolonise the school experience can provide increased connectedness and enriched educational outcomes for all students.

These opportunities may include changes to the curriculum, such as the embedding of Indigenous perspectives and prioritising truth-telling in teaching of histories and cultures, or they may be extra-curricular, based on facilitating relationship building between staff and students, and adding enriching activities, workshops and experiences to the school environment. These initiatives focus on 'creating space for Indigenous ways of knowing and being within and outside academia' (Cameron et al., 2016: 381). These forms of Indigenous knowledge recovery involve an anticolonial project that comes from the anguish of loss and hope for the future (Wilson, 2004). They 'erupt from the centuries of colonialism's efforts to methodically eradicate our ways of seeing, being and interacting with the world ... [and are] a conscious and systematic effort to revalue that which has been denigrated and revive that which has been destroyed' (Wilson, 2004: 359). Ahenakew (2016: 232) uses the term 'grafting' to describe the process of transplanting Indigenous ways of knowing and being to academic spaces which can be 'built on the violent historical foundations of modernity'. Grafting allows opportunities for educators to work within the existing educational systems and improve students' access to Indigenous ways of teaching and learning.

In Australia, the Closing the Gap initiative reports on the difference in educational attainment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students compared with the non-Indigenous population. A report released in 2018, 10 years after the initiative was started, showed that the national school attendance rate was 83.2 per cent for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, compared to 93.0 per cent for non-Indigenous students, resulting in a gap of almost 10 percentage points (NIAA, 2018). The Australian government also monitors literacy and numeracy indicators for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, and, while the gaps have reduced since 2008, targets in all but one (Year 9 numeracy) of the eight areas (reading and numeracy in Years 3, 7 and 9) identified over a decade ago are not on track to be achieved.

More recent Australian government attention has focused on the urgent need for truth-telling in the Australian school curriculum. 'Truth-telling' is a phrase that entered mainstream Australian policy domains after the Uluru Statement From the Heart (2017), which was issued by the First Nations Constitutional Convention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples held at Uluru in the Northern Territory. The Uluru Statement called for truth-telling as a critical part of an ongoing process of healing in Australia involving the telling of the true history of colonisation (Uluru Statement From the Heart, 2017). Truth-telling is powerful and needed, but it is a painful process that has the potential to re-traumatise already traumatised peoples. American feminist journalist Gloria Steinem best summed up the process with her book title, *The Truth Will Set You Free, but First It Will Piss You Off!* (Steinem, 2019).

The ACARA (2021: 4) Review consultation paper on the cross-curriculum priority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures argues that Australia's school curriculum is outdated in the following key ways:

- it does not include enough truth-telling about the experience of First Nations Australians since the arrival of Europeans

- it places too much emphasis on the period prior to contact with Europeans, positioning First Nations Peoples of Australia as artefacts of the past
- it fails to recognise that the First Peoples of Australia experienced colonisation as invasion and dispossession of land, sea and sky
- it lacks mention of the Native Title Act 1993 as a law passed by the Australian Parliament that recognises the rights and interests of First Nations Peoples of Australia in land and waters according to their traditional laws and customs
- it does not mention the First Peoples of Australia being recognised as the world's oldest continuing culture
- it does not showcase the sophisticated political, economic and social organisation systems of the First Peoples of Australia
- it does not adequately appreciate the breadth and depth of First Nations Australians' contributions to contemporary Australia
- it fails to highlight enshrined rights to maintain, control, protect and develop culture as Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property.

We argue that creating school experiences that involve Indigenous storytelling and poetry represents important truth-telling curriculum strategies that begin to address the disturbing lack of Indigenous perspectives being taught in Australian schools.

Poetry as a tool to decolonise the high school curriculum

We argue that poetry is an important approach to decolonising the high school curriculum. Although the study of written poetry has been seen generally in high schools as 'boring' (Mavhiza and Prozesky, 2020: 1) and unrelated to real-life experience, spoken poetry (performance, slam and rap poetry) has been more engaging and connected to lived experience and an effective agent of change in high school curricula (d'Abdon, 2016: 45). Further, poetry that subverts or disrupts colonial discourse offers a range of generative possibilities for decolonising high school curricula, and offers ways of bridging the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, offering a space for First Nations experience, and allowing non-Indigenous students opportunities to engage with First Nations' ways of being and knowing.

The late Zimbabwean poet Dambudzo Marechera (1978: 7) suggested that poetry can decolonise by engaging in 'harrowing fights and hair-raising panga duels with the language before you can make it do all that you want it to do ... this may mean discarding grammar, throwing syntax out, subverting images from within, beating the drum and cymbals of rhythm'; that is, spoken poetry decolonises by performance. Poetic pedagogies, then, enable secondary (and university) students to challenge hegemonic discourse. This decolonial approach to 'studying' poetry, 'throws syntax out' and 'subverts', liberating and transporting participants as both listeners and makers in a collective biography (Marechera, 1978: 7). Čerče (2017) illustrates the important impact of Indigenous poetry on White audiences, using examples to show that it challenges the sense of entitlement that White people can have as a result of their dominant positioning in Australian society.

Wandiny event: poetry as deep listening from the heart

Our team designed and implemented the first online *Wandiny* (Gathering Together) – Listen With the Heart: Uniting Nations Through Poetry event in August 2020 (Manathunga et al., 2020). *Wandiny* is a Kabi Kabi (Sunshine Coast) word meaning 'gathering together' that the team was given permission to use by Aunty Hope O'Chin, a Kabi Kabi Elder and co-author of this article. The *Wandiny* was an extra-curricular poetry event that brought together school students (aged 15 and over), schoolteachers, university academics and students and First Nations poets, Elders and performers. We had planned a two-day face-to-face event, but the COVID pandemic forced us to move towards holding a three-hour online event. At this event, the online gathering of poets and students participated in a collaborative activity of 'call and response' that was designed to create decolonising spaces for dialogue through poetic performance.

The stories of Elders and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander poets and performers were presented as a 'call' for sharing knowledge to prioritise *dadirri* (Ungunmerr-Baumann, 2002) or

deep listening/listening with the heart. A 'response' from the intergenerational, Indigenous and non-Indigenous audience in the form of poetry writing was gathered. This process re-inscribes the African 'call-and-response' approach (Sale, 1992) within First Nations Australian knowledge frames, including *dadirri* (Ungunmerr-Baumann, 2002) approaches of Aboriginal knowledge production. We use the term *dadirri* with the permission of the Miriam-Rose Foundation. *Dadirri* means 'deep listening, building community, be whole again, peace, silent awareness, be still and wait' (Ungunmerr-Baumann, 2002: n.p.).

Our research approach was to document the event using autoethnographic writing by the research team (including some of the Elders and artists featured in the programme); poetic responses written during the event by participants (Sale, 1992) and event chat comments written by participants. To privilege the voice of participants in this article, we have included participants' event chat comments as well as one response poem in the concluding section. We recognise that our own positionality and standpoints as a team of First Nations and non-Indigenous researchers have implications for our ability to engage in critical reflexivity about our research process. For this reason, we do not report this research as 'findings' in the traditional social science sense, but instead seek to tease out the possibilities inherent in using extra-curricular poetry events to decolonise the school curriculum. We also foreground the voices of participants in our concluding section to illustrate the impact they believed the event had on them.



The *Wandiny* research was inspired by the ZAPP South African Poetry Project, a collective of poets, scholars, teachers and students established in South Africa in 2013 to contribute to 'decolonising South African education by paying attention to indigenous poetic traditions and practices' (Newfield and Byrne, 2020: 1). Like the extra-curricular ZAPP Colloquium, the *Wandiny* was designed 'to recognise, listen, apologise, develop capacity, repair, heal and celebrate across racial, gender, class and cultural divisions' (Newfield and Byrne, 2020: 12).

Conclusion: truth-telling and cognitive justice

We suggest that extra-curricular poetry events such as the *Wandiny* create spaces for deep listening and listening with the heart (*dadirri*) that can promote truth-telling about colonial histories in schools (and universities). Poetry can also convey meaning and emotion across language barriers, as a participant reflected: 'you could hear that longing even without knowing the word.' Truth-telling was a key pillar of the *Wandiny* and an important precursor to healing the terrible wrongs of the past and present that are still wrought on First Nations Australians. Truth-telling is about honesty and the twin moral principles of non-maleficence ('do no harm') and beneficence ('do good to others'; Beauchamp, 2019). As one participant commented in the event chat: 'What an absolute privilege. This is the first time I have had the opportunity to hear First Nations people speak. This has been an amazing experience and I hope to know these perspectives better in the future.'

However, truth-telling is not only an acknowledgement of the atrocities and injustices of colonisation, ongoing discrimination and institutional racism. It is also an important opportunity to share, honour and celebrate First Nations Australians' rich culture, strengths and ways of knowing and being (Parliament of Australia, 2018). As one participant wrote: 'What a gift this whole night has been.' We argue that the *Wandiny* poetry event served as an innovative, intergenerational, iterative and intercultural truth-telling extra-curricular school experience that enacted both of these goals to decolonise the school curriculum. As one participant wrote: 'I feel like this meeting place should be a regular thing. I had the overwhelming feeling of a calm Aunty telling a wild child what life is about, and just repeating until it is heard.' The stories, poetry and performances shared by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and artists in the *Wandiny* invited Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants from schools, universities and the broader community to engage openly and with deep care with the heart-wrenching histories of dispossession and loss caused by the colonisation of the land now called Australia. These poetic performances also demonstrated the vibrancy and inspiration inherent in First Nations Australians' culture. As one First Nations participant wrote of several performances, 'both of you are so impressive just really beautiful and insightful and deep, this next generation just fantastic.' Another participant recognised the similarity of different First Nations' cultures across the world: 'I have some Māori blood in my family, and it is pretty amazing how some of these topics resonate.'

As a result, all of the performers and participants reported significant affective and political shifts in their engagement with First Nations Australian culture, knowledge and peoples. For example, participants wrote the following comments in the event chat:

- so so good this is all magic
- very lucky to be a part of this wonderful night
- Stunning. Beauty on the margins
- Thank you for a beautiful evening
- thank you all so much for such an amazing opportunity and I'm so thankful I got to be a part of this  
- Thank you so much for letting me be a part of such an amazing event :)

This is the power of poetry, as Newfield and Byrne (2020) found in ZAPP. Therefore, these kinds of poetic school experiences can eventually create the conditions for cognitive justice in the school curriculum (de Sousa Santos, 2014, 2018). As an example of this work of cognitive justice, we include this poem written by participant and co-author Alison Chan, who is a schoolteacher:

Be-longing

Longing for sand, sun, salt
 Warm cheeks, liquor poured into a green coconut,
 Laughter, and languages my heart knows even when my brain can't keep up.
 Lunch: A gift, from the garden, from the sea, from my old people – new to me,
 Soil, toil, the right amount of rain, a good day on the boat.
 Coconut flesh scraped with shell, squeezed to make milk, onto the fish, and onto the fire.
 Stories, old photos in shoeboxes, a litter of puppies chewing on tails in the dust.
 Kids, and me, piled into the back of an overfull ute, in the breeze, at dusk.
 The most beautiful sunset.
 'This is yours too, you know,' says my Uncle.
 'Home. Mine.' – I try the words on but they don't quite fit right yet.

We suggest that schools (and indeed all educational institutions) can become locations where we can challenge colonialist legacies, exclusionary pedagogies, and physical and symbolic violence against First Nations peoples and people of colour. These kinds of school experiences can work towards the important task of decolonising the school curriculum, and valuing and extending *all* cultural knowledge systems, rather than only those developed in the West/North (de Sousa Santos, 2014, 2018).

Wandiny was our counter to the dominance of the Northern science gaze and its associated tools of logical empiricism and neo-positivism, which are ingrained in Australian curriculum and culture. Our arts-based, 'cultural interface' (Nakata et al., 2014) was a liminal learning (and unlearning) space. Our approach to decolonisation via creative freedom released participants from Northern science, and reinstated and privileged Southern, First Nations and transcultural ways of knowing, being and doing. The BLM movement has, therefore, enabled us to return our focus with renewed energy to the ways in which school (and university) curricula can be radically reformed to grapple respectfully and wholeheartedly with decolonisation.

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Declarations and conflicts of interest

Research ethics statement

The authors conducted the research reported in this article in accordance with the University of the Sunshine Coast Human Ethics Committee, A/1/91/243.

Consent for publication statement

The authors declare that participants' informed consent to publication of findings was secured prior to publication.

Conflicts of interest statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest with this work. All efforts to sufficiently blind the authors during peer review of this article have been made.

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