

Keynote Speaker

Healing through D'harawal Storytelling: Learning and unlearning the epistemic violence of colonial storytelling

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Abstract

The true depths of First Nations Storytelling and Storywork is becoming increasingly recognised within educational institutions as an effective tool for research, teaching, and critical inquiry (Archibald, 2009; Martin, 2008; Todd, 2018). Indeed, an expanding base of First Nations research has emerged to reveal that a diversity of storytelling practices have been linked to not only the transmission of both traditional and contemporary cultural knowledges and values, but also positive educational, social, health, and mental health outcomes (Lester-Smith, 2013; Linklater, 2014; Wexler, White, & Trainor, 2015). Such research effectively highlights the power of Indigenous Storytelling to not only teach, but to heal both individuals and communities. Sadly, within the Australian context, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ancestral (Dreaming) Stories have been appropriated, minimised, and dismissed as mere child-like fables and myths, as non-Indigenous 'authors' have effectively erased the multiple layers of meaning deeply embedded within them (Bodkin, 2013). This presentation will argue that the appropriation, misrepresentation, and mindless reproduction of (colonial) Indigenous Stories is evidence for colonial violence that is forging the ongoing epistemic genocide of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Knowledges today. By engaging with the D'harawal Ancestral Story of *Pokulbi: How the Dianella came to be*, this presentation will critique the many violences embedded within colonial knowledge production that essentialises and demonises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In doing so, it is hoped that this presentation will teach us all how to both learn and unlearn - to heal from - the violence of colonial storytelling.

References/inspiration

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