

ALEA Conference abstract – research presentation

This research investigated the role of Indigenous children's picture books (specifically the text 'Wilam – a Birrarung Story' by Aunty Joy Murphy and Andrew Kelly, illustrated by Lisa Kennedy) in cultivating children's responsible relationship with Country and associated knowledges of place, history, sovereignty and seasonality. The research utilised an interdisciplinary, Indigenous – led methodology grounded in decolonial philosophies of education. Two of the researchers identify as Indigenous scholars and they are joined by a non-Indigenous colleague who has experience in using arts-based methodologies within literacy-based research. A series of workshops were held on the Birrarung (the Yarra river) for children aged 5 to 8 years. The picture book Wilam was shared with the children, and they then responded to the text and place through the medium of visual art. Wilam was authored by Naarm (Melbourne) based Indigenous writers and illustrators and contains beautiful illustrations of local flora and fauna. Using both the text and the surrounding Birrarung Marr and Wurundjeri trail, the children's artwork captured what was significant to them. This artwork was then reproduced in a leaflet providing local teachers with guidance on how to use Indigenous literature to inspire respect for Country. The researchers observed the children's interactions with both the text and Place as well as discussing with them the text, their surroundings and their art choices. These findings will be shared at the conference.

It is hoped that this research will help to build relational understandings of Indigenous perspectives and knowledges of place within the primary curriculum as well as encouraging teachers to use Indigenous picture books in their own practice to promote discussion and reflection among children about their own relationship with the local environment.