**Zeta Wilson:** Welcome, and thank you for attending this afternoon. My name is Zeta Wilson, and I’m the Project Manager for Aboriginal Perspectives in the Curriculum F-10 Unit at the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, and I’ll be hosting your webinar this afternoon.

Just before I start this presentation about Aboriginal Perspectives in the Victorian Curriculum, Humanities in primary settings, I would like to acknowledge my colleagues who’ll be assisting today – the manager of the Victorian Curriculum F-10 Unit, Craig Smith, with his support for the Q&A, and Peter Fisher, with the behind-the-scenes support for these webinars.

And, also, I would like to acknowledge my colleagues, the curriculum managers, Gerry Martin and Leonie Brown, and the key stakeholders, Aunty Fay from VACL and Vaso Elefsiniotis from VAEAI, who will be co-delivering this afternoon.

Also, I’d like to inform you that this presentation is being recorded, and that the slides as recorded will be made available once they have been edited. Also, too, today, in this webinar, we’ll be managing the questions only through the chat function. So, at the end of this session, depending on the time, we will answer your questions. Just click on the chat function. Use that only. And for the sound, if you have problems with the sound, you know that you can click on the auto broadcast below, next to the participant with the sound.

Now, before we start this session, I would like to do an acknowledgement to country. I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the many lands across Victoria on which each of you are living, learning and working from today. I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the Wadawurrung people and their ancestral lands that I’m speaking to you from today. When acknowledging country, we recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s spiritual and cultural connection to country. We acknowledge the continued care of the lands and waterways over generations, and celebrate the continuation of a living culture that has a unique role in this region. And as we share of our knowledge in teaching and learning, may we pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging, for they hold the memories, traditions, cultures and hopes of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the nation, and hope that they walk with us on our journey today.

So, I’m not gonna go in-depth here, but when you look at some of the words on this slide, it actually could represent a time line of the past and present of our shared history, stemming back many thousands of years. And as you move along that stream of time, there will be pivotal, significant events for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Now, these significant events have shaped and changed the culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia.

Now, I often hear these words so many times – “You have to know the past to understand the present.” Now, those words are so true. As we know, we don’t want to repeat history, but our shared history, as we know, has changed and shaped Aboriginal people today. So, how important it is for the next generations of students to understand the importance of those words, and what those words actually mean to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

So, the Humanities and Aboriginal Perspectives. Just quickly, I’ll just do...talk about the contents of the presentation. I will cover just an overview of Aboriginal perspectives in the Victorian Curriculum by considering the cross-curricular priorities and learning about the histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

I’ll also just provide, briefly, an overview about Aboriginal perspectives in the humanities. I will consider some of the protocols and suitable resources for embedding Aboriginal perspectives in the humanities, for the primary teachers, in a localised and Victorian context. The curriculum managers, they’ll provide an overview into their curriculum content, and then make that connection to a localised and Victorian context. And the key stakeholders, like Aunty Fay from VACL and Vaso from VAEAI, they’ll share their expertise and knowledge to contribute in the Q&A section.

So, the Victorian Curriculum. Now, to meet the diverse needs of all students, the Victorian Curriculum F-10 provides an inclusive and flexible framework for all schools to develop their teaching and learning program. Learning about the histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is embedded across...in the Victorian F-10.

Because it occurs in different curriculum areas, we call it the cross-curriculum priority. Now, the cross-curriculum priority for learning about the history and cultures of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people provides the opportunity for all students to deepen their knowledge and understanding about the oldest living culture. It is also important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the classroom to see their own cultural identity and their history reflected in their learning. By engaging with the learning across the 11 years of schooling – so, from Prep to Year 10 – students will build that...build their ability to show their appreciation and understanding about why – why it’s important to show the respect and empathy towards the First Nation peoples. This deep learning over time can only occur because of the meaningful learning experiences that explore the shared viewpoints and perspectives from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples when learning about the rich histories and cultures here in Australia.

So, the next point about a localised and Victorian context... So, here’s just one great starting point, is the community-preferred education model, when it comes to learning about the history and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Start teaching your student in a localised and Victorian context. Now, what do I mean by that? Firstly, think about where your school is situated. Who are the traditional owners? Localise the content about the history and culture of the traditional owners to suit the local area and the community and the surrounding areas. Then, next, you can extend your teaching and learning program to incorporate the many Aboriginal groups across Victoria. Then you’re providing that Victorian context. So, by following the community-preferred education model, you’ll be able to embed Aboriginal perspectives across the curriculum with a focus on a localised and Victorian context. And, of course, you can extend the students’ learning about the histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia.

So, this table here just shows an overview of the number of content descriptions and elaborations that makes references to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures across the humanities for the primary setting. So, you can see the overall, in the middle column, the numbers of that, and you can see there’s a large number that sits in History, followed by Geography. Also, too, we’ll just make reference to those elaborations that makes those exclusive references to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. So, here’s just an overall summary. If you want an overall summary of the content of the learning about the histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, that’s found on the VCA...VCAA website, in the section of Overview, under Cross-curriculum Priorities.

Wrong way. The Humanities – Aboriginal Perspectives. Again, I’ll be brief on this one. As we know, history can tell us so much about our past. And as we know, when we look in geography, geography is about place, the relationship between people, their environment. Civics and citizenship – considering the legal and political system, and you look at some of those pointers on there, we can see the impact of colonisation, how it had a devastating impact upon Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. And, yet, through all of that, you still can see the ongoing relationship and spiritual connection to country and place that is so strong for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today. And then, a time for a change in the political scene for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with the civil rights movement, the protests, the land rights and all of this leading into where we are today – the resilience and the self-determination.

So, take your students on that journey and help them to see how time has changed the landscape of Australia for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

So, now I’ll just hand over to Gerry, who will explain about the History. So, over to you, Gerry.

**Gerry Martin:** Thank you, Zeta, and good afternoon, everyone. Before I begin, I, too, would like to acknowledge and pay my respects to the Kulin people, the traditional custodians of the lands in which we meet. I would like to acknowledge their long tradition of learning, sharing knowledge, history and culture for over 60,000 years. I would like to pay our respect to their elders, past and present and emerging, and acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders present here today. Particularly, I would like to acknowledge Aunty Fay and Zeta, who are present here with us.

So, as...as Zeta indicated, history is really a prime location to explore the perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the past, and their experiences throughout our narrative, not just post-1788, but pre-European settlement as well, through their many, many sources and artefacts that pre-date European settlement. And that’s a really important point to begin with.

So, learning in History really requires engaging with both the historical knowledge, the narratives, the facts, and then applying the historical thinking concepts and skills in constructing the historical narrative. And that’s really what’s at the centre for students. It’s about constructing their own understanding of the past. And this is pivotal. Therefore, for students to really understand and construct an understanding of the past, they really need to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures by looking at their stories, looking at their perspectives from the past, but also looking at how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders talk about the past today – i.e. historians, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander historians – and then apply those historical thinking concepts and skills to those...to that investigation of the past.

So, one of the key skills, really, is requiring kids to...students to engage with historical sources. These are the building blocks of the past. It’s through engagement with sources from the time, and they may be Aboriginal sources as well as other sources... It demands them to engage with those perspectives from the time and of the period that’s being investigated. Also, it’s important to engage with the contemporary historians – many of whom are Aboriginal, today. And, so, their historical interpretations are really important. Not only a European interpretation of the past, but also an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interpretation of the past. So, therefore, by engaging with multiple perspectives and interpretations about the events in our past, students gain a more holistic understanding of the historical narrative.

It’s also important, when engaging with historical thinking concepts such as continuity and change and cause and effect, that changes and effects did not impact all people in the past in the same way. Again, it is an opportunity for students to...to engage in a variety of Torres Strait Islander perspectives and understand that some events in the past had significant impact on Aboriginal people, whereas some events did not. Conversely, some events had a huge impact on Aboriginal events and no impact on other Australians. So, again, observing how things may have changed for some people in our community, while it may have remained the same for others, engaging in the cause and effect of colonisation and evaluating the significance of these narratives, experience and perspectives on both Aboriginal people as well as on European people. So, it’s really important to engage with those concepts, apply those concepts, to ensure students are thinking about and engaging with and constructing their own understanding of the past.

So, really, when we talk about perspectives on the past, what do we mean by that? We mean the experiences, the points of view, the attitudes, the values, the beliefs of people who lived during these turning points, and our significant historical moments in the past. Often... Our history is often... The history you’ll often hear is that of white privileged men – their voices. Often, they’re the men, the people who wrote in the past, documented the past. And, therefore, often, today, the sources we often hear are often from white privileged men. So, therefore, it’s really, really important to be conscious that that’s kind of a very strong narrative that comes through the past perspectives. So, we need to start actually looking at and including what we have sometimes called the silent voices from the past – those perspectives of women, children, different ethnic groups and, again, most importantly, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices from the past – and really start thinking about, “How do we actually engage that narrative?” Because we know women and children, different ethnic groups, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, were there – we know they were there. But sometimes, we have to locate those sources and those perspectives to get a more thorough understanding of the historical narrative.

So, again, when looking at perspective, it’s really important to consider the thoughts, feelings and reasons why people have acted in the past, and think, when we are looking at a source, “Whose voice is not present there? Whose perspective is not present there?” and think about, “What would their experience be? What would their perspective be?” And if we’ve got those sources on hand, to use them. it’s also important to engage with multiple perspectives, so students actually see a range of different perspectives. And, again, not just multiple perspectives – European man, European woman, child – but also within the Aboriginal community, there are multiple perspectives too.

Students...students are really required to critically engage, corroborate – like, compare, contrast – sources and assess their reliability. So, you know, students need to be able to identify. “This is a white man’s perspective of the past.” “This is a European woman’s perspective of the past.” And “This is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander perspective of the past” or “This is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander woman’s perspective of the past.” So, again, engage kids with multiple perspectives about the past.

Also, it’s really important when you look at the content descriptors in the Victorian Curriculum – History, that there’s not all...there’s lots of explicit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content, but just because it’s not explicit doesn’t mean we don’t...that we do not engage with Aboriginal perspectives, because, again, a key concept is engaging with perspectives. So, therefore, that concept compels us to engage with those variety of perspectives, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

So, when we talk about F-2, one of the key skills is “Perspectives about changes to daily life for people in the past or present.” Or in levels 3 and 4, “Describe perspectives of people from the past.” And at levels 5 and 6, “Describe perspectives and identify ideas, beliefs, values of people and groups in the past.” So, that requires us to engage with a whole range of perspectives, including...including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

It’s also important to remember that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s perspectives in the past should not be treated as something uniform. There’s a variety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, and that may be a result of time, where that perspective in time comes from, their geographic location, their language group, their experience, and so on. So, it’s also...also, in History, it’s important not to treat these perspectives as something as separate or a genre of their own. Rather, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s perspectives should be an integral part of the historical narrative. They should be woven in. So, when we’re looking at Federation, well, we should look, “What was the Indigenous Aboriginal perspective at that time?” So, think about how we actually engage with it explicitly in teaching and learning.

Again, within the curriculum, there is lots of opportunities for teaching Aboriginal perspectives. For example, even at F-2, Community Histories is an opportunity to explore an Aboriginal perspective, particularly an opportunity to focus on local spaces and local history, as Zeta mentioned earlier. And from the beginning, students are learning to connect with the Aboriginal sacred sites, the perspectives from people in the past, and their own connection to those important locations in their own community. And, therefore, right from the beginning, not only are they understanding Aboriginal perspectives and their location to them, but also their connection to their history of their local community.

And, again, right through other areas within the curriculum, Community, Remembrance and Celebrations, we talk about the significance of country and place to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who belong to the local area, the role of diverse backgrounds, significant events, narratives, myths and celebrations, important days, such as National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week, National Sorry Day, and be able to describe the significance of those celebrations.

And, of course, at levels 5 and 6 – sorry, levels 3 and 4 – again, First Contact, looking at European settlement and the impact of European settlement, and the effects of that on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as, then, looking at Australian Colonies and Australian Nation at levels 5 and 6, where we look at the move towards a nation. We look at the impact of that, particularly the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Australian society and changing Australian society, and look at the patterns of continuity and change in daily life of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples during this time. And, of course, the significant events, and the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to those significant events, at that time.

I’m going to hand over now to Leonie.

**Leonie Brown:** Thank you very much, Gerry. I, too, would like to pay my respects for a very different part of Victoria that I’m presenting from, and that’s...I’m just outside Ballarat, so I’m in the home of the Wathaurung people. So, a very special respect to those people and the role that they play in this particular presentation, because there hasn’t been much time where I haven’t been not thinking about those local people and how I can relate it to the geography curriculum.

Looking at the history curriculum, it is often a really easy one to do because it’s a study of the past, whereas, “What is geography?” What I want you to do is to keep in mind that you should be looking at three key concepts in geography, in primary...that primary space. Those three concepts are place, space and interconnection. And if you get a little bit lost about where you should go in planning your teaching and learning program, don’t get lost – it’s geographically embarrassing. Go back to what special places are there, what spaces, and what are the interconnections between those. And actually looking at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people’s perspectives, having their perspective, is exactly that, because they have a very strong relationship between places and spaces, and the interconnection is extremely strong.

So, in terms of that, if you were to go to this particular perspective to illustrate the geography curriculum, it’s a very strong one. So, what I plan to do is actually do a quick walk – which is actually going to be a sprint – through the content descriptors, and just reiterate the sorts of things that you could be doing and the sorts of things that you perhaps should be doing in those sorts of things in terms of the curriculum.

So, the first one is we’re starting with F-2 Geographic Concepts and Skills. So, this may be a starting point. There’s no right or wrong with this. Sometimes, people go to the content descriptors, then go to the concepts and skills. But I’m choosing to go with the Geographic Concepts and Skills – Place, space and interconnection – at that F-2 level. So, this is a very simple thing, where you’re looking at identifying and describing the features of a place at a local scale and how they change, recognising that people describe the features of places differently.

Thank you to the person who just put in the chat, “Would you please tell me what the difference between a place and a space is?” So, that’s something I would like to cover here. A place is a specific point – so, if you like, geographically, a point of longitude or latitude, or in more modern-day sorts of things, a GPS, actually, coordinate. So, that is a special place. The surrounds of a special place is the space. So, that might be within your...say, for instance... And I’ll mention in a moment that the mandated part of this curriculum actually requires you to talk about the place of your school. So, the surrounding space would be your school community and the surrounding, perhaps, suburb or town or small rural settlement, whatever that is. So, that would be the space. And then the interconnection is between those places and spaces, but also between other places with each other and other spaces. But that’s basically what Geography is – place, space and interconnection.

And the other aspect to look at with concepts and skills at F-2 is identifying how people are connected to different places. And this is where, if we take the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective, there’s very strong links between how those people are connected to places.

So, in that sense, these two descriptors that I’ve got here are not the mandated descriptors for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. That’s something that’s over and above that. So, in my presentation, I’m going to deal with the mandatory ones that you can easily pick out, because they’ve got those words in them. But I’m also saying there’s more scope within the Geography curriculum to pick up that perspective of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples and, therefore, that makes your delivery really rich and it makes you in a position, as you always are, where you can actually design the curriculum to fit to the needs of your particular circumstances.

So, on that same F-2 space, let’s have a look at Geography Knowledge – Places and connections to them. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander places and space on which the school is located... And this is a mandatory one. So, this is the one that you should do, you must do, in terms of that. So, this is looking very...at a micro level, at your particular school, and its place and its space around it. So, you would be looking at special connections. And from a geographer’s perspective – and particularly take into consideration Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander country and place perspectives – you would go with landforms, physical features. So, mountains, rivers, streams, valleys, bays, those sorts of things, would be your starting point. So, what special place, it may be, or it certainly would be a space, is your school located in?

The other aspect of the mandated part is where you look at weather and seasons and the way in which different cultural groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, describe those. So, for our perspective, we take on that white Anglo-Saxon four seasons of the year, with winter officially finishing on 31 August and spring officially starting on 1 September, and the Indigenous perspective gives you a much more accurate and appropriate sense of this seasonality. And it’s quite diverse, and so it should be, because our natural environments throughout Australia are very diverse. So, that’s where the Indigenous calendars match the indigenous environment, the natural environment. So, therefore, their calendars are different.

So, if you want to look, for instance, at the Indigenous calendar for your local environment – and for the majority of people that would be people within the Kulin Nation – there would still be regional variances within that. So, just be mindful that dealing with these perspectives is not only rich, but it’s incredibly diverse, and something we should always keep the perspective of is that you would be looking at that diversity and recognising it and respecting that diversity. That’s a really strong part of what we’re doing here.

So, moving along... And this time, I’ve got a special image, and thank you to Zeta for actually finding this one for me. So, this is where we’re looking at, again, F-2, the definition of places as part of the Earth’s surface given meaning by people, and how places can be defined at a variety of scales. So, this image is relating to the You Yangs and it’s actually part of the Dreamtime story of Bunjil, and it’s the wedge-tailed eagle. So, traditionally, people gathered from Wathaurong land and Wathaurung land, and basically you’re looking at the You Yangs, Geelong, Werribee area, the Werribee River. But the You Yangs was a collective place where people would actually connect with that place very strongly through ceremonies and meetings and all the exchanging, all the gossiping and all the swapping of tools and ideas and so forth. So, it was a really vibrant, key place in Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander perspectives, in terms of that place. So, this place, which is now...we would know it as the You Yangs Regional Park, but this is a rock formation recognising the Dreamtime spirit of the wedge-tailed eagle.

So, this is an example of giving meaning by people and that they are at a variety of scales. But this is very much at a local scale, although the Bunjil Dreamtime story is throughout Victoria because that was a key part of those sort of stories. So, this is exactly the reason why some places are special and some places are important to people. So, this is a classic example of how the content descriptors can actually live, in the example that you’re looking at.

So, let’s move on to Year 3 and 4, with concepts and skills. So, this, again, is a possibility for you to look at. So, where you look generally at identifying and explaining interconnections between places and within places. So, if you look at this particular image, for example, which is not Victoria, but I predict that it’s... I suspect, my geographic background, that it’s somewhere in northern New South Wales. So, it could be the Clarence River or the Macleay River or perhaps the Tweed, even. But in terms of this particular perspective, it gives you that strong interconnection. So, in terms of Indigenous people, how they would have used this land traditionally, this would have been a very important place with natural water source here, the shelters of the valleys, the rich vegetation, which would have been a source for shelter and for food source. So, that’s a classic example of an interconnection between people and the place where they’re actually living. So, that’s an example of that one.

This is, again, at level 3 and 4, looking at diversity and significance. So, this is where we move away from a traditional, local, within your school, within your community, and perhaps within Australia, that scale perspective, rather than being even a Victorian perspective. So, this image here is of the red earth, which is a really strong connection and significance of many people in more arid areas. And, so, I’d be saying...a test for you, those of you who are participating in this webinar, I would say that you wouldn’t have that sort of rich red earth in your school grounds. You may have in certain parts of Victoria, but it’s highly unlikely. So, this indicates that it’s actually an arid area. Again, a very special relationship with that area, and that’s another thing where it actually brings in this idea of diversity. But, also, the big...big example for this one is – and this is where it’s actually talking about a mandated example – is where...how those people live sustainably in those very arid and very difficult environments. They lived very well, very healthy lifestyles, adapting to that, and the knowledge that is actually... pertains to that sort of traditional living is quite amazing, and we have got so much to learn from them in that sense. So, if we wanted to look at ideas of sustainability, another cross-curriculum priority, then that’s a classic example, within that content descriptor, in 3-4.

Also in 3-4, these two content descriptors are actually ones where there is potential to apply the viewpoints and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. So, it’s where types of natural vegetation and the significance of that vegetation... So, in the previous slide, that rich red earth and the associated spinifex vegetation was really important to so many people in those arid environments. So, that’s an example where they used the management of that natural resource to make appropriate tools, in terms of baskets and so forth. So, this is another example of where you can actually go outside the mandated perspectives but still actually cover that perspective within Geography.

And the other aspect of that is where you look at similarities and differences in different groups’ feelings about perceptions of different places. So, for us, we may look at that red earth and say, “How would we ever live here? How would ever survive? How would we ever, for instance, find water?” Whereas, from those traditional people’s perspective, they would be able to not only help us, but be able to take us to the best water source. So, it’s not just a matter of knowing. It’s a matter of knowing very well.

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