

Name: Lisa Thorpe

Institution: Bubup Wilam Aboriginal Child and Family Centre

E-mail: lisa.thorpe@bubupwilam.org.au

Bubup Wilam Approach in education

Short description / Abstract:

The ongoing failure of mainstream education to provide equitable outcomes for Aboriginal children in Australia is well evidenced. Mainstream education institutions still reflect colonised systems and structures; Aboriginal-led approaches provide effective alternatives. However, research on Aboriginal-led education approaches in Australia, largely focus on primary, secondary, and higher education, with limited Aboriginal-led research conducted within Aboriginal Community Controlled (ACC) early year's education services. This research took place within Bubup Wilam Aboriginal Child and Family Centre (BWACFC), an Aboriginal Community Controlled early childhood education (ECE) setting in Victoria, Australia. Through a decolonial and solidarity praxis, it explored how the Aboriginal community took charge to develop, govern and lead BWACFC, taking the sovereign right to educate their own children and educators into their own hands. It further explored BWACFC's de-colonising orientation and strong resistance against systemic injustice, for sovereignty. The research drew on Indigenous and critical methodologies, to document and explicate the Bubup Wilam Approach, through a strong Aboriginal community-led research agenda. The presentation reveals four key threads of meaning that define the Bubup Wilam Approach, understood through the metaphor of Bunjil, spirit creator of Wurundjeri Country. It illustrates BWACFC's specific Aboriginal curriculum and pedagogy underpinned by truth telling, identity, sovereignty, treaty and solidarity. It also showcases the significant impact of BWACFC on children's outcomes at school. This presentation challenges ethical and human rights issues marginalising First Nations children, highlighting the importance of ECE approaches led by First Nations communities that evidence outstanding outcomes.