**Zeta Wilson:** So, welcome to the second week of this series of webinars for Aboriginal perspectives in the curriculum. Today’s presentation will be Aboriginal perspectives and the Victorian Aboriginal languages, which is suitable for primary and secondary setting. And thank you for attending this afternoon.

I just want to say this. (SPEAKS PITJANTJATJARA) So, in my mother’s language, Pitjantjatjara, I have said, “My name is Zeta.” And my mother’s language is one of the languages that is not considered endangered – means that close to about 3,000 people can still fluently speak it, even though I can’t fluently speak it. So...I do remember that, learning that at school.

So, as I mentioned, my name is Zeta Wilson, and I’m the Project Manager for Aboriginal Perspectives in the Curriculum F-10 at the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, and I’ll be hosting your webinar this afternoon.

Just before I start this presentation, I would like to acknowledge my colleagues who will be assisting me today. That’s the Manager of the Victorian Curriculum F-10 unit, Craig Smith, with his support in the Q&A section, and Peter Fisher with the behind-the-scenes support for these webinars.

Also, I would like to acknowledge my colleague, the Program Manager for Aboriginal Languages – that’s Sarah Glatz – and key stakeholders like Aunty Fay Muir from VACL and Vaso Elefsiniotis from VAEAI, who will be co-delivering this afternoon.

Also, I would like to inform you that this webinar is being recorded, so you’ll have access to the recording and also the PowerPoint presentation. And also, you might be able to improve the sound quality, if you try the auto broadcast button, which is below the screen, next to the recording of the video. I’m just sort of looking in the chat. So, you’ll see a little auto broadcast little symbol. Press on that, and see if that makes a difference to the sound.

And for today, this webinar we’ll be managing questions only through the chat function. So, at the end of this session, we will allow plenty of time to answer your questions.

So, before we begin this session, I would like to do an acknowledgement of 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 the 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 peoples across the nation, and hope that they will walk with us on our journey.

So, the overview. So, I’d like to begin to talking to you about the content of the presentation today. In it, I will cover just a brief overview of Aboriginal perspectives when it comes to incorporating Aboriginal languages into your teaching and learning program.

Then, next, will be the Program Manager, Sarah. She will showcase the Victorian Aboriginal Languages curriculum, highlighting teaching resources to support the teaching of Aboriginal language programs in school.

Next, it will be the key stakeholders. So, that will be Vaso from VAEAI. She’ll show how the early years...from the early years, how to incorporate the teaching of Aboriginal languages, to training that’s involved to teach about an endangered language, and Aboriginal language programs taught across...Aboriginal language programs taught in schools across Victoria.

And then we’ll finish off with Aunty Fay from VACL, who will explain about VACL as it provides community and schools with the training, the incursions, the language resources and protocols for using language, and to really highlight the importance of schools establishing that partnership with Aboriginal communities for the development of learning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages in schools.

Alright. What do you see when you look at these numbers, or what do these numbers represent? Well, prior to European settlement in 1788, over 200 Aboriginal languages were spoken, and today, we only have 50. So, here in Victoria, all Victorian Aboriginal languages are revival languages, and they are being revived by the traditional owners, and they are in various stages of reclamation.

Now, the First Languages in Australia website actually makes the connections and understands the role between language and culture and to country and place. So, under that section of “Why maintain our language?”, this is what it states. “Language and culture are independent. It has long been understood that language is the verbal expression of culture. It is the medium through which culture is carried and transferred. Stories, songs and the nuanced meanings of words contain the key to understanding one’s world and one’s part within it. Strong culture gives the individual a sense of belonging to people and places. For this reason, language and culture are deeply interconnected and core parts of one’s identity.”

So... Some schools, if you don’t have an Aboriginal language program, you still can incorporate the local Aboriginal language throughout the learning areas. So, as I know, that some schools are incorporating the use of the local Aboriginal language to be displayed in their school environment. For example, the Welcome to Country in language and the greeting of welcome, which, in the Kulin Nation, Wominjeka, is often displayed in the front office of the school. Another way I’ve seen schools have...what they have done is the Koorie bush gardens. Now, that’s a great way of displaying plant names in language.

Now, have you ever wandered about our towns and cities and places? Most of these places’ and towns’ names are of Aboriginal origin. Do you know their meaning in Aboriginal language? So, it’s an opportunity to explore the origins and meanings with your students. And also, too, that some of the towns and names that you see too around are now including the dual names. So let’s take, for example, in Victoria, Gariwerd, which is known to the Djab Wurrung and the Jardwadjali peoples, in English is the Grampians.

Also, in learning areas such as science or geography, where you can be learning about the climate, the environment, think of food production, you’ve got physical and chemical science involved in food prep, or... This is where you can think of the opportunity where you can incorporate the use of local and Aboriginal language. Connect language to Aboriginal native plants. Bush tucker. Here’s an example of the Gariwerd six seasons. Animals, family, kinship. The list can go on.

So there’s many topics relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture that you can incorporate to learning about Aboriginal Victorian languages.

So, in conclusion, I can say that the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language in the curricula from Foundation to Year 10 is a great way for engagement with Aboriginal and...or Torres Strait Islander students in your school, as a language program you’ll be able to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to develop a connectedness to school. It’s able to boost their self-esteem and confidence and improve their learning outcome. And for all Australian students, in learning the language of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, they’ll make that connection between the history and the culture and where they live.

So, here is just that one resource what I just made that quote from – the First Australian...First Language of Australia. This website is just to raise the awareness and diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages across Australia, and has a sharing of resources, which promotes and supports local and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language and programs in the school.

So now, I’ll hand over to Sarah Glatz, the Program Manager, who will talk about the Victorian Aboriginal languages in the curriculum.

**Sarah Glatz:** Thanks very much, Zeta. I’d like to begin by acknowledging the people of the Kulin nation, whose country I’m on now, and all the traditional custodians of the beautiful lands and waterways across Victoria, wherever you are today. Their connection to this land is ancient and ongoing. It’s my privilege to be working with Aboriginal communities and elders across the state who are generously sharing their histories, their knowledge and their wisdom with me and schools and teachers and students. And in particular today I’d like to acknowledge Aunty Fay and Zeta, both of whom have taught me so much so patiently.

In my role at VCAA, I work with early years, with primary and with secondary, including VCE, in supporting programs involving Aboriginal languages in Victoria. I work really closely with VACL, so that’s Aunty Fay, and Vaso from VAEAI, and also the Department of Education’s Koorie Outcomes Division. My work is chiefly in schools, although there are an increasing number of early childhood centres offering an Aboriginal language. Next slide, please, Peter.

There are many wonderful quotes from elders about the importance of language, and interviews with Koorie students who feel such pride and a strong sense of connection with the land and their ancestors when they speak language. However, I like this quote from Dr Esme Bamblett, as it’s specifically about the benefits of using the local Aboriginal language in schools. This quote comes from an interview with Esme that’s on our VCAA website. She says, “I think it’s important that language is...in everyday usage in schools...because I think what that will do is validate the language as an important part of the school, important part of the curriculum...it will validate Aboriginal people as important to the history of the area...”

So, I’d like to give you a very quick quiz about VAL – Victorian Aboriginal Languages – in schools. Have a little think. How many schools do you think there might be currently with a Victorian Aboriginal language program? And how many students would that be? And maybe even a rough idea of how many languages. Next slide. Peter? The next slide.

So, the department’s report from last year on Victorian government schools shows that there are 20 schools who’ve said they are teaching a Victorian Aboriginal language. That’s 18 primary schools and 2 secondary schools, and well over 2,000 students. So it’s something that’s increasing. There’s at least eight languages. In fact, there’s probably quite a few more. And, overall, it’s now the 11th most studied language group.

More and more schools are calling me, calling Vaso in particular, asking about opportunities for a language program, and they’re showing interest, which is really exciting, but this poses its own challenges, so a bit more on that in a minute. Next, please.

So, today’s presentation is just going to give you...from me, is just going to give you a brief overview of what’s available to schools in terms of the Victorian Aboriginal Languages curriculum and its relationship to perspectives. We’ll be running a webinar in term 4 which will give a more detailed and specific information for schools wanting to introduce or further develop their Victorian Aboriginal Languages curriculum.

So, you might be aware that there’s a Victorian curriculum specifically for Victorian Aboriginal languages, although lots and lots of people aren’t. This curriculum is divided into two strands – communicating and understanding. It’s really closely based on the Australian curriculum, and there’s one F-10 sequence which runs right through, but it’s divided into three levels, if you like. There’s...from the time you start school to Year 2. That’s the first level. Then there’s Year 3 to Year 6. And then Year 7 to Year 10. And it includes what they call content descriptions – if you’re a teacher, you’re well and truly familiar with this from across the curriculum – and achievement standards, which give you a bit of an idea of what students should be achieving at the end of those levels.

When you go to the main Victorian Aboriginal Languages landing page, which is on our F-10 resource page, you end up with three buttons that you can see here. Underneath, there’s a section that gives you an overview of the history. And then this is all about resources. So, what do you think might be underneath each button? Let’s have a little look.

So, if you click on ‘Help me plan’, you’ll get curriculum mapping templates and a scope and sequence document. They just help to show you the progression and assist you, when you’re planning your teaching and learning program, to meet the needs of your diverse students, which will range from...you know, there’ll be Koorie students in the classroom who may have some language background, and all sorts of students with the average...huge range that we have in our classrooms of different needs and interests. There’s also a whole school curriculum planning document, which is very useful as well.

Then, in the middle, underneath ‘Help me find a teaching resource’, you’ll find sample units of work for each of those three levels. They give you an idea of how you can organise elements from the Victorian Aboriginal Languages curriculum into your teaching and learning program, and they’re done...they’re culturally appropriate units of work.

If you jump across to the ‘Help me assess’ tab, that gives you ideas on how to check your students’ understanding as they progress through each of those levels.

We’ll soon be adding information about starting a Victorian Aboriginal Language program underneath the ‘Help me plan’ tab, so watch this space.

Next slide. So, this is just to give you a little bit more detail about the sample units of work, just a bit of a snapshot. Apart from...under each level, you’ll see that there are three thematic units, but there are also three new sample units, which many people may not have seen yet – they’ve only just been put up on our website – and they’ll help guide you as you’re starting an Aboriginal languages program. They’re designed for Foundation to Level 2, so for the beginning of school, but some of the information at the beginning, there’s quite a lot of information on protocols and vocabulary, word creation, sounds – all sorts of things that’s useful. So I’d encourage you to have a quick look at those if you’re interested in starting a program.

And to the content descriptions and the achievement standards of the curriculum, they’re only meant to be a sample, just as a springboard to you developing your own local content with your community. But they do give you some idea of how you can match that in, in a doable way, in the classroom, and what it might look like for Foundation to Level 2.

So, if you’re thinking of starting a Victorian Aboriginal languages program, there are heaps of opportunities, also some challenges, and along the way you’ll definitely require some guidance. So, opportunities include, especially for our Koorie students, as Zeta already said, they’ll gain in self-esteem and confidence.

Just in our VCAA interviews, Geraldine Atkinson says that students are seeing their culture is being respected and nurtured, and Richard Kennedy mentioned that, for him, “It gives me another connection to say, yes, I do belong here, and this is my country. I’m not from overseas. I’m not a migrant that’s come in the last 250 years to this country.” So it’s a different framing. It’s a different perspective.

And for all students, they’re learning the traditional language that’s unique to this country and place, where it came from, and through learning them, all students gain access to knowledge and understanding of Australia that can only come from this Aboriginal perspective.

Challenges – well, Zeta’s already mentioned that all Victorian languages are revival languages, and so there aren’t fluent speakers. It’s different to doing your regular language course. Often, communities are only just learning their language themselves, and it may take time before they’re ready to have their language taught in schools. So be prepared to take the time, build genuine partnerships with your local community, learn more about the local culture, and teach it across the curriculum while you’re planning for the language classes.

In terms of guidance, there are protocols from the Department of Education, VAEAI has protocols, and there are suggestions here in the 10 steps to getting started that also give you ideas of where to start and who to talk to, and how to do your staffing and build a language team and get some resources. There are those interviews I’ve been quoting from, from senior community members throughout Victoria, and the links to the curriculum documents.

But, in the end, I think the biggest thing is respect. Be curious, prepared to learn, and show that you’re in it for the long term.

So, that’s all for me. I’d like to pass across to Vaso now.

**Vaso Elefsiniotis:** Hello, everyone. And thank you very much, Sarah. Thank you, Zeta and Craig, for excellent series of webinars. I’m Vaso Elefsiniotis. I am Senior Project Officer with VAEAI around Aboriginal Languages, Education and Curriculum. And I’m going to just add to what Sarah has spoken about, and Zeta, in terms of out there in the big picture, and the strategy and policy that sort of guides the work that we do. So, Peter, if you could...

Oh, and I’d certainly need to and want to acknowledge that I am on Wurundjeri country in Glenroy. I can say in... That’s the Woiwurrung language, and I can say... (SPEAKS WOIWURRUNG) – “This is Wurundjeri country” – and... (SPEAKS WOIWURRUNG) OK. Next slide. (LAUGHS) Just copying Zeta there a little bit.

So, big picture, in the early years... So, we have Aboriginal languages education fantastically in Victoria at the moment. It’s been growing for...since about 2012 in particular. And we have the funded Early Childhood Languages Program. And there’s a quote there on your slide you can read yourself – I don’t need to read it out. But it’s from Berrimba Aboriginal Childcare Centre in Echuca, and the feelings of the director when she’d been away and came back, and they’ve got a Yorta Yorta language program happening in that service. Next slide, please, Peter.

This slide here shows you a little bit about the Early Childhood Languages Program. And, now, Sarah did talk about us all working collaboratively, and it’s really important to know that this is a partnership that’s been going for a long time that involves VAEAI, VACL, the VCAA, and the Department of Education and Training. So...and we have working groups that monitor the work and make progress in these areas. So, there are currently 18 funded Early Childhood Language Programs across the state. Next slide, Peter.

I’m not going to talk in detail, because we’ve only got... We want to open up to questions and answers. Now, Sarah did quite rightly talk about there being 20 schools across Victoria. This slide only shows 14, because they’re within our radar at VAEAI, and...so my slide needs to be updated, most definitely. But there are programs that are potentially working closely with the curriculum and others that are language and culture – includes Healesville, includes the work that Aunty Fay’s doing around in Boon Wurrung country, and many more. So, there are up to 20 schools. And they started with three formal programs back in 2012. Next slide, please, Peter.

At the moment, of course, with COVID, many schools are doing online learning, and this is just a little sample. My son is at Thornbury Primary School, he’s in Grade 6, and this is through the work of Terri Lee-Fitzgerald, who’s the Woiwurrung teacher there, and a story of Marram and Warinj that...with illustrations created by the kids. So, that’s sort of some of the work that they did last term. Next slide, please, Peter.

So, talked about the early childhood, the schools. But we also have in the Cert... in the TAFE VET area, we have, last year and the year before, piloted Certificate III in Learning an Endangered Aboriginal Language. And this year, through Swinburne TAFE, the Certificate IV in Teaching an Endangered Aboriginal Language. These courses are open to community members only, and they are really, really intensive study into language, particularly at the Cert III level and now Cert IV, and this is new in Victoria.

So the thing is – next slide, please, Peter – these courses have...are up for re-accreditation, and as they are now finished, their certification or registration expires at the end of this year. So, with Tauondi Aboriginal College, there’s been a national stakeholder group, and we’ve supported their application for a new suite of training courses – Cert II, III and IV. And that’s currently in process...up for registration with ASQA, which is the national certification body for VET courses. But it’s good development, particularly to start off with Cert 2 as a bit of a taster. And next slide, please, Peter.

Oh! Nearly forgot about this. We have... Because of the growth in schools, we have a Victorian Aboriginal Language Teachers Association that’s in formation at the moment, and a dedicated Facebook page. And...and that group’s going really well. (LAUGHS) We’ve got a meeting coming up. Next slide, Peter.

This is a very quick trip through the language programs. And while Peter is...waiting for the next slide... In the... OK. So this is... In our background, what is the policy around Aboriginal languages education in Victoria? Many of you would know – hopefully, most of you know – about that the Marrung Aboriginal languages plan strategy, main strategy in the state, and Action 2C in particular talks about increasing the number of Koorie language programs in Victorian kindergartens and schools, especially by supporting community efforts of language learning. And that’s the Certificate III course. And Fay, I’m sure, will talk much more about the background with community capacity, to talk about why that’s important to build community capacity so that we can have Aboriginal languages in education and confidence. So, this is what guides us. Next slide, please, Peter.

Just to show you how this has enfolded...folded out, enfolded, rolled out...the growth in Aboriginal languages education since 2012. I think the graph shows, itself, the growth. And one last final slide.

This is the... So, the other one was by schools program, and this graph is about which languages...growth in language education program. Now, Gunditjmara is up there up at the top because there are quite a large cluster of preschools in Gunditjmara country, in the south-west of the state, where the kids have been learning Peek Wurrung, the language there...language.

So I think that’s it, and I hope I’ve made that in time, Zeta. (LAUGHS) There are my contact details, and will answer questions. Fay?

**Aunty Fay Muir:** Hi, everyone. My name is Fay, and I’m a cultural educator language specialist of the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages. I’d like to pay my respects to all traditional owners on whose land we’re all on today, and hope that everybody is well. Next slide, please.

This is to contact me. You can contact me at info@vaclang.org – the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages...contact. Next slide, please.

Now, community language training workshops. VACL does a lot of these with our communities, to take them on a journey of learning their languages, because, as Sarah said, our languages are being revived, and a lot of language workshops are just starting. And we’re trying to get a lot of our younger community members to participate in these workshops.

I do a lot of education and learning excursions into early childhood, primary, and also into secondary school as well.

Now, the language resources at VACL are... We have all the languages...the language groups within Victoria, which there are 44 different languages in Victoria. And we’re the holders of that language for the community.

Now, the protocols for using language. You need to understand that our languages have been forbidden by our elders many years ago by the government of the day, and they had to speak English. So it’s very hard to...for the elders to let go of that language just yet. They want to learn the language first, before anybody else, before they let it go out into our schools. So you need to get that permission from the traditional owners to teach language, and please don’t be offended if they say, “No, not just at the moment. You’ll have to wait a little bit longer while we learn the language first.” That’s the way things are happening at the moment, and it’s really important that you understand and go with that, please. Next slide, please.

This is the Aboriginal Languages of Victoria Map, and it shows you where the languages are. This map was done in 2016, I think, and it only had...it only had 38 languages. There are now 44 languages in Victoria. And you can get this map off the VACL website. Next slide, please.

Which language? Well, first of all, we are in Victoria, so you start learning a local language when you are able to. And, as I said before, we are revival languages as the moment. And protocols for learning language – I’ve been through that as well, that you have to have the TOs’ permission. So, start with your local Aboriginal organisation, or your...KECs in your school, or even Aboriginal parents, to ask them who to contact, which Aboriginal organisation is in your area.

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