

# At the Movies: Contemporary Australian Indigenous Cultural Expressions – Transforming the Australian Story

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Cinema is an art form widely recognised as an agent to change the social condition and alter traditional norms. Movies can be used to educate and transform society's collective conscience. Indigenous Australian artists utilise the power of artistic expression as a tool to initiate change in the attitudes and perceptions of the broader Australian society. Australia's story has predominately been told from the coloniser's viewpoint. This narrative is being rewritten through Indigenous artists utilising the power of cinema to create compelling stories with Indigenous control. This medium has come into prominence for Indigenous Australians to express our culture, ontology and politics. Movies such as *Samson and Delilah*, *Bran Nue Dae*, *The Sapphires* and *Rabbit-Proof Fence* for example, have highlighted the injustices of past policies, adding new dimensions to the Australian narrative. These three films are just a few of the Indigenous Australian produced films being used in the Australian National Curriculum.

Through this medium, Australian Indigenous voices are rewriting the Australian narrative from the Indigenous perspective, deconstructing the predominant stereotypical perceptions of Indigenous culture and reframing the Australian story. Films are essential educational tools to cross the cultural space that often separates Indigenous learners from their non-Indigenous counterparts.

■ **Keywords:** education, Indigenous control, movies, Australia's story, curriculum

The artist educates the public, the public votes the way they have been educated to, and the politicians take notice.

Oodgeroo Noonuccal (Kath Walker)

Indigenous Australians have a long history of sharing our knowledge through creative means such as stories, art and dance (Martin, 2003). In recent years, the First Peoples of Australia are increasingly taking artistic control of our stories through writing, directing and producing Indigenous Australian movies. Murphy (2013) explains that 'Wider audiences are being introduced to the true modern Aboriginal culture which overrides the clichéd stereotypes of the past' (ab). This is exposing the Indigenous traditional knowledges and ontology and shifting the Australian narrative. The artistic works created by Indigenous Australians is gaining increased recognition both nationally and internationally (Thomas, 2014). In 2010, Screen Australia identified that there had been over 600 films, including 20 feature films and 34 television dramas where Indigenous film-makers have had a key creative role (Davis, 2014). This remarkable output continues to grow with strength and integrity.

This wave of self-determination and emancipation of Indigenous Australian peoples through the use of film began only a few decades ago and is accelerating rapidly. The resulting 'explosion' of creative identity has begun to attract the attention of non-Indigenous peoples in Australia and the broader global community. In turn, this has begun to influence the way Indigenous Australian peoples are viewed and understood by mainstream Australians. Here the authors will examine movies and film making from the artistic expression of Indigenous Australian writers, directors and producers and discuss how this medium is used to influence mainstream attitudes and shift the previously dominant colonial narratives of Australian history. Powerful stories from Indigenous Australian creatives who write, produce and direct

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their own films are being incorporated into the Australian National Curriculum.

### Education in the Colony

Oodgeroo's quote (1988) states that 'the artists educates the public'. Oodgeroo realised that education was the key to freedom for Indigenous Australians and used her artistic talents to bring attention to the mainstream society the injustices of the past. Connell, Campbell, Vickers, Welch, Foley, Bagnell and Hayes (2010, p. xii) state, education provides people with the understanding of how society works and its order. Education helps a country's citizens understand what is valued by their society and which voices and opinions are legitimised and which are negated or silenced. Early education in Australia was based on moral absolutes emphasising imperial themes such as 'God, King/Queen and Country' (Gilbert, 2004, p.10).

This method of education limited the possibility of analytical discussion and restricted alternative discourses. Educational outcomes were largely concerned with achieving homogenous outcomes, silencing oppositional voices which restricted the student's capacity for critical thinking. It has been suggested that formal education in Australia has been used to segregate, discriminate and colonise through institutional racism (Welch, 2011; Taylor & Guerin, 2010, p. 75). Reynolds (2000) explains how past curriculum only presented the colonisers view of history which led to non-Indigenous students being caught in a void of ignorance whilst Indigenous students were more isolated and disempowered.

Indigenous Australian movies provide educators with contemporary cultural expressions that connect curriculum guidelines with Indigenous studies and alleviate what has been described as a 'problematic' study area by many educators (Hook, 2013, p. 111). Educators have decided that we should teach Indigenous Studies, but we are less inclined to critically address *how* we teach Australian Indigenous Studies (Hook, 2013, p. 110). This is where tapping into resources such as Indigenous produced films can be utilized in the classrooms to incorporate an Indigenous perspective to the curriculum.

### Education and a Shared Learning Space

However, formal education is only one way to acquire information and form opinions and this is where artists from all mediums have had an important role in society's ethos. In the classroom, using movies made by Indigenous artists and from Indigenous perspectives, allows the learner to have insight into cultural aspects and history of Indigenous Australia that is often misconstrued when presented from non-Indigenous viewpoints. Using these movies in the curriculum generates empowerment for Indigenous students as the classroom is decolonised through an honest exchange of information (Hook, 2013, p. 111). This classroom then becomes a shared learn-

ing space rather than a contested space. Such a space generates a deeper understanding of Indigenous knowledges that encourages all students to engage more critically with Australian historical narratives (Herbert, 2010, p. 24). The term 'knowledges' is used here to describe the multiple and complex variety of Indigenous Australian ways of knowing, being and doing. Creating a more inclusive pedagogy contrasts the one sided approach to Australian Indigenous Studies that was often presented in past curriculum.

The disparity that exists between Indigenous students' academic outcomes and non-Indigenous students' outcomes is well documented. Pascoe (2011, p. 4) states that Indigenous students often feel marginalised from the classroom as their stories and perspectives are overlooked or ignored. Only in the last 20 years has any recognition of Indigenous epistemology or ontology been given credence (Nakata, 2007). The importance of this inclusive education only came to the attention of policy makers through ongoing activism and 'education' from Indigenous peoples to mainstream governments and institutions (Rigney, 2011). Contemporary Indigenous cultural expressions are instrumental in influencing these changes.

In the past, there has been little academic consideration of the value of artistic products, such as film, in relation to Australian Indigenous Studies curriculum, not to mention other discipline areas. The value of these resources from Indigenous Australian film makers when used in classroom cannot be overstated. Australian Indigenous Studies is an area of education often perceived as being too difficult. Overwhelmingly current research (Herbert, 2010; Nakata, 2011; Pascoe, 2011) suggests valuable and beneficial outcomes when Indigenous Studies are adopted, included and encouraged in the classroom. The benefits not only apply to Indigenous students but have the capacity to 'prepare all Australians for more effective engagement with one another, a reality that can only lead to a more democratic society one that is truly egalitarian' (Herbert, 2010, p. 29).

Interestingly, the benefits for non-Indigenous students are increasingly acknowledged (Sherwood, Keech, Keenan, & Kelly, 2011, p. 195). Using contemporary Indigenous made films in the classroom means, education is taking place for non-Indigenous Australians because they are exposed to Australian history through Indigenous voices which creates an opportunity for all learners to be exposed to valuable knowledge that has informed the country for tens of thousands of years. Importantly, it exposes them to Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing.

### Australia's 'Hidden' History

Australia's narrative has been predominately written and told by the colonisers of this country. In the 1960s, WHE Stanner wrote a series of essays titled 'Great Australian

Silence', outlining the manner in which Western history writers have turned a blind eye to the stories and injustices of Indigenous Australia, 'a view from a window which has been carefully placed to exclude a whole quadrant of the landscape' (Stanner in Herbert, 2010, p. 25). Overall mainstream Australians were uncomfortable hearing a conflicting historical narrative and colonisation through institutions, including education, were ramped up in an effort to hide the 'Aboriginal problem' and the shame of the hidden history narrative. Broader Australia was confronted with a narrative which sat at odds with the dominant story that had been constructed (Downing & Husband in Hook, 2013, p. 112). This dichotomy came to define any discussion on Australian history and was ignited by former Prime Minister John Howard's propagation of the 'history wars' (Howard, 1996). This school of thought was supported by the views of academics such as Keith Windschuttle and Geoffrey Blainey. In turn, this created an educational divide between the philosophies that were readily accepted in the classroom as truths, and those which were not. The result was a history narrative which endorsed the traditional colonial stories from White Australia and the voices that criticised these stories were labelled as having a 'Black Arm Band' mentality (Manne, 2009).

Henry Reynolds' (2000) book, *'Why Weren't We Told - a personal search for truth about our History'* took this to task. Reynolds' book told of Stanner's Great Australian Silence and exposed the frontier wars and massacres that had been conveniently overlooked in Australia's history curriculum. Reynolds (2000, p. 114) stated that Australia as a nation had a hidden history providing a mental block, which could not shift without reconciling the past.

Windschuttle examined this in the 2003 publication entitled *'The Fabrication of Aboriginal History Vol. 1, Van Diemen's Land 1803-1847'*. These debates accelerated the 'history wars' and divided the nation (Windschuttle, 2003). Such discourse has continued recently with Education Minister Christopher Pyne as Minister for Education in 2014, announcing a reform for the Australian history curriculum by appointing conservative academics Ken Wiltshire and Kevin Donnelly as 'concerns have been raised about the history curriculum not recognising the legacy of Western civilisation' (Pyne in Ireland, 2014).

Although Stanner and Reynolds took an empathetic view and played an essential part in exposing the details of Australia's Indigenous history, Indigenous people's voices were rarely heard above the shouting match of the History Wars. The Indigenous Australian story needed to be told by the people themselves and valued as an essential educational tool to contribute to the Nations narrative. Increasingly film has become a medium which can carry Indigenous voices beyond geographical boundaries. For educators, film pedagogy allows for the introduction of Indigenous voices into the classroom where such discussions may have been placed in the too hard basket in favour

of 'colour the boomerang' curriculum (Pascoe, 2011, p. 7). Pascoe (2011, p. 7) argues that these conflicts should be embraced in the classroom by teachers and students rather than avoided. Film pedagogy allows a space to begin these challenging discussions through a medium which is both informative and entertaining.

## A Bran Nue Dae in a Brave New World

With funding now available projects such as the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association began to emerge and broader Australia was exposed to Indigenous arts and culture (Siemienowicz, 2013, p. 37). Indigenous writers, producers and filmmakers, such as Warwick Thornton and Rachel Perkins, began producing and directing Indigenous controlled films as a social platform to influence the opinions of broader Australia. This is not to say that these artists were only using film for the purpose of influencing or changing societal constructs of Indigenous culture or Australia's history, Indigenous controlled movies use Indigenous perspectives to highlight the broader social effects these films provide. They also recognise the need to tell the authentic Indigenous Australian story from the people themselves. Critical readings of popular media consistently reveal a dominance of negative stories, which perpetuate negative perceptions and stereotypes of Indigenous peoples (McCullum, Waller, & Meadows, 2012). With the establishment Indigenous owned and controlled newspapers, radio and broadcasting networks the mainstream media prejudice was taken out of the reporting and the 'other side' of the story told (McCullum et al., 2012). Indigenous voices have increasingly turned to film as a means to portray Australian Indigenous stories and philosophies in a medium which can be controlled with Indigenous perspectives and a new kind of 'activism' has emerged through the use of 'entertainment'.

As noted earlier, little was broadcast in the mainstream media about the realities of the treatment of Indigenous Australians. Australian movies were made with tokenistic representation of Indigenous Australian peoples. Langton (1993) explained this well, 'In film, as in other media, there is a dense history of racist, distorted and often offensive representation of Aboriginal people' (p. 24) In 1955, producer Charles Cheval made the 'ground-breaking' movie *Jedda*. Cheval became renowned for using Indigenous actors, for the first time, and some attention was brought to bear on the mainstream audience around Indigenous struggles. However, the narrative reinforced the assimilation policy of the 1950's by drawing the attention to the 'native girl' and the white station manager trying to 'civilise' her. This film can be largely viewed as patronising and sympathetic, yet reinforced values of colonisation and government policy of the day (Siemienowicz, 2013). Films like *Jedda* played a significant role in shaping the narrative of Australia. Ideas of Aboriginality have been largely constructed using films like these above. Colonial

hegemony is constructed and maintained on the creation of Aboriginal characters in movies like *Jedda* which are incredibly narrow representations (Rekhari, 2007). Such films serve to further marginalise Indigenous people from mainstream society because it reinforces a stereotypical image that all Indigenous people are the same. This 'noble savage' mentality has remained prominent in European consciousness since before Australia's colonisation (Maddison, 2009). Movies in the 70s such as *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* (1978) and *Walkabout* (1971) brought to the screen and to the wider Australian audience some aspects of our colonial past which help trigger social conscience of the Indigenous issues however, these were sympathetic representations of Indigenous problems brought to light without the authority of Indigenous voices (Siemienowicz, 2013, p. 36).

With the emergence of filmmakers such as Warwick Thornton, Rachel Perkins and Wayne Blair, contemporary Indigenous narratives appeared on the big screen (Siemienowicz, 2013; Dolgoplov, 2014). Here began an increase in creative and technical film making, writing, direction and music from talented Indigenous story tellers. The owners of the culture were finally able to tell their story in a medium that could reach mainstream audiences. This story telling has become a powerful tool for educating the wider society to the history, ontology, knowledges and culture of Indigenous Australians and can be powerful tools in the classroom. The success of movies such as *Samson and Delilah*, *Bran Nue Dae*, and *The Sapphires* has given enthusiasm and hope for the emancipation and validation of Indigenous Australian people's place in the Australian story. The attention drawn nationally and internationally by films such as these has been extraordinary.

As Dolgoplov (2014, p. 79) states:

a number of Indigenous films that can be considered part of the 'new wave' have aimed for and attained mainstream audiences. Aboriginal themes are no longer the sole domain of arthouse and there are now as many variations within Indigenous films as there are film makers

Movies are generally considered as entertainment, especially those played within multiplexes, *Bran Nue Dae* and *The Sapphires* used this premise to engage the audience in a much deeper text than appeared on the surface. Both of these films used music and comedy to give the audience entertainment but without neglecting the message and the subtext. As Hook (2013, p. 113) outlines such films highlight 'the importance of film as a powerful medium from which all Australians can understand Indigenous culture'. In the case of *The Sapphires*, racism, Government policies and struggles for civil rights in the 1960s were portrayed throughout the film. As director Wayne Blair (in Stone, 2013) explains:

But the best thing about it is that people from Australia are seeing it. And it comes in the guise of black soul music, and it comes in the guise of a comedy. But when you have that

underlying truth under it, it just rears its head. Just to say 'Hey, here it is.' It just reminds people. And hopefully in someone's psyche it stays forever, and it just changes people. And that's the proudest thing this film has done.

*The Sapphires* film was acclaimed around the world and won 11 out of its 12 nominations at the Australian Academy for Cinema and Television Arts (AACTA) awards in 2013. The film had its world premiere at the Cannes Film Festival in 2012 and at the 35th Denver Film Festival where it won People's Choice Award for Best Narrative Feature. Australia's silent history was being exposed to the world through films and Indigenous voices were no longer contained to the political battlefields of Australian politics or the dark corners of cinematic sidelines. The film was the highest grossing film at the Australian box office in 2012 and achieved a global distribution deal with the highly successful Weinstein Company (Siemienowicz, 2013). Therefore, not only Australian audiences but international audiences were exposed to the film's portrayal of Aboriginal life in Australia in the 1960s as important issues such as Missions, the Stolen Generation, racism and discrimination were explored as a subtext behind the music and the comedy.

## Movies and the Classroom

The opportunity to include these stories within the classroom no longer becomes one from a marginalised position outside Australian Film but from the red carpet of cinematic awards. Such success allows for educators to begin a dialogue on Indigenous Studies from a position which is 'mainstream' rather than marginal. As discussed earlier, Indigenous studies curriculum is now widely recognised as valuable to pedagogical practice. One of the key contemporary concerns for Indigenous studies is not *if* to teach but *how* (Hook, 2013, p. 112).

Including well recognised materials, like popular films, changes the power shift between non-Indigenous and Indigenous students in the classroom because the history and culture is presented from the Indigenous voice. This way some of the problems previously encountered within Indigenous Studies pedagogy can be overcome. Overall students were not adverse to Indigenous Studies but were contesting the way in which these areas of study were delivered (Hook, 2013, p. 112). This is a decolonising process that bridges the cultural space between Indigenous and non-Indigenous society. Film pedagogy provides a position to reexamine entrenched historical understandings and legitimise Indigenous ontology within Indigenous Studies curriculum.

The result has opened the door to an often silenced topic and allowed for conversation to emerge from within the classroom and to broader society. As highlighted by Australian Film, Television and Radio School CEO, Sandra Levy 'They (Indigenous filmmakers) are using film and television to document their cultures and promote

social change and to entertain' (Levy, 2013). Having said that, Langton (1993) points out that it is often difficult for critics to discuss Indigenous work because of an 'almost complete absence of critical theory, knowledge of, and sensibility towards Aboriginal film and video production (p. 23). For educators, introducing Australian Indigenous Studies into their everyday practice does not have to be a task approached from the margins of cultural output. Instead incorporating film pedagogy into Indigenous studies can be approached from a position of 'mainstream success'. Dolgoplov (2014, p. 80) highlights that there is an increasing variety and complexity to the output from Indigenous Australian filmmakers. The teaching of a complex Australian history narrative is far more exciting and engaging for students because of the multitude of stories and the complexity of the characters (Pascoe, 2011).

A simple example in current curriculum practice is the topic of the Stolen Generations. The lesson can incorporate Paul Keating's Redfern Speech as a turning point for wider discussion between non-Indigenous Australians about an unacknowledged history (Clark, 2013). This is where educators may find, as Hook (2013, p.111) highlights, non-Indigenous students can react in opposition to such content. As Taylor (in Hook, 2013, p. 112) explains, 'heightening student awareness about racism without also providing some hope for social change is a prescription for despair'. Using a broader range of Indigenous Australian Films can help strengthen teaching practice within Indigenous Studies and provide accessible pathways to connect Indigenous and non-Indigenous stories and perspectives. As Hook (2013, p. 112) suggests 'students are not dismissing and rejecting Indigenous Studies, but are rejecting the way in which the curriculum and educators deliver and facilitate these studies'. Films from Indigenous voices provide a space to bridge the gaps in non-Indigenous understandings of the Australian story. Using movies in the classroom can be entertaining, engaging and even humorous. In this way students can gain an understanding of Australian narratives from the Indigenous perspective in a positive approach, through a medium which is considered entertainment.

Pascoe (2011) argues that the curriculum should invite students to actively engage and to even be excited about Indigenous Studies. The multiple stories of colonial history provide a plethora of material from which to construct interesting engaging curriculum and these are increasingly being put to the screen by talented Indigenous practitioners (Dolgoplov, 2014, p. 79). By doing this non-Indigenous and Indigenous students can reevaluate the history of Australia in a constructive way, through stories which detail the complex nature of the past and the multiple perspectives which inform Australia's story. As Pascoe (2011, p. 8) states no history teacher should be able to teach a boring lesson as there is an abundance of invigorating stories to investigate.

As educators, the use of movies should only be the starting point, as Hook (2013, p. 113) outlines an over-reliance on this film portrays a narrow perspective on the Indigenous story and becomes the 'sole narrative'. For example the movie *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (although not entirely Indigenous controlled being directed by non-Indigenous producer, Phillip Noyce) is based on the book by Doris Pilkington Garimara – *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence*, and played a huge part in accelerating public awareness of the Stolen Generations and remains a powerful film for the classroom (Carrodus, Tudball, & Walsh, 2011). However, the multitude of Indigenous Australian controlled films available now allows students to engage with a wider variety of stories and perspectives. The important aspect for educators is to include these diverse stories within their syllabus. *Samson and Delilah*, *Rabbit -Proof Fence* and *The Sapphires* are used in the Australian schools for the History and English syllabus in Year 6, Year 8, Year 9 and Year 10 (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2014; Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2014; Education Services Australia, 2014).

Indigenous Australian film pedagogy provides an opportunity for teachers to renegotiate the 'cultural interface'. Nakata (2007, p. 9) describes the cultural interface as 'the space where contested knowledges meet'. Using Indigenous Australian films in the classroom means that non-Indigenous and Indigenous students can reevaluate the history of Australia in a positive way, through stories which detail the complex nature of the past and the multiple perspectives which govern Australia's story (Sherwood et al., 2011, p. 195). Movies made with Indigenous control reflect the Indigenous Australian's traditional knowledges and ontology. Teachers then have the opportunity to highlight this in their methodology to the lessons as well as exposing the sometimes excluded 'hidden history' of the Nation.

In the past, Australia's schools were dominated by imperialistic notions to support colonisation and 'white' privilege (Gilbert, 2004, p. 10). Democratic societies depend on active involvement from their citizens who are educated and equipped with critical thinking skills to be actively involved in the Democratic Process (Dickson, 1998, p. 2). Pascoe (2011, p. 4) argues that critical engagement is required within current Indigenous Studies, particularly Australian History. Pascoe (2011, p. 4) argues 'the gap between black and white in Australia is not an economic factor, it's spiritual and intellectual'. What continues are often contradictory perspectives with Indigenous Australians on one side and non-Indigenous Australians on the other side of a 'canyon of incomprehension' (Pascoe, 2008, p. 12).

One of the keys to bridging the gap is through Indigenous Studies curriculums which create space for Indigenous voices and perspectives, which for too long have been left outside the classroom. As discussed, an

increasing number of educators acknowledge the importance of Indigenous Knowledges within the classroom, so the issue becomes one of process, rather than intent. Film pedagogy provides the opportunity for educators to approach the complex terrain of the Cultural Interface through a positive, engaging and perhaps even entertaining method. Importantly, Indigenous films provide an opportunity to share our stories, our knowledges, our experiences and our culture in a manner that is different to mainstream film and other creative works. It allows the audience an opportunity to become familiar with new characters that are often quite different to those in mainstream film and television. It provides the means for a classroom to explore the curriculum in a new way that is stimulating, challenging and refreshing.

In order to further engage Australian society about Indigenous history, people and culture, it is very important that multiple positions and perspectives about Australia's colonial history are communicated not only in schools but to the wider community. As mentioned earlier Australia's colonial past has been hidden, distorted and conveniently ignored in order to maintain the dominance of the colonisers over Australian Indigenous peoples. As Pascoe (2011, p. 7) argues it is not only Indigenous voices who contradict this narrative, early explorers diaries give insights into Indigenous history which have been continually forgotten or overlooked in Australia's retelling of the story to itself.

Indigenous Australian writers, directors, producers and other creatives have taken control of their stories and captivated audiences in Australia and internationally by making films that exposed previously untold histories of Australia. Films such as *Rabbit-Proof Fence* were influenced and informed non-Indigenous Australians understanding of past Government policies, igniting public debate on issues such as the Stolen Generations (Flicking, 2002). Whilst *Samson and Delilah*, *Bran Nue Dae*, *The Sapphires* and *Rabbit-Proof Fence* all explored the racial tension, unjust policies and social exclusion of Indigenous peoples in Australia and also revealed realities about Indigenous society and culture (Dolgoplov, 2014, p. 81).

### Strong Story – Strong Voice

Once mainstream audiences are exposed to these films, many of the preconceived attitudes or thoughts about Indigenous Australians are challenged. Quite often it is the case that many of the perceptions were constructed as dominant cultural views from institutionalised imperial constructs taught in Australian history curriculums and reinforced through popular culture and the arts. Socialisation process, especially in our early years occurs through dominant values, beliefs and norms becoming our values and norms (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003, p. 14). These learned and 'taken for granted' values and beliefs only come

under question when they are challenged by someone or something that contradicts those (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003, p. 14).

In making film for instance, creative Indigenous Australian artists are able to share an alternative narrative. In turn, we are provoking a shift in the consciousness of mainstream society. This deliberate disturbance has the potential to dispel many of the myths often portrayed about Indigenous Australians through movies made by non-Indigenous film-makers. Australian mainstream audiences exposed to these movies from non-Indigenous storytellers form opinions about Indigenous culture often reinforcing a stereotype and maintain societal dominance. As Rekhari (2008) explains the audience is told the 'story' from a dominant viewpoint and the 'truth' can easily be distorted. Myths distort the truth and legitimise the existing power base and social ideology (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 97).

### Conclusion

Movies such as, *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, *Samson and Delilah*, *Bran Nue Dae* and *The Sapphires* to name just a small sample, have been instrumental in changing perceptions and understandings of Australia's First Peoples to the broader public. Within the classroom, the Australian Indigenous voices through film, provide the opportunity to unpack difficult concepts and to unsettle views from a previously dominant social construct. Giroux (in Hook, 2013) outlines how film can present 'contrasting narratives of race that can be used pedagogically to explore both racial others and "whiteness" as part of a broader discourse on racial justice'. Moreton-Robinson (2004 in Hook, 2013, p.112) explains, 'whiteness secures hegemony through discourse by normalising itself as the cultural space of the West'. A new social understanding of how Australian Indigenous peoples were treated and the impacts of government policies has emerged through films created with Indigenous control. Indigenous Australian actress Deborah Mailman, one of the stars of *The Sapphires*, commented on the power of films after receiving one of the 12 awards the film received at the AACTA celebrations. Mailman (cited in Siemeinowicz, 2013) stated that now the 'real stories' can be told by Indigenous people themselves because they have creative control of the narratives and can now push the boundaries. The stories are rich, compelling and offer the opportunity for Indigenous Studies to step out of the 'colour the boomerang' mould and onto the colour television screen.

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