

*The Weight of These Histories: An Ethnography of Indigenous and
Non-Indigenous Historical Interpreters in England, Turtle Island
(USA), and Aotearoa.*

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Abstract

This thesis is a comparative, ethnographic study of the experiences of Indigenous and non-Indigenous historical interpreters working on the front line of British colonial histories education. I use the term “historical interpreter” to describe anyone who teaches history to public audiences, to encompass the breadth of professionals and volunteers involved in delivering the commemorative programme *Mayflower 400* (England–Turtle Island), and the ambitious educational reform, the *Aotearoa New Zealand Histories Curriculum*. I investigate the deeply personal and changing affective experiences of historical interpreters through an original Collaborative Consent Process inspired by the Indigenous Wampum belt. I demonstrate that historical interpreters’ work is shaped by colonial amnesia and nostalgia, as well as an underexamined affective detachment from colonial history, which I term affective amnesia. I define affect as it appears in the work of historical interpreters, as a form of historical knowledge, and as an embodied and cognitive ‘intensity’ shaped by personal background, and then mobilised, expressed, and transformed by the interpreter. I argue that engaging affectively with colonial history and its legacies is essential in order to dismantle colonial misrepresentations and improve historical understanding. I show how through Indigenous partnership, non-Indigenous interpreters confront British colonial and Indigenous histories as living, harmful, and sensitive. I show that Indigenous partners face an unequal affective challenge within these partnerships as they interpret deeply personal histories with lasting harm and navigate significant demands on their knowledge and skills. I argue that attention to the affective work of historical interpretation is essential to meaningfully redressing inequalities within colonial history education.

Key Words: Colonial Amnesia; Heritage Practice; Indigenous Peoples; Heritage Partnerships; Historical Education.

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Epigraph

“Ignorance is like a stone wall. If you ball up your fists and pound on the wall, you only come away with bloody fists. If you gently take the stones off, one by one, you will see the light at the end. Let this work take another stone off the wall.”

Paula Peters, Mashpee Wampanoag journalist, educator, and activist, speaking about this research.

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This thesis is my attempt to share, to the best of my ability, the experiences of a courageous and inspiring group of historical interpreters. Thank you for trusting me with your stories. I hope that our work together has only just begun.

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Finally, Mary Snashall. Thank you. It is with your help that I realised my ideas on these pages. I am a dyslexic student who has just written an 80,000-word thesis. That shows the importance of tailored support.

Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for a degree or other qualification at this University or elsewhere. All sources are acknowledged as references.

How to Cite

Amelia Mulcahey-Knight, 'The Weight of These Histories: An Ethnography of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Historical Interpreters in England, Turtle Island (USA), and Aotearoa.' (PhD diss., University of York, 2025).

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This research was supported by the CHASE AHRC studentship, which was subsequently managed by the White Rose University Consortium in the final year of my research.

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A Note on Quotations

Phrases presented in single inverted commas ('test') are quotations from written sources. All quotations given by participants in the field are reported in speech marks ("My thoughts on this test"). They are directly reported from the medium of recording agreed upon by the participant. Longer quotations by participants are indented, and speech marks are used to distinguish reported speech from fieldnotes.

A Note on Translations

Below, I provide a glossary with a more detailed translation of te reo Māori and Algonquian terms. I include a short, in-text translation in brackets for the first mention of these terms in each chapter, such as 'hapū (subtribe)'.

A Note on Ethnographic Vignettes

In front of all but the third chapter of this thesis, I include ethnographic vignettes. These are interviews or exchanges taken from my fieldnotes that illuminate key themes I will then analyse within the chapter.

A Note on Turtle Island and Aotearoa

Within this thesis, I use Turtle Island, a term used by many Indigenous North Americans to describe the North American continent. I also predominantly use the te reo Māori ‘Aotearoa’, instead of the English ‘New Zealand’. I seek to emphasise Indigenous presence and highlight that the very identities of these lands are contested.

A Note on Decolonisation

In line with Indigenous studies scholars Eve Tuck (Unangaŋ) and K. Wayne Yang’s much-cited article ‘Decolonization is not a metaphor’, I do not engage with decolonisation as a concept or practice in this thesis. Tuck and Yang emphasise that ‘Decolonization brings about the repatriation of Indigenous land and life.’¹ They argue that we lose what is ‘unsettling’ about decolonisation if it is reduced, or made ‘metaphor’, such as to describe what ‘we want to do to improve our societies and schools’.² The term decolonisation was rarely used by my participants, who instead described their work as challenging inaccurate historical mythologies and detached affective relationships with colonial history and its ongoing legacies. Tuck and Yang describe decolonisation as unique to other social justice efforts in involving ‘an ethic of incommensurability’ that requires a ‘dangerous understanding of uncommonality’.³ While I reveal such tensions to be present in Indigenous and non-Indigenous historical interpreters’ work, they more often articulated their practice in terms of building understanding and connection. Finally, as Tuck and Yang argue, decolonisation will take distinct and unsettling forms in each settler-colonial context, thereby discouraging the uncomplicated application of the term across multi-sited projects such as those described in this thesis.⁴

¹ Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, ‘Decolonization is not a metaphor,’ *Decolonization: Indignity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1.

² Tuck and Yang, ‘Decolonization is not a metaphor,’ 1.

³ Tuck and Yang, ‘Decolonization is not a metaphor,’ 35.

⁴ Tuck and Yang, ‘Decolonization is not a metaphor.’

A Note on Indigenous, Māori, Native American and specific Indigenous Nation names

When I first mention an Indigenous participant or writer, I include their specific Nations in brackets after their name or within the text, e.g. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Porou, and Tūhourangi). Indigenous identity is perceived differently in Aotearoa and Turtle Island. All the Indigenous participants of Aotearoa are Māori, while Indigenous Turtle Island participants identified as either ‘descendants of’ or ‘members of’ a particular Indigenous Nation. Throughout this thesis, I capitalise the term Indigenous, not merely as a ‘sign of respect’, but to draw on a definition which emerged from 1970s Indigenous activism.⁵ This definition acknowledges Indigenous peoples’ shared experiences of colonisation, and strong connections to land, while recognising their enormous cultural diversity.⁶ I address these terms further in my methodology.

A Note on Italicisation and font

I do not italicise Indigenous terms, so they are not presented as separate from or other than the text. I only italicise *Mayflower 400* and the *Aotearoa New Zealand Histories Curriculum* so the reader can quickly identify my two case studies. Finally, book titles are italicised in keeping with the referencing norms. You will also see that throughout my thesis I use Times New Roman, which due to my dyslexia is easier for me to read and process.

A Note on Aotearoa New Zealand’s Histories Curriculum

My participants and the Aotearoa New Zealand Ministry of Education described the new *Histories Curriculum* by a multitude of titles: Aotearoa New Zealand’s or NZ’s Histories, ANZH, the Histories Curriculum, and Aotearoa New Zealand’s Histories Curriculum. To differentiate the Curriculum from the country’s histories, I have chosen to use *Histories Curriculum*.

⁵ Government of British Columbia, ‘Capitalization and Formatting of Indigenous Terms,’ *Writing Guide for Indigenous Content*, accessed June 5, 2025, <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/services-for-government/service-experience-digital-delivery/web-content-development-guides/web-style-guide/writing-guide-for-indigenous-content/capitalization-and-formatting-of-indigenous-terms>.

⁶ Christine Weeber, ‘Why Capitalize ‘Indigenous’?’ *SAPIENS*, May 19, 2020, accessed May 10, 2025, <https://www.sapiens.org/language/capitalize-indigenous>.

A Note on Pilgrims and Separatists

The histories of the passengers of the Mayflower's 1620 voyage from Plymouth, England, to Patuxet, Massachusetts, has been much mythologised. In chapter two, I address this dominant, mythic tale, which focuses on those passengers who were fleeing religious persecution. These passengers are famously described as Pilgrims or Pilgrim Fathers, positioning them as the founders of the United States. I do not use the terms 'Pilgrim' or 'Pilgrim Fathers' outside of addressing this myth. Less than half of the passengers were driven to voyage on the Mayflower because of their religious practices, and fears of facing religious persecution in England. I will refer to this small religious group by the title of their religious sect, Separatists. Separatists were pursuing a radical separation from the Church of England in the belief that God could be worshiped outside of the Church.⁷ Identifying the exact number of committed Separatists on the Mayflower voyage is challenging as Separatist men travelled with their families and servants.

Acronyms

NZHTA – New Zealand History Teachers' Association

MoE – Ministry of Education

PPTA – The New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association / Te Wehengarua

CISCS – Centre for Indigenous and Settler Colonial Studies

⁷ Stephen Brachlow, 'John Robinson and the Lure of Separatism in Re-Revolutionary England,' *Church History* 50, no. 3 (September 1981): 289.

Glossary of Indigenous Key Terms and Notes on Language Use

Within this thesis, I include terms and concepts in Wôpanâak, the language of the Wampanoag Nations of North America, and in te reo Māori, the language of the Māori iwi [tribes] of Aotearoa. By learning and including these terms, I have sought to share the words of my participants accurately. Many of my Wampanoag participants are actively learning Wôpanâak through the Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project.⁸ The Wampanoag Nations are the first Indigenous Turtle Island ‘community to reclaim and revitalize a sleeping tribal language after many generations without living speakers.’⁹ They practiced and shared their language when interpreting British colonial and Indigenous histories on heritage sites in England for *Mayflower 400*. In Aotearoa, te reo Māori words and phrases are commonly incorporated into predominantly English language conversations by Māori and Pākehā (non-Indigenous New Zealanders). The ‘2021 General Social Survey’, found that 30% of New Zealanders aged fifteen plus, were able to speak ‘more than a few’ te reo Māori words and phrases, and that 7.9% were fairly proficient in the language.¹⁰ Therefore, by incorporating te reo Māori into my English language thesis, I reflect my experience conducting interviews in Aotearoa, and recognise Professor Ella Henry’s (Ngātikahu ki Whangaroa, Te Rārawa, Ngāti Kuri) calls for non-Māori to normalise and ‘revitalize’ te reo Māori.¹¹

Within this thesis, for ease of reading, I include a short, in-text translation in brackets for the first mention of the te reo Māori or Algonquian word in each chapter, such as ‘hapū (subtribe)’. This glossary, therefore, presents a significant opportunity to provide more detailed translations. Following the work of Brian Tweed and Pania Te Maro (Ngāti Porou), I have sought to include these words within the context of their cultures, without claiming them, and without separating them from their whakapapa (relations).¹² Wôpanâak is currently only being taught to members of the Wampanoag Nations. As such, I only use terms that Wampanoag participants taught me directly. For te reo Māori definitions, I referenced a

⁸ ‘Home,’ *Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project*, accessed June 4, 2025, <https://www.wlrp.org>.

⁹ ‘About WLRP,’ *Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe*, accessed June 4, 2025, <https://mashpeewampanoagtribe-nsn.gov/about-wlrp>.

¹⁰ ‘Te Reo Māori Proficiency and Support Continues to Grow,’ *Stats NZ*, accessed June 4, 2025, <https://www.stats.govt.nz/news/te-reo-maori-proficiency-and-support-continues-to-grow>.

¹¹ Te Ahipourewa Forbes, ‘How Non-Māori Learning Te Reo Helps Revitalise It,’ *Re: News*, May 31, 2024, accessed 16, 2025, <https://www.renews.co.nz/how-non-maori-learning-te-reo-helps-revitalise-it>.

¹² Brian Tweed and Pania Te Maro, ‘Non-Māori Are Embracing Te Reo – but There’s More to It Than Language,’ *RNZ*, February 4, 2023, accessed August 19, 2025, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/on-the-inside/483611/non-maori-are-embracing-te-reo-but-there-s-more-to-it-than-language>.

growing body of dictionaries and cultural guides, particularly *Te KōParaPara An Introduction to the Māori World* and the *Te Aka Māori-English Dictionary*.¹³ I also highlight differences in dialects where they occurred in my interviews, writing against a homogenising of distinct iwi histories and identities. The glossary below does not provide a definitive or all-encompassing translation. As Aotearoa history teacher Michael Harcourt explains in the introduction to his PhD thesis, these short glossaries, written by non-Native speakers, are only, ‘A starting point for readers unfamiliar with the terms’.¹⁴ With this glossary, I seek to highlight rather than resolve the challenges of direct translation, emphasising that these terms ‘describe deeply different words’.¹⁵

Te reo Māori Terms

Aotearoa – the land of the long white cloud. The name for the North Island, now used to describe New Zealand as a whole.¹⁶

Ākonga – student.

Awa – river or stream.

Hapū – a kinship group or subtribe of a larger political unit (see ‘iwi’). The name of a hapū often references the subtribe’s shared ancestor, for example, Pūkaki is ‘the ancestor of Ngāti Pūkaki’ who are a hapū within the Te Arawa iwi.¹⁷

Iwi – a larger associated kinship group of multiple hapū. The iwi is a ‘tribe, nation, people, nationality, race’.¹⁸ They are often ‘associated with a distinct territory.’¹⁹

Kai – food.

Kaiako – teacher.

Kāinga – a village or home.

Kaumātua – elder and ‘a person of status’.²⁰

Kaupapa Māori – a research methodology and philosophy that ‘gives full recognition to Māori cultural values and systems’(see ‘te ao Māori’ and ‘mātauranga Māori’) and aligns

¹³ Michael Riley et al., *Te KōParaPara An Introduction to the Māori World*, 3rd ed. (Auckland University Press, 2021), 50; John C. Moorfield, *Te Aka Māori-English, English-Māori Dictionary and Index*, accessed June 9, 2025, <https://maoridictionary.co.nz>.

¹⁴ Michael Harcourt, ‘Teaching and learning New Zealand’s difficult history of colonisation in secondary school contexts,’ (PhD diss., Victoria University Wellington, 2020), xiii.

¹⁵ Alison Jones, *This Pākehā Life an Unsettled Memoir* (Bridget Williams Books, 2020), 11.

¹⁶ John C. Moorfield, *Te Aka Māori-English*, under ‘Aotearoa’.

¹⁷ Michael Riley et al., *Te KōParaPara*, 50.

¹⁸ Moorfield, *Te Aka Māori-English*, under, ‘iwi’.

¹⁹ Moorfield, *Te Aka Māori-English*, under, ‘iwi’.

²⁰ Moorfield, *Te Aka Māori-English*, under ‘Kaumātua’.

with ritually correct behaviour (see ‘tikanga’).²¹ It is also a ‘form of resistance’ challenging the dominance of western knowledge systems, and a critical strategy for dismantling colonial ideologies and contemporary inequalities. It is so expansive in its meaning that many researchers have even concluded that it ‘is unwise to try and define Kaupapa Māori research’.²²

Kīngitanga – also known as the King or Māori King Movement. The first King, Pōtatau Te Wherowhero, was crowned in 1858 with the support of the Waikato iwi. Their aim was to unify distinct Māori iwi under a single sovereign who could negotiate with the British Crown and protect iwi lands from further colonial encroachment.²³

Kōrero – a speech, story or a physical ‘record’.²⁴

Māori – translates as ordinary, and it came to be used by the Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa to describe and distinguish themselves from European colonisers.

Marae – meeting grounds. The centre of community life, a ‘site of important rituals of life and the formation of new relationships.’²⁵

Mana – can be described as ‘prestige and authority’, an enormously significant concept in Māori worldviews.²⁶ There are multiple forms of mana, with the source being an ‘endowment of spiritual power’ by the gods.²⁷ Mana can be inherited from relations or gained through ‘conquest or achievement’.²⁸ A growing body of pedagogical resources has focused on how Aotearoa teachers can enhance the mana of their students.²⁹

Mana Whenua – land rights. The concept acknowledges the ‘independent spiritual power and authority’ of the land and describes a legal claim by ‘hapū or iwi’ to ‘ownership, control and sovereignty over a defined area’, as described in the Resource Management Act.³⁰

²¹ Shayne Walker, et al., ‘An exploration of kaupapa Māori research its principles, processes and applications,’ *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 9, no. 4 (2006): 333, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570600916049>.

²² Walker, et al., “An exploration of kaupapa Māori research,” 333.

²³ Rahui Papa and Paul Meredith, ‘Story: Kīngitanga – the Māori King movement,’ accessed July 31, 2025, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/kingitanga-the-maori-king-movement>.

²⁴ Moorfield, *Te Aka Māori-English*, under, ‘Kōrero’.

²⁵ Riley et al., *Te KoParaPara*, 102.

²⁶ Riley et al., *Te KoParaPara*, 37.

²⁷ Riley et al., *Te KoParaPara*, 37.

²⁸ Riley et al., *Te KoParaPara*, 37.

²⁹ Melinda Webber, ‘Teaching the Mana Model – A Māori framework for reconceptualising student success and thriving,’ *Set: Research Information for Teachers* 1 (2024): 2-11, <https://doi.org/10.18296/set.15>; Rapata Wiri, “Mana Whenua and The Settlement of Treaty of Waitangi Claims in the Central North Island of New Zealand,” *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples* 9, no. 1 (2013): 3-15. <https://doi.org/10.1177/117718011300900101>.

³⁰ Riley et al., *Te KoParaPara*, 4.

Mātauranga Māori – Māori knowledge, the ‘epistemological foundations of Māori society’.³¹ Incorporated into ‘narratives that retell the creation of all parts of the natural world and the people that exist within it’, with particular focus on genealogical relations.³²

Moko Kanohi – face tattoo, see tā moko.

Mihimihi – a greeting, ‘The focus of *mihimihi* is on... living and peaceful interrelationships.’³³

Ngāi – prefix for some iwi e.g. Ngāi Tahu.

Pākehā – non-Indigenous people of Aotearoa. During the colonial period, Māori used this term to describe people of European descent. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous New Zealanders now use the term to describe all non-Māori. One translation is Pa (to come into contact) ke (unique) ha (breath), interpreted as those that came from afar into the Māori and Polynesian worlds.³⁴

Pou whenua – land or boundary marker; can be highly decorative and can mark a particular iwi or hapū’s claim to the area.³⁵

Pōwhiri – formal welcome, ceremony and ‘rituals of encounter’.³⁶

Pūrākau – a traditional narrative, transmitting cultural knowledge and ‘creating shared meaning and...identity’ rooted in genealogy and in the land.³⁷

Rangatira – chief with ‘a concern for the integrity and prosperity of the people, the land, the language and other cultural treasures (e.g. oratory and song poetry), and an aggressive and sustained response to outside forces that may threaten these.’³⁸

Rohe – a territory or boundary.

Tā moko – Māori tattoo tradition. Sacred and ‘visual symbol of cultural pride and commitment to upholding the art forms and customs of the ancestors in a modern world.’³⁹

Tamariki – children.

³¹ Riley et al., *Te KoParaPara*, 32.

³² Riley et al., *Te KoParaPara*, 32.

³³ Moorfield, *Te Aka Māori-English*, under, ‘mihimihi’.

³⁴ Joan Costello, ‘Pākehā: the Real Meaning behind a Beautiful Word,’ *Te Papa’s Blog*, September 14, 2018, accessed July 18, 2025, accessed July 8, 2025, <https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2018/09/14/pakeha-the-real-meaning-behind-a-beautiful-word>.

³⁵ Moorfield, *Te Aka Māori-English*, under, ‘Pou whenua.’

³⁶ Moorfield, *Te Aka Māori-English*, under, ‘Pōwhiri.’

³⁷ John Stansfield, ‘Pūrākau: Our world is made of stories,’ *Whanake: The Pacific Journal of Community Development* 6, no. 1 (2020): 86.

³⁸ Moorfield, *Te Aka Māori-English*, under ‘rangatira’.

³⁹ ‘Tā moko: Traditional Māori Tattoo,’ *100% Pure New Zealand*, accessed June 23, 2025, <https://www.newzealand.com/uk/feature/ta-moko-maori-tattoo>.

Tangata whenua – the people of the land. Participants commonly used this term to describe the iwi or hapū with historical and contemporary Mana Whenua (land rights) in that area. The term could also be used to mean all Māori.

Tapu – to be recognised as sacred, with restrictions on access and use, ‘the sacred state or condition in which a person, place or thing is set aside by dedication to the gods and thereby removed from profane use.’⁴⁰

Te ao Māori – the Māori world. Encompassing all Māori cultural concepts and ways of being.

Te reo Māori – the Māori language, which has regional variations. The language is an essential source of cultural knowledge, but, as Tangiwai Rewi (Waikato, Ngāti Tipā, Ngāti Tahinga, and Ngāti Amaru) and Matiu Rātima (Whakatōhea, Ngāti Pūkeko) explained, it continues to come ‘under siege from the pervasive forces of colonisation, globalisation and consumerism’.⁴¹

Te Tiriti o Waitangi – the te reo Māori version of the Treaty of Waitangi, New Zealand’s foundational document, signed between the British Crown and several Māori leaders in 1840; it is also referred to as Te Tiriti or the Treaty.

Te Waipounamu – the South Island of Aotearoa.

Tikanga – ritually correct behaviour, ‘practices and procedures’ that are ‘informed by customary values or concepts’.⁴² An understanding of tikanga is vital for appropriate relationship building, and essential to te ao Māori.

Tuku – send, hand down, release.

Waka – canoe. A named waka can also be referred to when describing your genealogy (see ‘whakapapa’). Māori identify with one of the seven waka hourua, double canoe, by which the original Polynesian navigators first arrived in Aotearoa. The canoes were called ‘Tainui, Te Arawa, Mātaatua, Kurahaupō, Tokomaru, Aotea and Tākitimu’, which now form the names of the iwi which descend from them.⁴³

Whakawhanaungatanga – the act of strengthening relationships, and ‘relating well to others’.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Reilly et al., *Te KoParaPara*, 39.

⁴¹ Reilly et al., et al., *Te KoParaPara*, 304.

⁴² Reilly et al., et al. *Te KoParaPara*, 30-34.

⁴³ ‘The Arrival of Māori,’ *100% Pure New Zealand*, accessed July 31, 2022, <https://www.newzealand.com/uk/feature/arrival-of-maori>.

⁴⁴ Moorfield, *Te Aka Māori-English*, under ‘whakawhanaungatanga.’

Whakapapa – an enormously complex concept that is often translated as genealogy, for it ‘indicates and describes networks and relationships’ encompassing human, non-human and non-material relations.⁴⁵ It ‘weaves the living...the dead...the environment and the celestial realm into a complex matrix, denoting connections and order’ and as such it ‘collapses time so that time-past is connected to time-present.’⁴⁶

Whānau – family, often referring to an extended group of relations and can be used to describe ‘friends’ and community that are not biologically related.⁴⁷

Whenua – land

Algonquian Terms

Algonquian – a large language group to which numerous Indigenous languages belong, including Wôpanâak, as well as ‘Cree, Ojibwa, Blackfoot and Cheyenne’.⁴⁸

Massasoit – a title meaning great leader, or sachem. Commonly, the title is incorrectly used in place of the name of Ousamequin, the Massasoit of the Wampanoag Nations from 1581 to 1661.

Mishoon – dugout canoe made from a ‘single pine, chestnut, or oak tree’.⁴⁹ Historically, mishoonash (plural) could carry up to forty people.

Moccasinash – plural of moccasin, a shoe made of animal hides.

Narragansett – the Indigenous peoples of the contemporary State of Rhode Island. The Narragansett ‘were considered warriors’ in the region and ‘offered protection to smaller tribes’.⁵⁰

Patuxet Wampanoag – a historic band of the Wampanoag Nation; their territory was in the region of present-day Plymouth, Massachusetts. By 1619 the Patuxet Wampanoag had been destroyed by plagues brought by European slavers, merchants and colonists.

Shinnecock – people of the stony shore. An Indigenous Nation whose territories are in the present-day state of New York; they speak an eastern Algonquian dialect.⁵¹

⁴⁵ Reilly et al., *Te KoParaPara*, 52.

⁴⁶ Riley et al., *Te KoParaPara*, 53.

⁴⁷ Moorfield, *Te Aka Māori-English*, under ‘whānau.’

⁴⁸ Ives Goddard, ‘Algonquian Languages,’ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, last modified February 22, 2024, accessed August 18, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Algonquian-languages>.

⁴⁹ Plimoth Patuxet Museums, ‘Mishoon (Boat),’ *You Are the Historian – Unit 1: Patuxet, Plimoth Patuxet Museums*, accessed June 9, 2025, <https://plimoth.org/yath/unit-1/mishoon-boat>.

⁵⁰ ‘Early History,’ *Narragansett Indian Tribe*, accessed June 9, 2025, <https://narragansettindianation.org/history/earl>.

⁵¹ ‘Home,’ *Shinnecock Indian Nation*, accessed April 9, 2025, <https://www.shinnecock-nsn.gov>.

Turtle Island – a term used by many Indigenous North Americans to describe the North American continent. It recalls an origin story with many regional variations, which intimately relates a responsibility for the land to Indigenous identity.

Wetu – traditional Wampanoag home. A winter wetu is covered in bark and built inland. A summer wetu is covered in cattail reeds and built on the coast.

Wampanoag Nations – people of the first light. The Indigenous Nations in the territories of present-day Massachusetts and Eastern Rhode Island.⁵² Many of my participants are from the Mashpee, Aquinnah and Herring Pond Wampanoag Nations.

Wôpanâak – the language of the Wampanoag Nations that is being reintroduced after ‘more than 150 years of dormancy’ through the Wôpanâak Language Reclamation project.⁵³ In restoring Native speakers, the project seeks to strengthen cultural identity and resilience.

⁵² ‘Home,’ *Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe*, accessed June 9, 2025, <https://mashpeewampanoagtribe-nsn.gov>.

⁵³ ‘About,’ *Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project*, accessed March 8, 2025, <https://www.wlrp.org/about>.

Part 1| Examining Historical Interpreters

Chapter One Vignette: Wampanoag Powwow, Mashpee, Turtle Island

I talk with Andrew over the sound of the drums at the Wampanoag summer powwow. They. Punctuate. Our. Conversation. A clear, reoccurring statement of survivance.¹ I ask Andrew, a descendant of the Shinnecock Nation, “When you are interpreting at museums and talking to visitors about your history, do you feel there is an expectation that you suppress your emotions or frame the history positively?”

Andrew answers quickly, reflecting on his years of experience working as a historical interpreter at US museum sites, “No, if you are emotional about something people often see that and feel that and connect with that. We weren’t going to be quiet about the things that people didn’t want us to talk about. Because the truth of it is that it is very ugly. There are not that many great parts once you hit colonisation.” Andrew pauses to let this resonate and then speaks firmly, “We are going to talk about it. It is still emotional, and it still affects us to this day. But we weren’t going to be quiet about it, we were not going to be silenced about it. I don’t care if you come down [to a museum site] and you are offended! I hope that you are! So that you actually feel something about what is happening to Native people. I am not trying to attack you. I am not trying to argue with you as a person. But the fact that you might be offended, you might be upset, means you are realising what happened. On the museum site, one thing I would preface before I talked about something I knew I was going to get emotional with, is that I don’t blame anyone in that room. This stuff, that I am talking about, happened 300 to 400 years ago. But you have to understand it to know where we are now. You have to understand it to help us change it now.

¹ Gerald Vizenor, *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence* (University of Nebraska Press, 2008). Native American studies scholar, Gerald Vizenor (Minnesota Chippewa) coined the term ‘survivance’ to describe not only Indigenous cultural survival but their active resistance and resilience.

If you feel uncomfortable, good.

If you feel a little uneasy, good.

Why do you feel that way?

What are you going to do about it?"

"Historical interpreter" is a term most used in North America, often within living history museums, to describe those who perform historical narratives to public audiences. As Andrew shared his experience of this role, which he practices for a range of heritage sites, he revealed that he is on the front line of British colonial and Indigenous histories education. He described colliding with a lack of understanding and attempts to deny the legacies of colonialism. Andrew shared his frustrations and the deeply affective challenge of this work with me, a friend. However, we both know I am also implicated in this profound absence of knowledge. Within England and across its former colonies, calls for the teaching of British colonial histories have drawn attention to a widespread lack of understanding and denial of the basic facts of colonisation.² The mythologising, sanitisation and forgetting of colonial violence is seen as characteristic of settler-colonial states, such as Turtle Island and Aotearoa.³ In these nations there is also a profound absence of knowledge of Indigenous histories, so much so that Andrew encounters American visitors who do not realise Indigenous people "still exist". Andrew's statement, with its rhythmic emphasis and powerful refrain, emphasised the enormous affective challenge this absence of knowledge presents to the historical interpreter. Yet, he also stressed the importance of this work in driving affective engagement, historical understanding, and action in support of Indigenous communities.

² Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* (Beacon Press, 2014); Michael Harcourt, 'Teaching and learning New Zealand's difficult history of colonisation in secondary school contexts' (PhD diss., Victoria University Wellington, 2020); Tina Ngata, *Kia Mau: Resisting Colonial Fictions* (Kia Mau Campaign, 2019); Jean O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians out of Existence in New England* (University of Minnesota Press, 2010); David Olusoga, *Black and British A Forgotten History* (Pan Macmillan, 2016); Restall, '2018 Presidential Address: The Trouble with "America,"' 67, no.1 (2020): 1-28, <https://doi.org/10.1215/00141801-7888671>; Coll Thrush, *Indigenous London: Native Travellers at the Heart of Empire* (Yale University Press, 2016).

³ Restall, '2018 Presidential Address.'; Harcourt, 'New Zealand's difficult history'; O'Brien, *Writing Indians out of Existence*; Robert Fletcher, 'The Art of Forgetting: imperialist amnesia and public secrecy,' *Third World Quarterly* 33, no. 3 (2012): 423-439, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2012.657476>; Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History*; Ngata, *Kia Mau: Resisting Colonial Fictions*.

Chapter One: Introduction

This thesis is an examination of the experiences of Indigenous and non-Indigenous historical interpreters working within two ambitious historical education projects, *Mayflower 400* in the UK and the *Aotearoa New Zealand's Histories Curriculum*, henceforth referred to as the *Histories Curriculum*. Through an ethnographic investigation of the affective experience of historical interpreters within these projects, I identify cross-culturally reoccurring challenges facing British colonial and Indigenous history education in England and Aotearoa.

Throughout this thesis, I reveal and examine historical interpretation as an affective practice. I define affect as it appears in the interpreters' work, as a form of historical knowledge, and as an embodied and cognitive 'intensity' shaped by personal background that can be mobilised, expressed, and transformed. Within this chapter, I introduce *Mayflower 400* and the *Histories Curriculum* as fieldsites for the examination of collaborative and participatory work between Indigenous and non-Indigenous historical interpreters. I argue that *Mayflower 400* and the *Histories Curriculum* offer rich comparative case studies for examining the challenging and affective work of interpreting British colonial and Indigenous histories. Both projects newly engaged a broad group of professionals and volunteers, including teachers, Indigenous advisors, heritage workers, and national and local government officials in the interpretation of these histories. Both projects designed and delivered their historical narratives through partnerships between Indigenous (Wampanoag or Māori) and non-Indigenous (English or Pākehā) interpreters. I argue that by comparing the experiences of these heritage and school educators, under the term historical interpreter, common challenges in the interpretation of British Colonial and Indigenous history education are revealed. I begin this chapter by defining the term I use to describe the participants of this thesis, historical interpreters. I then provide a thesis plan, followed by a reflective statement sharing my own affective experience of historical interpretation and my motivations for this research. I introduce my comparative case studies, *Mayflower 400* and the *Histories Curriculum*, and conclude with a thesis statement that contextualises and addresses the significance of my research questions.

Throughout this thesis, I examine the experiences of a diverse group of professionals who produced and adapted historical narratives for public audiences during *Mayflower 400* and the *Histories Curriculum*. I refer to the participants of this thesis as historical interpreters. By using this term, I identify meaningful commonalities in the challenges of interpreting

Indigenous and British colonial histories faced by interpreters within both projects. I argue that the breadth of this term is essential to study *Mayflower 400* and the *Histories Curriculum*, which both engaged heritage workers, including curators, volunteer guides, school outreach teams, and front-of-house staff, as well as schoolteachers, teaching assistants, government officials and Indigenous advisors who advised both schools and heritage sites. By using the term ‘interpreter’, I further acknowledge that each partner related to these histories differently and engaged in the challenging work of navigating multiple, often conflicting, historical narratives.

While I argue that the term ‘historical interpreter’ best describes the breadth of educators newly engaged in these national projects, I recognise that there are meaningful professional and pedagogical differences between heritage practice and school-based teaching. Through ethnographic analysis, I explore the distinct experiences of classroom teachers, managing curriculum expectations with a young audience through consistent, long-term engagement, in contrast to heritage workers, who prepare their knowledge for fleeting interactions with local and international audiences. This comparison is made possible by recognising each participant, irrespective of their background or role, as a historical interpreter and vital to the success of *Mayflower 400* and the *Histories Curriculum*. I draw on a growing body of heritage studies, recognising that a network of professional and volunteer roles shapes the historical interpretations shared by heritage sites.⁴ Drawing on hospitality studies, Geesje Duursma et al. argue that a significant and overlooked network of volunteers are instrumental in shaping the affective experiences of visitors in heritage sites.⁵ Volunteers include front of house staff, tour guides, as well as behind-the-scenes workers taking on tasks such as ‘documentation, conservation and research’.⁶ School classrooms are similarly comprised of a diverse group of actors and influences.⁷ As I explore throughout this thesis, the *Histories*

⁴ C.V. Horie, ‘Who is a curator?’ *International Journal of Museum Management and Curatorship* 5 (1986):267-272; Geesje Duursma et al., ‘The role of volunteers in creating hospitality: Insights from museums,’ *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management* 54 (March, 2023): 373-382; Jonathon Haas, ‘The Changing Role of the Curator,’ *Fieldiana. Anthropology* no. 36 (September 30, 2003): 237-242; Kirsten Holmes, ‘Volunteers in the heritage sector: a neglected audience?’ *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 9, no. 4 (2003).

⁵ Duursma et al., ‘The role of volunteers’.

⁶ Holmes, ‘Volunteers in the heritage sector,’ 342.

⁷ See studies by Aotearoa teachers, participants of this thesis, who examine the multiplicity of influences on their teaching practice; Harcourt, ‘New Zealand’s difficult history’; Michael Harcourt, Gregor Fountain, and Mark Sheehan, “Historical significance and sites of memory,” *Set: Research Information for Teachers*, no. 2 (2011): 26-31; Tom Brooking and Paul Enright, ‘Taking the Anglo and Euro Out of Centric: A Discussion on the Long Battle to make New Zealand History Compulsory in Schools,’ *New Zealand Journal of History* 55, no. 2 (October, 2021): 134-155.

Curriculum engaged a hugely broad network of interpreters, academics, heritage workers and government officials who supported teachers, as well as teachers seconded into government roles and new Māori and Pākehā (non-Indigenous New Zealander) partnership structures.

As I do in this thesis, anthropologist and museologist Sharon McDonald employs a broader term, ‘history worker’, to acknowledge the breadth of roles that make up the historical messaging and shape visitor experience at heritage sites.⁸ She defines ‘history workers’ as those ‘who are involved in presenting the past in the public realm’.⁹ Within this term she includes curators, tour guides and historical educators outside of the heritage site, including tourist information workers, government ministers and journalists. As with my use of ‘historical interpreter’, McDonald’s use of the term ‘history worker’ makes the argument that a network of actors, from varied professional backgrounds, are engaged in historical education that shapes public understanding. As with McDonald’s account, my ethnographic methodology, with long-form interviews and ethnographic vignettes, reveals the distinct identities of *Mayflower 400* and the *History Curriculum*’s interpreters, while identifying and analysing meaningful shared experiences.

1.1 Layout of the Thesis

This thesis comprises three sections. In the first part, consisting of this chapter and the following two chapters, I introduce my case studies and contextualise my research. Ahead of this ‘Introduction’, I have established historical interpretation as an affective, complex practice through my interview with Andrew. This thesis is an ethnographic research project, and I begin all my chapters, excluding the third and conclusion, with ethnographic vignettes. These larger scenes, taken from my fieldnotes, share my participants’ perspectives and continually orient my analysis towards my participants’ experiences. Within this chapter, I provide a contextual overview of *Mayflower 400* and the *Histories Curriculum*, ambitious, cross-national projects that engaged new audiences in the learning and interpreting of British colonial and Indigenous histories.

⁸ Sharon Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond* (Routledge, 2008).

⁹ Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage*, 21.

Chapter two, 'Contested Histories' is in two parts. Firstly, I introduce the histories these projects interpreted. I highlight a key challenge confronting *Mayflower 400* and the *Histories Curriculum*'s interpreters, as these histories are violent, sensitive and have harmful, ongoing legacies; yet, in their dominant interpretations, they have been sanitised and mythologised. Within the second half of the chapter, I situate my research within a diverse body of work examining such contested histories. Throughout my thesis, I analyse literature in conversation with my field sites and participants' personal experiences. I was inspired by writer Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Mississauga Nishnaabeg) who defined theory within Nishnaabeg thought:

"Theory" isn't just an intellectual pursuit – it is woven within kinetics, spiritual presence and emotion, it is contextual and relational. It is intimate and personal, with individuals themselves holding the responsibilities for finding and generating meaning within their own lives.¹⁰

By examining relevant literature within my chapters, I identify and produce 'theory' that is 'contextual and relational' and specific to this research and its networks of participants.¹¹ Within chapter three, 'Understanding the Field(s), an Analysis of Methods,' I present my Indigenous studies methodology. I detail the specific cross-disciplinary methods that I borrowed and synthesised for my transdisciplinary research. I make an original methodological contribution through my Collaborative Consent Process, inspired by the technology of the wampum belt. It is through this process that I embed relationship-building and accountability into this thesis.

Within the second part of this thesis, comprised of three chapters, I explore historical interpretation work as an affective practice. In chapter four, 'Defining Affect within Historical Interpreters Practice', I establish a definition of affect that emerges from, and is 'intimate and personal' to, the experiences of Indigenous and non-Indigenous historical interpreters working in partnership.¹² Within chapter five 'An Absence of Knowledge and Affective Amnesia', I explore the experiences of non-Indigenous, English and Pākehā, historical interpreters. I show that their historical understanding was deeply shaped by colonial amnesia, a profound absence of knowledge of colonial history, colonial nostalgia, a

¹⁰ Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, 'Land as Pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation,' *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 3, no. 3 (2014): 7.

¹¹ Simpson, 'Land as Pedagogy,' 7.

¹² Simpson, 'Land as Pedagogy,' 7.

persistence of sanitised, positive accounts of colonial history, and an affective detachment from this history. I develop the term 'affective amnesia' to describe non-Indigenous interpreters' detached affective relationship with British colonial and Indigenous histories. I examine their transformative affective experience confronting these histories as sensitive, urgent, and living through Indigenous partnership. In chapter six, 'The Work of Indigenous Historical Interpreters and the Need for "heavy shoulders"', I explore the unequal demands placed on Indigenous interpreters. Through Mashpee Wampanoag participant Darius Coombs's theory of "heavy shoulders," I analyse the unique affective challenge of Indigenous interpreters' practice and demonstrate the urgency of the Indigenous interpreter's work, which has the potential to improve the contemporary treatment of Indigenous peoples. I also show the risks that the weights of interpretation overburden the Indigenous interpreter, or that their interpretation is misrepresented to reinforce colonial historical narratives that harm their communities.¹³ I argue that "heavy shoulders" can expand theories of 'difficult heritage' or difficult histories, by attending to the unique affective experiences of those who interpret histories that are deeply personal and affect their everyday lives.¹⁴

In the third and final section of this thesis, I reflect on my findings. In my 'Conclusion' I identify areas for further research and consider the impact of the English and Aotearoa Culture Wars on *Mayflower 400* and the *Histories Curriculum*. I then present a 'Key Recommendations' guide for non-Indigenous heritage workers and teachers, based on my research. This can be read independently of my thesis. Within the guide, I present five actionable steps to sensitively develop Indigenous–non-Indigenous partnerships for the accurate and nuanced interpretation of British colonial and Indigenous histories. Throughout this thesis, I intend to encourage such vital interpretive partnerships, in wholehearted agreement with Andrew's statement, "you have to understand it to know where we are now. You have to understand it to help us change it now."

1.2 Reflective Statement: The Worn-out Trailer

I was inspired to conduct this research by my experiences as a historical interpreter intern at Plimoth Patuxet (previously Plimoth Plantation), a living history Museum in Massachusetts,

¹³ Darius Coombs, 'Challenging perceptions of Wampanoag culture,' *Mayflower 400*, accessed May 12, 2025. <https://www.mayflower400uk.org/education/challenging-perceptions-of-wampanoag-culture>.

¹⁴ Sharon Macdonald, 'Is "Difficult Heritage" Still "Difficult"?' *Museum International* 67, no. 1-4 (2015): 6-22. <https://doi.org/10.1111/muse.12078>; Sharon Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage*.

Turtle Island. At the Museum, heritage professionals and volunteer guides interpret distinct historical perspectives in two living history sites: a seventeenth-century English colonial village, where American interpreters carefully re-enact the life of specific Mayflower passengers, and the Wampanoag Homesite, where Indigenous interpreters from local Nations interpret the Wampanoag's historical perspective and their own contemporary culture. It was there, during three internships from 2007 to 2017, that I began to develop this thesis's research questions. Standing outside a wetu (traditional Wampanoag home), speaking to hundreds of visitors a day, I encountered the affective challenge of interpreting British colonial and Indigenous histories. I assembled my reflections below, pulled from old fieldnotes that were scribbled in the brief pauses between visitors' questions:

I step into the worn-out trailer, age thirteen, on my first internship at the Museum. This 'staff room' is covered in carefully and lovingly woven bags, hand-sewn buckskin quivers and fired clay pots. Their creators, historical interpreters from the Wampanoag and other local Indigenous Nations (Shinnecock and Narragansett) bump into one another as they prepare berry tea, shuck corn, and slip on their buckskin moccasinash [plural of moccasin]. Danielle, my work experience manager, introduces me, an overwhelmed English teenager, warmly to the team. After I smile and say hello, she hands me an armful of furs, luxuriously soft, and we head down to the Wampanoag Homesite. I follow.

Down the hill from the trailer, the Wampanoag Homesite opens into a planting field with an awning by a growing fire. There are two wetu; a summer wetu near the lake, made of mats of pale cattail reeds, and a much larger winter wetu by the trees, with a carefully bent cedar frame covered in rugged bark. As we reach the winter wetu, we dip through the low entrance and push aside the deer skin door. I move with significantly less grace than Danielle – ducking too close to the furs I am carrying and sneezing. I right myself and look around. The wetu is expansive, curved like an overturned mishoon [dugout canoe]. It is warm and homely, with the amber glow of two fires dancing on crisp white animal furs. Copying Danielle, I approach the benches that wrap around the inside edge of the wetu and begin covering them with the furs. Danielle turns to stoke the fire

and then leaves, perhaps to tend to the planting field, or work on the mishoon.

I meet the American interpreters of the English Colonial Village away from the Homesite, along a dusty path. They are welcoming and laugh loudly with one another as they don the many layers of clothing the seventeenth-century colonists would have worn. In a spacious staff room, resembling a student common room, they drink tea and slip into petticoats, stays and britches. Every layer had been custom-made by the Museum's costume department. The interpreters transform into English colonial figures. They have received accent classes, training in specific historical actors' life stories and their Separatist beliefs.¹⁵ They adopt well-practised seventeenth-century Nottinghamshire accents as they answer visitors' questions in character. After work they tease me warmly "when I hear you speak with your English accent, I keep thinking you've forgotten to stop interpreting."

On my final internship in 2016, I wash pots in the worn-out trailer as the Indigenous interpreters discuss the unionisation of their American colleagues on the English Colonial Village. The American interpreters were quoting poor pay and working conditions.¹⁶ They spoke out against a lack of recognition of the mental and physical challenge of their work, standing alone in dusty, smoke-filled houses, vulnerable to visitors' abuse.¹⁷

During my first internship, I started to understand the hard, physical work that goes into preparing a site and interpreting British colonial history for thousands of visitors daily. During

¹⁵ Just under half of the Mayflower passengers were Separatists who were pursuing a radical separation from the Church of England in the belief that God could be worshiped outside of the Church. See Stephen Brachlow, 'John Robinson and the Lure of Separatism in Re-Revolutionary England,' *Church History* 50, no. 3 (September 1981): 289.

¹⁶ Emily Clark, 'Newly unionized Plimoth Plantation workers plan to hold rally Sunday,' *The Patriot Ledger*, August 26, 2017, accessed June 3, 2025, <https://eu.patriotledger.com/story/news/2017/08/26/newly-unionized-plimoth-plantation-workers/19219818007>.

¹⁷ Clark, 'Newly unionized Plimoth Plantation.'

my final internship, I began grappling with the intellectual and emotional challenge of this interpretive work.

In the English Colonial Village, American interpreters worked long hours under challenging conditions, attempting to actively engage visitors who were unsure what questions to ask or who firmly believed in a mythologised view of this history. However, for the Indigenous interpreters on the Wampanoag Homesite their interpretive work was even more intellectually and affectively challenging. They did not put on a character; they represented themselves. Visitors directed questions to them personally: “What do you eat?”, “Where did your people live?” As few visitors understand the diversity of Indigenous Nations, they expected the interpreter to answer questions about the cultures and histories of nations hundreds of miles away. Indigenous interpreters also fielded questions on more than 10,000 years of history. They navigated questions that recycled harmful stereotypes or were explicitly racist: “Are you sure you’re a real Indian?”, “Do you all have casinos?” “Are your people warlike or peaceful?” “Did you used to just roll around in the dirt?” While I witnessed a strong sense of community and knowledge sharing between staff on the Wampanoag Homesite, I saw that they received significantly less support and training from Museum management than the American interpreters in the English Colonial Village. Indigenous interpreters were expected to already have extensive lifeways skills, to do a huge amount of self-led historical research and supply their own clothing and material culture items such as quivers, pots and bags. I visited a member of staff at the Museum in 2022, during my PhD research:

The Wampanoag have called a public boycott. They are protesting the Museum’s fall from a bi-cultural space where Wampanoag artisans taught younger generations, and where visitors could be re-educated on a misunderstood history. The site has fallen from 10 or more Wampanoag interpreters to one or two, and the winter wetu walls are rotting through. As I walk around, I cannot find the worn-out trailer, the Wampanoag Homesite staffroom. An Indigenous interpreter explains that a fire had broken out and the blaze had destroyed the clothing and material culture items they had made and some they had been gifted by family. While the Museum paid for the damages, I am struck that those meaningful objects were only in the trailer because Indigenous interpreters are required to provide in their own clothing and material culture.

All the Wampanoag partners of *Mayflower 400* and all my North American Indigenous participants had worked at Plimoth Patuxet Museum. The exclusivity of this group of interpreters speaks to the enormous and, as I argue in chapter six, uneven requirements for knowledge and skills placed on Indigenous interpreters within historical education projects. Through my work at the Museum, I saw the importance of on-site historical interpretation for shaping public understandings of British colonial and Indigenous history. I was, myself, wildly ill-prepared for this historical interpretation work as I had never been taught England's colonial history. After my first internship I returned to school in England and presented what I had learnt about British colonial and Indigenous histories. I was met with a sea of blank faces, those of my classmates and teachers. I began to experience the underexamined intellectual and affective complexity of the work of interpreting these forgotten and contested histories. I also began to see the unique challenge of this work for Indigenous interpreters.

1.3 *Mayflower 400*: An Overview

To provide a contextual overview of *Mayflower 400*, I will first describe the goals and actions of Plymouth Council, England, which founded and provided the headquarters for the multi-sited UK project. I will then present the project's partnership with the Turtle Island Wampanoag Nations. In doing so, I introduce the relationships and expectations that shaped the work of Indigenous and non-Indigenous historical interpreters. Plymouth's historical connection to the Mayflower was by chance, as the ship first left from Southampton and only returned to Plymouth because an accompanying vessel needed repairs. Plymouth invested heavily in the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower voyage, building *Mayflower 400* as an umbrella organisation over six years to operate an extraordinarily ambitious multi-sited events and heritage programme. Members of Plymouth City Council proposed the idea of investing in the anniversary of the 1620 Mayflower voyage at a meeting in 2016. Plymouth had narrowly lost their bid for 'City of Culture', a scheme operated by the British Government's Department for Culture, Media and Sport.¹⁸ The winning 'City of Culture' is supported to host a year-long programme of activities and events; it is a highly competitive opportunity to attract domestic and international investment. For Plymouth, which has areas of deprivation in the top 1% nationally, the scheme could have offered much-needed

¹⁸ 'Collection UK City of Culture 2025,' *Gov.uk*, updated August 13, 2021, accessed August 12, 2025, <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-city-of-culture-2025>.

regeneration.¹⁹ Charles, CEO of *Mayflower 400*, explained that the City leaders, “disappointed by their loss, said we will do it anyway - sod it! We will use the Mayflower’s 400th anniversary to do this.” Charles shared that members of Plymouth Council were confident the Mayflower voyage had the scope to “inspire” and build community pride, engage international audiences, and generate significant economic value. As such, *Mayflower 400* was built by Plymouth City Council, working alongside the tourism board, ‘Destination Plymouth’, to produce a ‘city of culture moment.’²⁰ The project sought to attract ‘1.4 million visitors’ and the goal for economic impact would be ‘in excess of £76 million’ and the creation of ‘around 2,000 jobs’.²¹ In particular, *Mayflower 400* organisers were hopeful they could engage descendants of the Mayflower passengers, now numbering 35 million, as well as a wider American audience because of the Mayflower’s connections to the annual Thanksgiving celebrations, which I discuss in chapter two.²²

Charles described *Mayflower 400* as a “network of networks”. Although headquartered in Plymouth, the organisation was built to support eleven English partner destinations across England. In Plymouth alone, *Mayflower 400* worked with 2,800 businesses, stakeholders, tour operators and local authorities.²³ The sheer number of stakeholders is illustrated in the opening page of *400 Plymouth: Final Evaluation October 2021*, which details the ‘Sponsors and Supporters’ for Plymouth alone:

¹⁹ Plymouth City Council, *City Centre – Key Facts and Figures* (Plymouth City Council, January 2023), <https://democracy.plymouth.gov.uk/documents/s137103>.

²⁰ Amelia Mulcahey, ‘Genesis Story for the USA or the Beginning of the End: The Work of Mobilising the Mayflower Narrative in its 400th Commemorative Year,’ (master’s diss., University of Durham, 2021), 46, <https://etheses.dur.ac.uk/13882/1/Mulcahey000852119.pdf>.

²¹ WTM Team ‘WTM London helps Mayflower 400 prepare for 2020 anniversary,’ *WTM Global hub*, updated September 7, 2017, accessed August 1, 2025, <https://hub.wtm.com/exhibitor-news-2017/wtm-london-helps-mayflower400-prepare-for-2020-anniversary>.

²² Nathan Gower, ‘Mayflower 400 years: How many people are related to the Mayflower pilgrims?’ *BBC News*, August 7, 2021, accessed August 1, 2025, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-57698818>.

²³ Charles Hackett, ‘The Mayflower 400 anniversary’ (powerpoint presentation, Plymouth, 2019), accessed June 8, 2025, <https://www.visitplymouth.co.uk/dbimgs/DP%20Member%20presentation%20June%202019%20-%20Charles%20.pdf>.

Sponsors and Supporters

National sponsors, funding partners and supporters:



Plymouth founders:



Plymouth sponsors:



Local delivery partners:



With thanks to:

POP+	New Continental Hotel	Plymouth Gin
Duke of Cornwall Hotel	Plymouth Albion RFC	Roger Young
Timebank South West	Plymouth Raiders	Specialist Vehicles
Building Plymouth	PricewaterhouseCoopers	Burgh Island Hotel
National Marine Aquarium	PKF Francis Clark	Thomas Westcott Chartered Accountants
Plymouth Leander Swimming Club	Co-op Funeralcare	Applied Automation
Institution of Civil Engineers	Bishop Fleming	Sunrise Windows
Greenbeanz Photography	IQ Mobile UK	Moortec
Plymouth Pavilions	Shield Media Services	Paul Burton Media

Figure 1. Illustration of Sponsors and Supporters for *Mayflower 400* Plymouth, England

From *Mayflower 400, Mayflower 400 Plymouth: Final Evaluation October 2021* (Mayflower 400, 2021), 2, accessed April 8, 2025, <https://democracy.plymouth.gov.uk/documents/s127081/Mayflower>.

With the support of these sponsors, *Mayflower 400* operated an enormous breadth of events and activities, including a guided walk across the UK, museum exhibitions, theatrical productions, classroom and school trip activities, and local sports events. These cross-England partnerships then sat within a four-way international partnership involving Mayflower commemorative organisations in Turtle Island (Plymouth 400), the Netherlands (Leiden400), and members of the Wampanoag Nations. As I detail in chapter two, the Wampanoag Nations are profoundly connected to the Mayflower voyage as the ship's passengers built a colony in their territory. Given this breadth of partners and stakeholders, the boundaries of *Mayflower 400* are difficult to capture. Within chapter three, I evaluate the methodological literature that supported the definition of my fieldsite.

The *Mayflower 400* international partnerships were an astute strategic move, as Plymouth sought to encourage international visitors, drive investment and position the City within a global history. Charles explained that it would be meaningful for locals that “People from your tiny village shaped the world, even if it was not 100% good or bad. We can inspire people with interconnectedness.”²⁴ As I discuss in the following chapters, *Mayflower 400* organisers acknowledged that they began the project with a lack of understanding of the historical details and the contested nature of these histories. As I will detail, *Mayflower 400* volunteers and staff stressed that the Wampanoag partnership transformed and improved their understanding of the Mayflower histories, and profoundly shaped the historical interpretations they shared across *Mayflower 400* events, heritage activities and educational materials.

Although *Mayflower 400*’s English interpreters emphasised the importance of the Wampanoag partnership, it was unplanned and developed in an unstructured way. Curator and Content Producer for *Mayflower 400*, Jo Loosemore, a key participant in this thesis, explained that the partnership came about following *Mayflower 400*’s efforts, in 2015 or 2016, to work closely with the Turtle Island Mayflower commemorative events organisation, Plymouth 400. As this English-American partnership developed, *Mayflower 400* were introduced to Plymouth 400’s Wampanoag Advisory Committee, made up of two experienced Mashpee and Aquinnah Wampanoag historical interpreters. Jo, who was one of the key drivers of the English-Wampanoag relationship, explained that despite her interest in developing a partnership, at the time there was “no real plan”. The relationship evolved over the following five years to involve a larger group of Wampanoag interpreters from three of the Wampanoag Nations, the Mashpee, Aquinnah and Herring Pond Nations. This partnership supported the development of an extensive and multi-sited heritage and events offering: two museum exhibitions; the production of a new cooking pot and wampum belt; a cultural performance in Plymouth, England; the building and onsite interpretation of a traditional Wampanoag home at the Bassetlaw Museum, Nottinghamshire; and a large volume of videos and written histories for the *Mayflower 400* website.

Initially, the *Mayflower 400* marketing information described the Wampanoag partnership as an essential modernisation of the dominant Mayflower history into a nuanced multi-

²⁴ Mulcahey, ‘The Beginning of the End,’ 46.

perspective interpretation. After the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020, Plymouth Council upheld the partnership as proof of Plymouth's commitment to stand 'against any form of discrimination or oppression'.²⁵ As of June 11, 2025, the language on the *Mayflower 400* website, which Charles described as a "living document", had become far more explicit about the violent legacies of colonial history. The home page of the website reads:

Mayflower 400 UK is an honest, broad and inclusive commemoration of the ship's sailing from England to America and its often-challenging legacy... The ambitious cultural programme highlighted the experiences of different ethnic groups both in history and today, working in tandem with the Wampanoag Nation, the very people who once stood alongside the Mayflower's passengers but eventually saw their lands and homes brutally taken from them.²⁶

These evolving documents speak to the complexity of historical interpretation work within a multi-stakeholder environment. The scope of *Mayflower 400* resulted in the engagement of a broad group of English interpreters, who would be newly engaging in partnership building with the Wampanoag Nations and interpreting British Colonial and Indigenous histories, often for the first time. The initial goals of Plymouth Council did not foresee the complexity of this work for historical interpreters, who would be engaging in histories that were deeply mythologised and contested.

1.4 The *Histories Curriculum*: An Overview

The *Histories Curriculum* was mandated by the Aotearoa New Zealand Labour Government. It is a nationwide curriculum change that required teachers to interpret Māori and Pākehā histories for students aged five to fourteen.²⁷ Then Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, announced the *Histories Curriculum* in September 2019, to the surprise of those that campaigned for it.²⁸ The *Histories Curriculum* preceded the complete curriculum refresh

²⁵ 'Plymouth Stands in Solidarity with Black Lives Matters.' *Plymouth.GOV.UK*, June 4, 2020, accessed June 1, 2025, <https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/news/plymouth-stands-solidarity-black-lives-matter>.

²⁶ 'Exploring the Mayflower anniversary from multiple angles.' *Mayflower 400*, accessed June 11, 2025, <https://www.mayflower400uk.org>.

²⁷ 'Introducing Aotearoa New Zealand's histories,' *Te Poutāhū Curriculum Centre*, accessed April 8, 2025, <https://aotearoahistories.education.govt.nz/about/content-structure>.

²⁸ The New Zealand Historical Association, 'Discussion of Aotearoa New Zealand's Histories: Draft Curriculum,' accessed April 3, 2025, <https://nzha.org.nz/discussion-of-draft-history-curriculum>.

expected in 2026.²⁹ This earlier release was presented by Ardern and the Ministry of Education (MoE) as reflecting the urgent need to teach Aotearoa’s children their histories: ‘histories learning that can’t be left to chance’.³⁰ The mandated *Histories Curriculum* marked three significant changes in direction for Aotearoa’s educational ideology and structure. Firstly, the *Histories Curriculum* presented an ideological shift from a fiercely neoliberal educational structure that gave teachers almost complete ‘curriculum autonomy’.³¹ Secondly, the *Histories Curriculum* marked a dramatic change to the traditional incorporation of history into a broader social science subject area, to ensure students learnt historical skills and topics which could otherwise be overlooked. Thirdly, the new *Histories Curriculum* required that schools engage with tangata whenua (the people of the land) in the production of their historical interpretations.³² In chapters five and six, I describe the impact these changes had on the experiences of historical interpreters. Here, I seek to emphasise that the *Histories Curriculum* was perceived by scholars, many teachers, and the MoE, as breaking from ‘a long history of “forgetting” the Nation’s contentious and conflictual past’, and of not teaching Aotearoa history to ākonga (students).³³ In many cases for the first time, primary and high school teachers across Aotearoa were tasked with teaching the bi-cultural histories of their Nation. ‘Histories’ in the plural speaks to the *Histories Curriculum*’s mandate to teach multiple historical perspectives that reflect the bi-cultural (Māori and Pākehā) and multi-cultural diversity of Aotearoa. The *Histories Curriculum* utilised a progression-focused model prescribing the same four ‘big ideas’ each year.³⁴ The 2021 draft described the *Histories Curriculum*’s intent to ‘gradually deepen their understanding of the [four big] ideas as their knowledge of national, rohe [territory], and local contexts grows’.³⁵ The four ‘big ideas’ were fundamentally bi-cultural.³⁶ They were: ‘Māori history is the foundational and continuous history of Aotearoa New Zealand’; ‘Colonisation and settlement have been

²⁹ Graham McPhail, Barbara Ormond, and Alexis Siteine, ‘Knowledge and the New Zealand curriculum ‘refresh’,’ *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 55, no. 5 (Sep 2023): 511, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2023.2256010>.

³⁰ Rangahau Mātauranga o Aotearoa, *New Zealand Council for Educational Research Aotearoa New Zealand’s histories Findings from the public engagement on the draft curriculum content* (NZCER, 2021), 3.

³¹ Harcourt, ‘New Zealand’s difficult history,’ 2.

³² In this case tangata whenua refers to iwi who have land rights in that area.

³³ Avril Bell and Elizabeth Russell, ‘Aotearoa New Zealand’s New National History Curriculum and Histories of Mourning,’ *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies* 57 (2022): 21; Te Poutāhū Curriculum Centre, ‘Introducing Aotearoa New Zealand’s histories.’

³⁴ ‘Content structure,’ *Te Poutāhū Curriculum Centre*, accessed July 31, 2025, <https://aotearoahistories.education.govt.nz/about/content-structure>.

³⁵ Ministry of Education, *Aotearoa New Zealand’s Histories in the New Zealand Curriculum Draft for Consultation* (Ministry of Education, 2021), 3.

³⁶ Te Poutāhū Curriculum Centre, ‘Content structure.’

central to Aotearoa New Zealand’s histories for the past 200 years’; ‘The course of Aotearoa New Zealand’s history has been shaped by the use [in previous versions ‘and misuse’] of power’, and ‘Relationships and connections between people and across boundaries have shaped the course of Aotearoa New Zealand’s histories.’³⁷ Measurable achievements were laid out in the draft to guide learning expectations across two-year ‘phases of learning’.³⁸ The MoE asked teachers to ‘weave’ together three elements: ‘Understand’, ‘Know’ and ‘Do’.

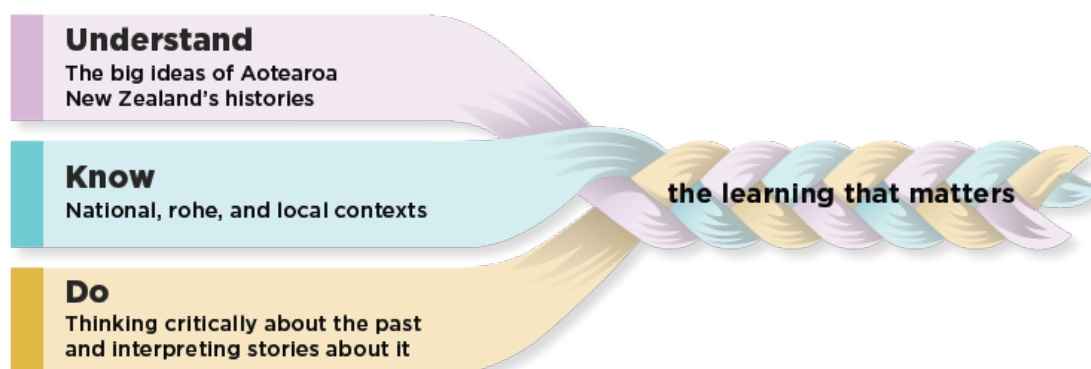


Figure 2. The Three Interconnected Elements of Learning in the Histories Curriculum

From Te Poutāhū Curriculum Centre, ‘Content structure,’ Te Poutāhū Curriculum Centre, accessed July 31, 2025, <https://aotearoahistories.education.govt.nz/about/content-structure>.

As a result of the *Histories Curriculum*, ākonga would be expected to move through school with a growing understanding of the ‘big ideas’ (Understand), a command of significant local events and of prescribed national events (Know), and have the ability to practice historical skills such as source identification and interpretation (Do).

Despite an intended implementation date of 2023, during my online interviews and then fieldwork, from July to April 2023, the *Histories Curriculum* was still in its preparatory stages. This delay was principally due to the disruptions of the Covid-19 pandemic.³⁹ However, in my interviews designers of the *Histories Curriculum* stressed that they needed time to support significant demands from teachers for training, teacher and iwi (tribe) resourcing, and new iwi partnership building. As I discuss in chapter six, iwi expressed concerns about their limited involvement in the consultation process and the potential of being overwhelmed by requests from schools. As the roll out of the *Histories Curriculum*

³⁷ Te Poutāhū Curriculum Centre, ‘Content structure.’ Section in square brackets was present when accessed on March 31, 2025. <https://aotearoahistories.education.govt.nz/about/content-structure>.

³⁸ Te Poutāhū Curriculum Centre, ‘Content structure.’

³⁹ Jody O’Callaghan, ‘Teaching of New Zealand history in schools delayed by a year,’ *Stuff*, January 26, 2022, accessed July 6, 2025, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/pou-tiaki/127595620/teaching-of-new-zealand-history-in-schools-delayed-by-a-year>.

began in 2023, primary and secondary school kaiako (educators) across the country grappled, in some cases for the first time, with the hard work of interpreting their Nation's colonial and Indigenous histories.

1.5 Statement of Thesis

This thesis details the collaborative and participatory work between Indigenous and non-Indigenous historical interpreters, examining how national and local political, cultural, and historical contexts shape these relationships. *Mayflower 400* and the *Histories Curriculum* provide rich comparative case studies to examine the challenging and affective practice of interpreting British colonial and Indigenous histories. Through an ethnographic investigation of the affective experience of historical interpreters within these partnerships, I identify cross-culturally reoccurring challenges facing British colonial and Indigenous histories education in England and Aotearoa. In this section, I will establish my key research questions, their significance, and briefly discuss the theoretical frameworks with which they engage.

A central question of this thesis is how does an interpreters' Indigenous or non-Indigenous identity shape their experience of historical interpretation? This question meaningfully engages in the distinct challenges faced by interpreters of British colonial and Indigenous histories, and the overlooked affective weight for Indigenous interpreters, who are interpreting personal histories with ongoing harm. This question arises from social and cultural theories of affective practice, which argue that affect is shaped by personal and cultural background, and works to create the self and other.⁴⁰ I argue that historical interpretation is an affective practice to which Indigenous and non-Indigenous professionals bring distinct affective repertoires. Drawing on the theory of 'emotional repertoires' proposed by anthropologist Anita Von Poser et al., I show that affect is developed through repeated practice and expression and shaped by personal background and culture.⁴¹ Through my fieldwork in Aotearoa, Turtle Island, and England, I demonstrate that collaborative historical

⁴⁰ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh University Press, 2004); Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (Routledge, 2000); Laurajane Smith, Margaret Wetherell, and Gary Campbell, *Emotion, Affective Practice, and the Past in the Present* (Routledge, 2018); Zembylas, 'Understanding the Emotional Regimes of Reconciliation in Engagement with 'difficult' Heritage.' In *Emotion, Affective Practices, and the Past in the Present* (Routledge, 2018): 198-208; Zembylas, "Structures of Feeling" in *Curriculum and Teaching: Theorizing the Emotional Rules*, *Educational Theory* 52, no. 2 (2005): 187.

⁴¹ Anita Von Poser et al., 'Emotion Repertoires' in *Affective Societies*, edited by Jan Slaby and Christian von Scheve (Routledge, 2019): 241-252.

interpretations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous interpreters involve a collision of distinct affective repertoires. I argue that these affective repertoires profoundly shape how Indigenous and non-Indigenous interpreters understand British colonial and Indigenous histories. The contribution of this thesis is to show the implications of these differences for collaborative work between Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners.

Throughout this thesis, I argue that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous interpreters engage in challenging yet distinct affective work. Non-Indigenous perceptions of British colonial history within my field sites have been characterised by colonial nostalgia or amnesia.⁴² The dominance of these theories led me to initially propose the research question: how does a lack of knowledge of the details of colonial history shape interpreters' experience within Indigenous and non-Indigenous partnerships? However, my ethnographic research revealed that a detached affective relationship with British Colonial and Indigenous histories commonly disrupted partnerships. A lack of a sense of this history as living, sensitive, and harmful meaningfully disrupts historical understanding; however, my research shows that this can be addressed and transformed to encourage a critical engagement with present-day colonial inequalities. I therefore argue that a central, and overlooked, challenge of interpreters' practice is their work to drive affective engagement with British colonial and Indigenous histories. For Indigenous interpreters, this involves advocating for the contemporary significance of histories that continue to shape their everyday lives. As a result, my second research question became, 'how does an absence of affective attachment to colonial history come to shape interpreters' experience within Indigenous and non-Indigenous partnerships?' I propose that by examining the distinct weights that Indigenous and non-Indigenous historical interpreters carry, we can better understand how British colonial history is suppressed and forgotten.

⁴² Ella Creamer, 'UK within British empire is like last person left at a party, says David Olusoga,' *The Guardian*, June 2, 2024, accessed August 2, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/article/2024/jun/02/uk-british-empire-david-olusoga-hay-festival>; Kevin Bruyneel, 'The trouble with amnesia: Collective memory and colonial injustice in the United States,' in *Political Creativity: The Mangle of Institutional Order, Agency and Change*, ed., Gerald Berk, Dennis Galvan, and Victoria Hattam (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013). Nadine El Enany, "Things Fall Apart: From Empire to Brexit," *University of Bath*, May 2, 2017; Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia* (Columbia: University Press, 2004); Peter Mitchell, *Imperial Nostalgia How The British Conquered Themselves* (Manchester University Press, 2021); Race in Britain, 'Britain's Colonial Amnesia – Dr Kojo Koram,' YouTube, September 9, 2018, Video, 44 min., 31 sec., <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XBO6N7ROZ9E>; Joanna Kidman et al., *Fragments from a Contested Past Remembrance, Denial and New Zealand History* (Bridget Williams Books, 2022)

An examination of the experiences of historical interpreters offers a complicated, neglected, and, I argue, enriching addition to theories of difficult histories and ‘difficult heritage’.⁴³ These theories have dominated the analysis of the teaching and learning of British colonial and Indigenous histories in heritage sites and schools.⁴⁴ My third research question is, how does British colonial history come to be understood as contested or difficult history by the historical interpreter? ‘Difficult heritage’ and histories have been defined as historical events, ‘recognised as meaningful in the present’ but ‘contested and awkward’ to a ‘self-affirming’ national identity.⁴⁵ Through this theory, the dominance of positive, sanitised narratives is understood to alleviate the difficulty of violent history and heritage to the nation. I argue that such a definition can overlook the difficulty of those positive and sanitised narratives to Indigenous communities whose histories and experiences they erase. I further propose that the perception of British colonial history as ‘difficult heritage’ or history is contested.⁴⁶ My ethnography demonstrates that a major challenge for historical interpreters is persuading others that a celebrated history has, in fact, caused lasting harm. Through my thesis, I highlight the distinct challenges faced by Indigenous interpreters, so that non-Indigenous partners may recognise and support more equitable collaboration.

⁴³ Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage*; Macdonald, “Is ‘Difficult Heritage’,”; Maia G. Sheppard, ‘Difficult Histories in an Urban Classroom’ (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 2010). <https://hdl.handle.net/11299/94166>.

⁴⁴ Britta Timm Knudsen and Casper Andersen, ‘Affective politics and colonial heritage, Rhodes Must Fall at UCT and Oxford,’ *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 25, no. 3 (2019): 239-258, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2018.1481134>; Harcourt, ‘New Zealand’s difficult history,’; Magdalena H. Gross and Luke Terra, ed., *Teaching and Learning the Difficult Past Comparative Perspectives* (Routledge, 2019); Sheppard, ‘Difficult Histories,’; Terrie Epstein and Carla L. Peck, ed., *Teaching and Learning Difficult Histories in International Contexts: A Critical Sociocultural Approach* (Routledge, 2017); Zembylas, ‘Teacher resistance to engage with ‘alternative’ perspectives of difficult histories: the limits and prospects of affective disruption,’ *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 5, no. 38 (2017): 659-675.

⁴⁵ Macdonald. *Difficult Heritage*, 13.

⁴⁶ Macdonald. *Difficult Heritage*.

Chapter Two Vignette: Rangiriri Pā Site, Aotearoa

I am coming to the end of my time in the Waikato region of Aotearoa. My gaze skates across the rolling hills as we drive through Ngāti Naho's rohe [territory] and over the meandering Waikato awa [river]. Ngāti Naho are a hapū [subtribe] of Waikato Tainui iwi [tribe].

Kelly, my host, explains, "I wanted to bring you to the Rangiriri pā as soon as you said you would stay with us. Though I really wish we could have done one of the Ngāti Naho tours."

Kelly is an intermediate schoolteacher at a local school and is enthusiastic about teaching Aotearoa's histories.¹ During my three-week stay, she attends meetings with Indigenous advisors from multiple local hapū, takes te reo Māori [Māori language] classes and talks passionately about iwi-run teacher training programmes, including the training she attended at this site. She stresses that her experience touring the site with members of Ngāti Naho had left a lasting impression and changed her understanding of the area.

We are climbing out of the car as Kelly points to the tops of two beautifully carved pou whenua [land markers] which mark the entrances of the recreated pā site, a complex 'fortified enclosure' made of tunnels and trenches.² Pā were built by hapū and iwi across Aotearoa before and during European colonisation.³ I follow Kelly up the hill to the full-sized replica of the fortifications, realised by Brad Totorewa (Waikato, Ngāti Naho), the Chair of Ngāti Naho.⁴ Kelly initially reached out to Brad to see if I could join one of his tours. However, earlier this week the devastating

¹ Aotearoa intermediate schools teach children ages 11-13 years.

² Ian Knight, *Māori Fortifications* (Osprey Publishing, 2009), 9.

³ Knight, *Māori Fortifications*, 9.

⁴ Bronson Perich, 'Rebuilt Waikato pā to tell story of historic Land Wars battle,' *1News*, April 23, 2022, accessed August 1, 2025, <https://www.1news.co.nz/2022/04/23/rebuilt-waikato-pa-to-tell-story-of-historic-land-wars-battle>.

Cyclone Gabrielle hit the North Island; iwi and hapū are scrambling to support their whānau [family or community], with financial aid, housing and food. I am struck by the innumerable demands on iwi.

Kelly interprets the pā, explaining that this is the site of one of the most decisive battles of the New Zealand Wars.⁵ From the 20th to the 21st of November 1863, Māori attempted to repel the British invasion of the Waikato region. Approximately ‘1400 Imperial troops’ were mobilised to attack the Kīngitanga [Māori King] forces at Rangiriri and end Māori sovereignty in the region.⁶

“The British underestimated the pā”, Kelly interprets as she points to the tunnels and the rise of the central redoubt. “The British troops couldn’t scale it, and over two days, they couldn’t take it, even though there were probably only 500 Māori defenders. The English claim the Māori were surrounded and surrendered, but the Kīngitanga forces were at an advantage; they were holding the pā.”

As we walk around the site, we discuss how chaotic it would have been. Kelly explains that the Māori raised a white flag, “They were not trying to surrender, they were trying to negotiate. The white flag had already been used like this earlier in the New Zealand Wars.”

At the edge of the pā, I see the Ngāti Naho sign, which reads, ‘We survived annihilation and lived to tell our stories.’ The sign includes an image of a Māori man with Moko Kanohi [face tattoo], crouched and armed, defending the pā.⁷

⁵ For more information on the New Zealand Wars see Vincent O’Malley, *The Great War for New Zealand Waikato 1800-2000* (Bridget Williams Books, 2016).

⁶ ‘Rangiriri NZ Wars army memorial,’ *NZ History*, accessed August 1, 2025, <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/memorial/rangiriri-nz-wars-army-memorial>.

⁷ For more information on the site and tours, see ‘Rangiriri Pā,’ *Ngāti Naho*, accessed June 18, 2025, <https://www.rangiriri.com>.

Kelly explains, “Brad Totorewa and the hapū are working to set up a visitor centre here at huge cost to the iwi and to Brad himself.” She points to the land on the opposite side of the road, “That is the original pā site, up on the hill, and those are the Ngāti Naho offices over on the other side of the lake. It was really difficult for Brad to buy that land, the farmer didn’t want to sell. He wanted to keep it, even though it’s a mass grave!” She explains with incredulity, “It’s my feeling that the Government didn’t support this commemoration and heritage work until they were sure it had tourism potential.”⁸ Brad and the hapū had already been working for over a decade to buy back the land, build the earthworks, and develop an educational offering to increase awareness of the New Zealand Wars and the invasion of Waikato.⁹

Standing at the redoubt, we can better see the original pā site, a rich green hill that slopes into Lake Waikare. Kelly points to the water, “Fleeing Māori, women and children, they were shot down as they attempted to climb into their waka [canoe]. They drowned in that lake.” We stand in the silence. Kelly continues, “That is why the re-creation is here, the land over there is tapu [sacred]”.

Kelly draws my attention to a nearby house, “People around here have no idea what happened on this site. They want to build their houses here for the view, not knowing they’re overlooking a mass grave! You see, there are dog walkers.” Kelly points one out with anger, “People let their dogs shit here, on the pā. It is a sacred site!”

Teachers of the *Histories Curriculum*, who are predominantly Pākehā (non-Indigenous New Zealanders), are newly required to confront the suppressed and mythologised histories of

⁸ ‘Rangiriri Pā,’ *Kānoa Regional Economic Development & Investment Unit*, published c. late 2023–early 2024, accessed June 18, 2025, <https://www.growregions.govt.nz/regions/in-your-region/waikato/rangiriri-pa>

⁹ For more information on the site and tours, see Ngāti Naho, ‘Rangiriri Pā.’

their Nation.¹⁰ The battle at Rangiriri was a key event in one of the most significant conflicts in Aotearoa history, the New Zealand Wars. Between 1845 and 1872, these Wars were fought between the English Crown and a confederation of North Island iwi. The Waikato campaign (1863-4), in which Rangiriri was a decisive battle, ‘brought 12,000 British (and Irish) soldiers to New Zealand.’¹¹ The battle at Rangiriri was particularly meaningful as it marked the loss of the second defensive position of the economic heartland of the Kīngitanga, and the numbers captured after the battle rendered a defence of their final stronghold significantly more challenging.¹² Following the invasion of the Waikato region, ‘the Crown confiscated over 1.2 million acres of land’.¹³ Kelly emphasised that despite the contemporary significance of this history, the burden of memorialising and protecting this historic site had fallen to Māori, with little local or national Government support. Kelly interpreted the significance of this site by contextualising it within te ao Māori (the Māori world), particularly the concept of tapu [sacred]. As she interpreted the site for me, she navigated the complexity of conflicting primary sources, and the affective challenge of describing the horrific drownings in the lake we can see. Most emphatically, Kelly highlighted the lack of knowledge about this history among local people and the dramatic difference in how local Pākehā and Ngāti Naho understood it.

Chapter Two: Interpreting Contested Histories

In this chapter, I provide a historiographical overview of the cultural significance and contested histories interpreted through the *Histories Curriculum* and *Mayflower 400*. This chapter provides contextual information for the histories mentioned by my participants. I argue that a core complexity of interpreting these histories is the challenge of navigating the dominance of sanitised, positive accounts while asserting their nuanced historical realities and violent legacies. This chapter begins with an overview of the historical events and concludes with a focused literature review on related theories of contested heritage and histories. I begin by describing several of Aotearoa’s most contested histories, violent events that have been sanitised, forgotten or adapted into positive stories about the Nation. I then address the Mayflower and its changing significance to England and Turtle Island, and their

¹⁰ In ‘2021, 73 percent [of teachers] were Pākehā, 12 percent Māori’. See Ara Alam-Simmons, ‘A very New Zealand education: Deny, deflect, defend’, *E-Tangata*, July 2, 2023, accessed June 1, 2025, <https://e-tangata.co.nz/comment-and-analysis/a-very-new-zealand-education-deny-deflect-defend>.

¹¹ O’Malley, *The Great War for New Zealand*, 10.

¹² O’Malley, *The Great War for New Zealand Waikato 1800-2000*.

¹³ ‘Settlements,’ *Waikato-Tainui*, accessed June 18, 2025, <https://waikatotainui.com/about-us/settlements>.

evolving relationship. I contrast a positive, nation-building Mayflower narrative, shared through Thanksgiving celebrations, with a history of British colonial expansion contextualised within the devastating experiences of the Wampanoag Nations. In the second part of this chapter, I provide a concise review of the literature relevant to the issues of contested and complex histories and heritage. I include literature analysis within my chapters, in conversation with my ethnography. In this focused literature review, I include my analysis of accessible public histories, as well as theories of colonial memory, that have examined how this history is suppressed or forgotten. By providing historical detail and presenting these histories as contested, I reveal what many non-Indigenous interpreters only came to learn through Indigenous partnership.

2.1 Aotearoa's Origin Story

As they chased the great wheke [sea monster] through the ocean far from their home of Hawaiki, Kuramarontini, the wife of Kupe exclaimed, “He ao! He ao! He ao tea roa”, the cloud, the cloud, the long white cloud. The island of Aotearoa had been seen by Polynesian navigators for the first time.

This short excerpt from my fieldnotes is a pūrākau (traditional narrative) that I was taught by historical interpreters from Te Āti Awa iwi, in the Te Whanganui-a-Tara (Wellington) and Taranaki regions. It is the story of the great Polynesian navigator Kupe, which Te Āti Awa interpreters taught to local teachers as part of their Kura Ahurea programme. This training programme sought to give local teachers a deep understanding of the foundational stories of Aotearoa. In the iwi's telling, they carefully conveyed the meaning of the pūrākau, its whakapapa (genealogy) and the related tikanga. Following Kupe's lead, over the next few hundred years, seven waka hourua (double canoes) were sailed from Hawaiki to Aotearoa. These waka were called 'Tainui, Te Arawa, Mātaatua, Kurahaupō, Tokomaru, Aotea and Tākitimu.'¹⁴ Archaeological evidence suggests that the first Polynesian settlers arrived in the early 1300s, as part of a mass migration.¹⁵ Before their arrival, Aotearoa was not populated. All Māori trace their whakapapa to these waka and describe them when formally identifying themselves, for example by saying, ko Tainui te Waka, meaning Tainui is the waka.

¹⁴ 100% Pure New Zealand, 'The Arrival of Māori.'

¹⁵ Richard Walter et al., 'Mass Migration and the Polynesian Settlement of New Zealand,' *Journal of World Prehistory* 30 (2017): 351.

Aotearoa's history could also begin before human arrival with tectonic movement or with the daring demi-god Maui using his great fishhook to haul up the North Island. However, as Alfie Shaw's article for BBC Earth reflects, the history of Aotearoa is most often begun in Europe:

If asked the question "Who discovered New Zealand?" many of us would answer, without really thinking, "Captain James Cook?" and after centuries of a European-dominated view of history, it's no wonder it has taken so long to shake this perspective.¹⁶

Captain James Cook first sighted Aotearoa in 1769. This was not the first European sighting of the country; in 1642 Dutch explorer Abel Tasman saw the West Coast of the South Island. A small landing party was sent out and a skirmish with Māori left four of Tasman's men dead and one Māori man shot. Both Cook and Tasman were travelling in search of a single, vast southern continent. Cook's three expeditions, between 1769 and 1779, involved far more extensive mapping of Aotearoa and numerous interactions with different iwi. Cook would spend '328 days on the coast'.¹⁷ While he is often celebrated as a scientist and explorer, his was a joint venture not only commissioned by the Royal Society who were interested in the collection of scientific data in the Southern Hemisphere, but also by the British Admiralty. Detailed in a July 1768 letter, marked secret, Cook was commanded by the Admiralty to discover 'the great southland', map navigation and trade routes, and detail Indigenous settlements for the benefit of the British Empire.¹⁸

The 250th anniversary of James Cook's voyage around Australia and Aotearoa highlighted the legacy of Cook's colonial and scientific goals and the contested contemporary memory of this history. Historian Nicholas Thomas, in his history of Cook's voyages, accurately predicted that these 2020 anniversaries would move away from an 'essentially celebratory tone' which 'anticipated the development of the modern nations and were adventures that citizens could still feel stirred by and proud of'.¹⁹ Matariki, participant and Senior Historian at the Ministry for Culture and Heritage Manatū Taonga, explained that political change from a

¹⁶ Alfie Shaw, 'Who really discovered New Zealand?' *BBC Earth*, accessed by July 1, 2025. <https://www.bbcearth.com/news/who-really-discovered-new-zealand>.

¹⁷ 'Biography: Cook, James,' *Te Ara*, accessed July 10, 2025, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1c25/cook-james>.

¹⁸ 'James Cook's secret instructions,' *National Library of Australia*, January 11, 2022, accessed August 18, 2025. <https://www.library.gov.au/learn/digital-classroom/indigenous-responses-cook-and-his-voyage/james-cooks-secret-instructions>.

¹⁹ Nicholas Thomas, *Discoveries The Voyages of Captain Cook*, 3rd ed. (Penguin Books, 2018): xv.

National to a new Labour Government had driven a shift from the initial plan to celebrate the achievements of James Cook. The previous government had arranged for the sailing of a replica of the HMB Endeavour, Cook's ship, from Australia to the shores of Aotearoa. In our 2023 interview, former Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern reflected on how she had worked with iwi to shift the tone and focus to a commemoration of Aotearoa's broader histories of navigation. Even so, the tensions between these conflicting historical interpretations remained troubling. Ardern reflected:

“When I first took on this role, I was the Minister of Arts, Culture, and Heritage because I saw it as so critical to nation-building. I inherited, unfortunately, an already established portfolio on the anniversary of Captain Cook's arrival in New Zealand.”

“Oh, they sent the Endeavour, didn't they!” I said, remembering and pulling a face.

“And so, so,” she pauses, acknowledging my response, “before then it had been called Cook250 and it was being framed as kind of this celebration...when I came in they had just started the transition and they had at least started giving it a new name, Tuia – Encounters 250 rather than Cook250. So that was a good change, but it just felt so fraught to me, they had already booked in the Endeavour and I thought - I don't know if that is going to survive!”

I agree, “I saw the news story about it when I was in a pub with friends, and we couldn't believe it. I remember one of them immediately said, ‘That will go down well!’”

Ardern nods but explains, “So, it was okay. Apparently, it wasn't really seaworthy, and I was praying at times that it wouldn't come. However, we saw the commemoration as an opportunity to acknowledge and finally tell the story of navigation in New Zealand. Firstly, we added well-respected

historians to the group leading the commemorations, and critically, we added expert co-chairs, including Hoturoa Barclay-Kerr, a specialist in traditional Māori voyaging. Cook was not the first to arrive in New Zealand. When you consider the forms of navigation used by Māori and Polynesian ancestors, utilising currents, stars, and sea life, it is incredible. So, we thought, let's take this as an opportunity to broaden the scope of what we are doing. And, so everywhere the tall ships went, the waka hourua went. The other opportunity that this gave us - probably the most amazing thing is that Ngāti Oneone, the tribe that lost their first leader at the hands of Cook, were recognised. This violence had never been formally acknowledged; there is no monument, nothing to commemorate it. So, this beautiful monument was created in the lead-up to the commemoration. They also reached out and asked us to facilitate conversations with the British High Commission to try and seek an acknowledgement of what happened. And the British agreed.”

Tuia 250 was notably different to the previous anniversaries of Cook's voyages. But Ardern revealed that this shift was recent and imperfect. Tuia 250 historical interpreters had to reckon with the tradition of celebrating these histories as they were expected to meet the diverse expectations of stakeholders, local audiences and international partners. The HMB Endeavour, owned by the Australian Maritime Museum, was sailed around Australia and to Aotearoa. Australian Prime Minister, Scott Morrison nostalgically described the event as improving public understandings of ‘Captain Cook's historic voyage and its legacy for exploration, science and reconciliation.’²⁰ The comments of two residents of Gisborne, Aotearoa, where the Endeavour would dock, highlighted drastically different relationships with this history. One local explained, ‘We are here to celebrate Captain James Cook and everything that he did and he represents our heritage of which we are very proud.’ While a Māori interviewee shared, ‘The fact that we have to re-live that traumatisation as a whānau hapū iwi is actually quite devastating for us as Māori’.²¹

²⁰ ‘Replica of HMS Endeavour to sail around Australia on 250th anniversary of voyage,’ *Itv*, accessed July 2, 2025, <https://www.itv.com/news/2019-01-22/replica-of-hms-endeavour-to-sail-around-australia-on-250th-anniversary-of-voyage>.

²¹ ‘NZ anniversary: New Zealand divided over Cook's landing,’ *BBC News*, October 8, 2019, accessed July 2, 2025, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-49958027>.

2.2 Founding a Nation: Te Tiriti O Waitangi and The Kīngitanga Movement

From the arrival of European sealers and whalers, iwi suffered significant losses due to European diseases and changes in inter-iwi relationships resulting from access to European goods. Most impactful was the introduction of the musket.²² The firearm was first introduced to the Ngāpuhi iwi on whose land the first colonies of European sealer and whaler communities had been established. The muskets exaggerated conflicts within Māori society and the leader of Ngāpuhi iwi, Hongi Hika, led an aggressive war to increase his mana (prestige).²³ Between 1818 and the early 1830s, muskets were introduced into existing conflicts across the North and South Islands.²⁴ These were the Musket Wars and they led to the death of ‘As many as 20,000’ Māori.²⁵

The late 1830s were a time of significant prosperity for Aotearoa and iwi. Principal of Takarangi Research, Paul Tapsell (Te Arawa, Ngāti Raukawa) writes:

By the early 1830s the arms race between tribes had generally reached equilibrium and boundaries were re-established between economically powerful rivals... a widespread inter-kāinga [village] economy had developed, built on seed exchanges, *tuku* [passing on] of livestock and technology, sharing of mills and the uptake of new cultivars, species and practises.²⁶

An 1835 declaration was a product of this new sense of inter-tribal collaboration. In response to European colonisation, historian Michael King explains that different iwi began to develop a shared understanding of Māori identity. However, Māori sovereign recognition and the booming Aotearoa economy did not alleviate the concerns of the British that other powers, including ‘France and the US’, might take power.²⁷ Thirty-four northern chiefs signed the Declaration of Independence of the United Tribes of New Zealand (He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tireni). This declaration, and the uniting of iwi to sign it, highlighted the rapidly transforming landscape of Aotearoa. The below is a translation from te reo Māori

²² Paul Tapsell, *Kāinga People, Land, Belonging* (Bridget Williams Books, 2021), 59.

²³ Knight, *Māori Fortifications*, 24-28.

²⁴ ‘Musket Wars,’ *NZ History*, accessed July 2, 2025, <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/war/musket-wars/overview>.

²⁵ Knight, *Māori Fortifications*, 25.

²⁶ Tapsell, *Kāinga People, Land, Belonging*, 60.

²⁷ Tapsell, *Kāinga People, Land, Belonging*, 63.

of the second of four articles of the declaration through which the Māori leaders sought to protect their sovereignty and mana:

The sovereignty/kingship (Kīngitanga) and the Mana from the land of the Confederation of New Zealand are here declared to belong solely to the true leaders (Tino Rangatira) of our gathering, and we also declare that we will not allow (tukua) any other group to frame laws (wakarite ture), nor any Governorship (Kawanatanga) to be established in the lands of the Confederation, unless (by persons) appointed by us to carry out (wakarite) the laws (ture) we have enacted in our assembly (huihuinga).²⁸

An Englishman, James Busby, helped organise the signing of this declaration to represent the interests of a rapidly growing number of English colonists in Aotearoa. Busby and the Crown wanted to prevent the acquisition of land by other colonial powers, and the United Tribes of New Zealand was formally acknowledged by King William IV in 1836.²⁹ The declaration was not the first effort by Māori to formalise an alliance with the English Crown that recognised their absolute sovereignty. In 1831, Busby and thirteen Ngāpuhi chiefs, the largest tribe in New Zealand from the Northland regions, wrote to King William IV of the United Kingdom. Māori leaders committed to protecting British citizens within Aotearoa in return for coming under the protection of the Crown.³⁰

In 1840, the Crown drew up the Treaty of Waitangi (Te Tiriti o Waitangi) to replace the 1835 Declaration. The first version was in te reo Māori. It contained commitments to protect the absolute sovereignty of iwi, along with affording them British citizenship; which would remove disruptive trade restrictions. Five hundred and forty Māori Rangatira (chiefs) were encouraged by these terms to sign the treaty, even as ‘Māori outnumbered colonists by forty to one.’³¹ Soon after, the Aotearoa Government would claim that ‘rangatira willingly ceded sovereignty to enable the formation of the British colony called New Zealand’.³² These contradictory claims, which have persisted as contested historical interpretations into the present day, speak to a hugely significant mistranslation:

²⁸ ‘He Whakaputanga - Declaration of Independence’ *NZ History*, accessed July 6, 2025. <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/culture/declaration-of-independence-taming-the-frontier>.

²⁹ NZ History, ‘He Whakaputanga.’

³⁰ NZ History, ‘Declaration of Independence.’

³¹ Tapsell, *Kāinga People, Land, Belonging*, 63.

³² Tapsell, *Kāinga People, Land, Belonging*, 65.

In the Māori version the Crown promises to protect the rangatira and hapū in their exercise of chieftainship (rangatiratanga: mirroring the 1835 Declaration's use of this word to mean absolute sovereign power) over their lands (whenua), villages (kāinga) and resources (taonga). More than 500 rangatira signed this version in good faith. They and their hapū believed they were entering into a solemn contract under which an honourable Crown would protect their sovereignty, already confirmed in 1835...But what they did not know was that Lieutenant-Governor William Hobson would later arrange publication of the unsigned (at least by Māori) English version, which contradictorily states that the confederation and the independent chiefs of New Zealand freely cede 'all the rights and powers of sovereignty' over their lands to the Crown.³³

From the start of English colonisation of Aotearoa, and in the erroneous translation of the Treaty, multiple interpretations of Aotearoa's identity have collided. The terms of the Treaty are still being closely considered. Today it is described by many as the foundational document of the Aotearoa Nation state, the guiding document for Māori-Pākehā relations; it is not, however, enshrined in supreme law, it 'occupies an uneasy, uncertain place in New Zealand's constitution'.³⁴ The Treaty does not override legislation unless incorporated into statutes by Aotearoa New Zealand Parliament. Breaches of the Treaty are still being processed by the Crown, now represented by the Aotearoa Government.

The history of Aotearoa following the signing of the Treaty involved the violent and radical reimagining of the cultural landscape. Between 1839 and 1852 the number of English colonists in Aotearoa exploded from 2,000 to 28,000.³⁵ The New Zealand Company promoted opportunities in Aotearoa across Britain and promised land owning classes 100 acres of farmland and 'one town acre'.³⁶ The Company attracted labourers through similarly dubious promises and the offer of 'free or assisted passage'.³⁷ The whenua (land) was transformed through secretive and exploitative land deals, whole scale acquisitions by the

³³ Tapsell, *Kāinga People, Land, Belonging*, 63-4.

³⁴ Matthew Palmer, 'pa,' *Te Ara*, accessed July 16th, 2025, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/constitution/print>.

³⁵ Jock Philips, 'History of immigration,' *Te Ara*, accessed July 1, 2025. <https://teara.govt.nz/en/history-of-immigration/print>.

³⁶ Philips, 'History of immigration.'

³⁷ Philips, 'History of immigration.'

colonial government of ‘disputed land’, and the fencing off and destruction of the existing ecosystems:

Rangatira had been stripped of their mana – of their kainga lands, waterways and resources; stripped of their promised Te Tiriti partnership; stripped of their right to be part of New Zealand’s future; and stripped of equality.³⁸

Tāmihana Te Rauparaha, the son of the powerful Ngāti Toa chief who had met Queen Victoria, believed that unifying iwi under a King could better protect Māori interests.³⁹ It took him five years to find a King and convince his choice, Pōtatau Te Wherowhero, to accept the role.⁴⁰ Pōtatau had significant resources in the Waikato region and was well-connected among iwi and with Pākehā. He and his followers recognised his authority alongside, rather than in opposition to, the British Crown.⁴¹ However, in March 1860, when fighting broke out between British soldiers and supporters of Wiremu Kīngi Te Rangitāke, the chief of Te Āti Awa iwi in Taranaki, the Kīngitanga was portrayed as being behind the war.⁴² Despite the King and other iwi in the movement opposing the fighting, British officials presented the Kīngitanga movement as a threat to British sovereignty.⁴³ In early 1863, Governor George Grey issued:

an ultimatum to the ‘chiefs of Waikato’ to pledge allegiance to Queen Victoria. The following day – before Waikato Māori had even received this message – a force led by Lieutenant-General Duncan Cameron crossed the Mangatāwhiri stream, a tributary of the Waikato River near Mercer. This waterway marked the aukati – a line that should not be crossed – between the European settlement of Auckland and the lands under the Mana [protection] of the Māori King. The key conflict of the New Zealand Wars had begun.⁴⁴

³⁸ Paul Tapsell, *Kāinga People, Land, Belonging*, 74.

³⁹ See, Papa and Meredith, ‘Story: Kīngitanga – the Māori King movement.’; ‘Māori King movement origins,’ *NZ History*, accessed June 2, 2025, <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/politics/the-maori-king-movement/in-search-of-a-king>.

⁴⁰ See, *NZ History*, ‘Māori King movement origins.’; Papa and Meredith, ‘Story: Kīngitanga – the Māori King movement.’

⁴¹ See, *NZ History*, ‘Māori King movement origins.’; Papa and Meredith, ‘Story: Kīngitanga – the Māori King movement.’

⁴² See, O’Malley, *The Great War for New Zealand*.

⁴³ See, O’Malley, *The Great War for New Zealand*.

⁴⁴ Heritage New Zealand, *A Journey through the Waikato War* (Heritage New Zealand, 2014), <https://waikatotainui.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Waikato-War-Education-resource-2014.pdf>.

Throughout the New Zealand Wars, the Crown displaced and violently repressed the sovereignty of iwi and hapū, ultimately transforming Aotearoa's identity into a settler-colonial state, run according to 'British legal traditions rather than tikanga (ritually correct behaviour) Māori'.⁴⁵

2.3 The Challenges of Teaching the New Zealand Wars

Through the *Histories Curriculum*, historical interpreters are navigating the forgetting, and intentional suppression and misrepresentation, of the violence of Aotearoa's colonial past and present. The specific erasure of colonial and Māori histories is evident when we compare the scant memorialisation of the Land Wars with the widespread commemorations of the Nation's role in the First and Second World Wars. Aotearoa historian Vincent O'Malley explains that the 150th anniversaries of major battles of the New Zealand Wars, Rangiriri and Orakau, 'probably passed by most New Zealanders largely unnoticed'.⁴⁶ In contrast, 'the events, places and people from the Great War are freely memorialised, taught in schools and publicly acknowledged'.⁴⁷ Ambiguous primary sources further exacerbate the complexity of interpreting the New Zealand Land Wars. The battle of Rangiriri exemplifies this challenge, with the numbers killed, captured and the circumstances of a supposed Māori surrender still debated by historians. Within O'Malley's 650-page history of the Waikato Wars, he evaluates the contradictory primary sources:

According to the official version, 'a white flag was hoisted by the enemy, and he surrendered unconditionally'...contemporary British reports attributed this 'surrender' to the belief that Rangiriri was surrounded. So did a highly tendentious Māori-language account of the battle printed and circulated by the government. Yet even a cursory consideration of the available evidence shows this was not the case.

As I detail in chapter five, the *Histories Curriculum* engaged non-subject specialists in the teaching of Aotearoa's history, meaning this process of critical source analysis would prove more challenging for participants than it did for experienced historians such as O'Malley. For

⁴⁵ Ngāti Naho 'Rangiriri Pā.'

⁴⁶ Orakau was the site of the last stand of Ngāti Maniapoto chief, Rewi Maniapoto, who was a key leader in the Māori King Movement; O'Malley, *The Great War for New Zealand*.

⁴⁷ Joanna Kidman et al., *Fragments from a Contested Past Remembrance, Denial and New Zealand History*. (Bridget Williams Books, 2022): 94.

teachers, the limited time they had for learning exacerbated this challenge, making tours such as those provided by Ngāti Naho at Rangiriri even more critical.

The stark differences in how Pākehā and Māori communities understand these histories presented a further challenge for teachers and iwi partners interpreting the *Histories Curriculum*. Kelly conveyed this difference by recreating a lesson from her tour with Ngāti Naho, an experience that had resonated deeply with her:

“I want to show you the cemetery, we also went there on our tour,” Kelly says, driving us down the road to a small, walled site with an austere grey entranceway and the sign, ‘Māori War & Early Settlers Cemetery.’

“When the other local teachers and I were brought here by Brad on the teacher training, he asked us to find the graves of his ancestors. Do you want to have a go?”

“Definitely, thank you.” I step into the small graveyard and start walking around; there are well-kept monuments to English soldiers, faded gravestones with English and Irish names, and, lying between them, nameless grey slabs. Had the names simply been eroded overtime? Or were these sombre stones intentionally unnamed, burying Māori bodies beneath? I hope for the former as I ask, “What surnames should I be looking for?”

Kelly responds, “I’ll show you where they are.”

I look down sadly at the grey slabs, but Kelly points to a mound of unmarked earth in the other direction.

“That’s a mass grave. My friend from Ngāti Naho used to play around here as a child, but she was told to never touch that ground. The hapū doesn’t mark it now because that lack of marking is the history.”

I turn to the mound and feel appalled and tearful.



Figure 3. Unmarked Mass Grave of Māori Killed Fighting in the Battle of Rangiriri or While Fleeing

Photograph by the author, February 16, 2023.

Hamilton City Councillor, Moko Tauariki (Ngāti Naho, Ngāti Hawa, Ngāti Māhanga and Ngāti Waire) explains that even the classification of the Rangiriri conflict is contested: “It’s often referred to as the Battle of Rangiriri but it was an invasion”.⁴⁸ As Kelly’s affective statement, “My friend from Ngāti Naho used to play around here as a child, but she was told to never touch that ground”, reveals, the very landscape of Aotearoa is related to differently by those that know this history. The lake below the original pā site was understood by Māori as tapu for over 159 years.⁴⁹ Tapu was defined by Anglican minister, scholar and philosopher Māori Marsden (Te Aupouri, Ngāti Takoto, Ngāti Wharara) as ‘the sacred state or condition in which a person, place or thing is set aside by dedication to the gods and thereby removed

⁴⁸ Shannon Haunui-Thompson, ‘Rangiriri Pa returned after 1863 invasion,’ *RNZ*, August 19, 2016, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/te-manu-korihi/311348/rangiriri-pa-returned-after-1863-invasion>.

⁴⁹ Mahi Tahi Media, ‘The Land Wars commemoration dedicated to children killed in war,’ *Re:*, December 17, 2023, accessed August 5, 2025, <https://www.renews.co.nz/the-land-wars-commemoration-dedicated-to-children-killed-in-war>.

from profane use.’⁵⁰ In 2022, the Māori King removed the tapu, thus making the site of the Rangiriri invasion ‘safe’ to visit.⁵¹ Yet, even with the lifting of the tapu, Rangiriri remains a place of careful commemoration for Māori. When Kelly expressed her distress at how farmers and dog walkers use the site, she revealed that teachers of the *Histories Curriculum* not only needed to address significant gaps in their historical understanding but also their knowledge of te ao Māori and tikanga to interpret such sites. These intergenerational historical silences would profoundly shape the experience of historical interpreters, which I explore in the following chapters.

2.4 The American National Myth: The Mayflower Pilgrims and the Friendly Wampanoag

To understand the challenges facing *Mayflower 400* Indigenous and non-Indigenous interpreters, we must understand both the violent realities of this history and the dominance of its mythologising. The Wampanoag Nations have inhabited present-day ‘Southeastern Massachusetts and Eastern Rhode Island’ for at least 12,000 years.⁵² Historically, the Wampanoag lived according to a thirteen-moon cycle.⁵³ In the spring and summer, they moved to the coast and lived in summer wetu (traditional Wampanoag homes) in small family units. A summer wetu is a domed, watertight wooden structure, covered in cattail reeds that expands in the rain and contracts when dry. For the Wampanoag, life occurred outside the home, in planting fields, where they tended to corn, beans, and squash, on the riverways and coast, while travelling and fishing from mishoonash (dugout canoes), as well as around communal cooking areas. During autumn and winter, wider communities and multiple Wampanoag villages came together in large winter wetu covered in bark. Men hunted with bows and arrows and snares to catch moose, black bear, and raccoons, while women grew crops. Before European arrival, this cycle structured all aspects of life for the Wampanoag.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Marsden, Māori., ‘God, Man and Universe: A Māori View,’ in *Te Ao Hurihuri: Aspects of Maoritanga*, ed. Michael King (Reed, 1992), 125.

⁵¹ Mahi Tahi Media, ‘The Land Wars commemoration.’

⁵² ‘Wampanoag History,’ *Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head Aquinnah*, accessed July 4, 2025, <https://wampanoagtribe-nsn.gov/wampanoag-history>.

⁵³ Darius Coombs, ‘Thirteen Moons: A history of Wampanoag Culture with Darius Coombs at OVL,’ YouTube, Massachusetts, February 2024, 1 hour, 26 min., 41 sec., <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mLxipP2vw-0>; Linda Coombs, *Colonization and the Wampanoag Story* (Penguin Random House, 2023).

⁵⁴ Coombs, ‘Thirteen Moons.’

Despite 12,000 years of trade, technological development, and the complex histories of distinct Indigenous cultures, the history of America, like that of Aotearoa, is often begun in Europe. In a dominant and highly mythologised narrative, the 1620 voyage of the English merchant vessel, the Mayflower, is presented as the start of English colonisation in Turtle Island and the historical foundation of American culture and values. In this dominant interpretation, the passengers of the Mayflower are described as Pilgrims, and as fathers of the American Nation. They are described as having journeyed to America to worship freely, having faced persecution in England for wishing to worship God outside of the Church. These Pilgrims embarked on a treacherous journey across the Atlantic alongside other English craftsmen and indentured servants.⁵⁵ The Mayflower, with its 103 passengers and 30 crew, was blown off course away from Virginia to Patuxet (present day Plymouth, Massachusetts). This dominant interpretation of the Mayflower voyage focuses on the terrible conditions of the first winter which killed around 50 of the company. This retelling then transitions to a hopeful tone, a crescendo that historian Nicholas Thomas describes as ‘anticipating the development of the modern nations’.⁵⁶ The Pilgrims are described as having organised themselves around common goals, signing an agreement, The Mayflower Compact. In this agreement, they claimed the land of present-day Plymouth under the name of King James. They built houses and they met Tisquantum, (commonly known as Squanto) a Wampanoag man who could speak English, and so was able to support them to facilitate a peace treaty with the Wampanoag Massasoit (leader) Ousamequin. The treaty is described as leading to 50 years of peace.⁵⁷ Tisquantum also teaches the Pilgrims to plant corn. After the first successful harvest, the Pilgrims and the Wampanoag gather to eat; this is presented as the first Thanksgiving.

Since its voyage to Patuxet in 1620, the Mayflower has been evoked in explicit acts of nation-building, and its centrality to American national identity cannot be overestimated. Recent studies of historical culture and the ‘cultural turn’ in diplomatic history have enabled an examination of the Mayflower’s changing, nation-building role in ‘popular history-consciousness’ in both Turtle Island and England.⁵⁸ Here, I provide a brief overview to

⁵⁵ Warwick Charlton, *The Second Mayflower Adventure* (Plimoth Plantation Press, 2007), 5.

⁵⁶ Thomas, *Discoveries The Voyages of Captain Cook*.

⁵⁷ Please note Massasoit means leader, his name was Ousamequin.

⁵⁸ Edmund Downey, ‘The Mayflower and Historical Culture in Britain, 1620-2020,’ *English Historical Review* 138, no. 593 (2023), 901; Robert Hendershot and Steve Marsh, ‘Celebrating the Mayflower 400 years of Anglo-American relations,’ *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 18 (2020): 405-414.

demonstrate that the Mayflower narrative has been transformed and mythologised to reflect changing national ideals and the evolving relationship between Turtle Island and England. The mythologisation of the Mayflower within Turtle Island begins with its primary sources. What historians Edmund Downey et al. describe as ‘the malleability of the Pilgrim legend’, began as a narrative by the English colonists to evidence their Separatist religious purity and the success of the Massachusetts region for English colonial expansion.⁵⁹ In the first two years of the colony, Mayflower passenger Edward Winslow published an account, shared widely in England, to reassure investors and encourage further English settlement.⁶⁰ Winslow minimised the challenges faced by the colonists, instead focusing on the first successful harvest, and the stable relations with the Wampanoag Nations.⁶¹ Contrastingly, in the late 1700s, the Mayflower narrative supplied historical legitimacy to revolutionary ideals, as Samuel Adams evoked the ‘truly noble spirit of our renowned Ancestors’.⁶² For American revolutionaries, the toils of the Separatists were interpreted as encapsulating American rather than English values.⁶³ In the revolutionaries’ interpretation, the persecution of the colonists by the English received greater emphasis.⁶⁴

In 1863, that the Mayflower narrative was incorporated into an annual celebration. Over several decades, Sarah Josepha Hale, an influential editor of a popular women’s magazine, successfully campaigned for a national Thanksgiving holiday. Drawing on a footnote in an 1841 historical account of the Mayflower colony, which interpreted the Separatists’ harvest meal with the Wampanoag as the first Thanksgiving, Hale gave her proposed national holiday the authority of a historic foundation.⁶⁵ Confirmed by President Lincoln in 1863, ‘this holiday was an explicit act of nation-building, forging an established history of a unified US after the Civil War and asserting the values of the North as those of the US as a whole.’⁶⁶ The dominant Mayflower narrative has since been re-visited and re-entrenched each year through

⁵⁹ Downey, ‘The Mayflower and Historical Culture,’ 914; Edward Winslow, *Mourt’s Relation*, John Bellamie: 1622, available at: <https://archive.org/details/journalplymouthimages/page/8/mode/2up>; William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647*, edited by Francis Murphy (New Random House, 1981).

⁶⁰ Winslow, *Mourt’s Relation*.

⁶¹ Winslow, *Mourt’s Relation*.

⁶² Christine Arnold-Lourie, ‘Baby Pilgrims, Sturdy Forefathers, and One Hundred Percent Americanism: The Mayflower Tercentenary of 1920,’ *Massachusetts Historical Review*, 17 (2015), 36.

⁶³ Downey, ‘The Mayflower and Historical Culture,’ 914.

⁶⁴ Arnold-Lourie, ‘Baby Pilgrims, Sturdy Forefathers,’ 36.

⁶⁵ Alexander Young, *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers of the Colony of Plymouth from 1602-1625* (Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1841), <https://ia800208.us.archive.org/13/items/chroniclesofpilg00young/chroniclesofpilg00young.pdf>.

⁶⁶ Mulcahey, ‘Beginning of the End,’ 39.

family Thanksgiving celebrations across Turtle Island. By the three-hundredth anniversary (1920), historian Christine Arnold-Lourie highlights that the Mayflower narrative came to represent a peaceable and supposedly equal American nation.⁶⁷ The 400th anniversary in America thereby built upon a nationwide recognition of the Mayflower history, far transformed from a story of English colonial expansion to an American foundational myth.

For England, the Mayflower narrative was not simply ‘imported from across the Atlantic’ but transformed and evoked to address ‘domestic concerns about identity, politics and society.’⁶⁸ British interpretations of the Mayflower narrative transitioned from an example of religious ideals for eighteenth-century ecclesiastical historians, to a symbol of colonial breakdown following the revolution. Positive public interest was captured again in the early nineteenth century by Romantic authors who shared moralising tales of British colonialism. From the nineteenth century onward, the power of the Mayflower for English audiences lay in its ability to support claims to a shared heritage and Anglo-American supremacy.⁶⁹ The Separatists’ radical separation from England was underplayed to evoke a narrative of ‘fraternal’ kinship.⁷⁰ While Downey et al. argues that there was a shift in the English Mayflower narrative during the postwar years from a ‘racialised Anglo-Saxonism’, with ‘imperial decline from the late 1940s, the Pilgrims were in any case no longer of any use in justifying a genetic right of the British to rule the world.’⁷¹ I disagree and argue that the mythologised Mayflower continues to be evoked as a racialised claim to shared heritage, and as a benevolent narrative of British colonialism, now as part of a modern UK-US ‘special relationship.’⁷² While dismissed by Downey et al., the 1955 building of a replica Mayflower, by English journalist Warwick Charlton, powerfully evoked claims to a shared Anglo-Saxon heritage, a felt gratitude for US support during the Second World War, and an English claim to (fading) colonial power.⁷³ Warwick Charlton, the force behind Mayflower II, described his motivation:

Her voyage, the very crossing of the Atlantic itself symbolic, is accepted as the first meeting point and the first point of departure of the histories of the two English-speaking peoples...Behind lay a common heritage, and it

⁶⁷ Arnold-Lourie, ‘Baby Pilgrims, Sturdy Forefathers,’ 35.

⁶⁸ Downey, ‘The Mayflower and Historical Culture,’ 900.

⁶⁹ Downey, ‘The Mayflower and Historical Culture.’

⁷⁰ Downey, ‘The Mayflower and Historical Culture,’ 901-2.

⁷¹ Downey, ‘The Mayflower and Historical Culture,’ 901-2.

⁷² Hendershot and Marsh, ‘Anglo-American relations.’

⁷³ Downey, ‘The Mayflower and Historical Culture,’ 928.

was Mayflower that took the accumulated, sifted wisdom of the Old World to the New.⁷⁴

In Charlton's dramatic words, we see how the English Mayflower narrative entirely erases Indigenous histories and knowledge.⁷⁵ In Charlton's statement, it is from white England that American knowledge and values travelled. While reflecting on the US narrative, Arnold-Lourie highlights such mobilisations of the Mayflower narrative as denying 'the Pilgrim legacy to many would-be claimants', including immigrants and later non-English arrivals.⁷⁶ As discussed in chapter one, *Mayflower 400* emerged from a history of localised Mayflower celebrations in England. However, *Mayflower 400's* widescale investment spoke to a perception of Mayflower as a shared American and English heritage, which, with America now the primary power, would, by association, assert the significance of local British cities' heritage on an international stage.

While numerous American and English historiographies of the Mayflower have been attempted, an analysis of how the Mayflower mythology has been resisted is notably absent. The dominant Mayflower narrative has repeatedly been mobilised by the people it seeks to silence, as Malcolm X so famously stated, 'We didn't land on Plymouth Rock, the Rock was landed on us.'⁷⁷ The Mayflower narrative, as a symbol of American national identity, has been evoked as a powerful metaphor for America's false claims to piety and kindly values. Arnold-Lourie argues that 'The struggle over the Pilgrim heritage reflected deep rifts within American society'.⁷⁸ Throughout the thesis, I map how Indigenous partners grappled with and reinterpreted the mythologised Mayflower in its 400th year. Within this chapter, reflecting on Wampanoag leader Wamsutta James' 1970 commemorative speech, I show that *Mayflower 400's* Indigenous interpreters built upon a history of resistant interpretation, reframing the Mayflower not as the start of a Nation but as the 'beginning of the end'.⁷⁹

Contemporary histories have sought to reclaim historical fact from the much changed, and widely publicised Mayflower narrative.⁸⁰ The dominant Thanksgiving narrative detaches the

⁷⁴ Charlton, *The Second Mayflower Adventure*, 3.

⁷⁵ Charlton, *The Second Mayflower Adventure*, 3.

⁷⁶ Arnold-Lourie, 'Baby Pilgrims, Sturdy Forefathers,' 35.

⁷⁷ Malcolm X, 'The Ballot or the Bullet,' (speech, Cleveland, Ohio, April 3, 1964).

⁷⁸ Arnold-Lourie, 'Baby Pilgrims, Sturdy Forefathers,' 36.

⁷⁹ 'The Suppressed Speech,' *UAIINE*, accessed July 6, 2025, http://www.uaine.org/suppressed_speech.htm.

⁸⁰ See Coombs, *Colonization and the Wampanoag*; David Silverman, *This Land is Their Land: The Wampanoag Indians, Plymouth Colony, and the Troubled History of Thanksgiving* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020); Lisa

Mayflower voyage from its British colonial context. In doing so, this interpretation fails to account for the pressures that motivated the Wampanoag Massasoit's strategic decision to partner with the English. The Mayflower was not the first journey in either direction from the Northeast of Turtle Island to England. European merchants and slavers had been trading in the region since the late 1400s. Jamestown, the British military outpost in Virginia, was founded in 1607. Furthermore, numerous Indigenous captives had been taken to Europe and Pocahontas and her entourage had sailed into Plymouth, England four years earlier to represent their people.⁸¹ Even in these early years of European colonisation, there was an established legal framework for European colony building, the Doctrine of Discovery:

The Doctrine provided that Europeans automatically acquired property rights in native lands and gained governmental, political, and commercial rights over the indigenous inhabitants without their knowledge or consent.⁸²

Prior to the Mayflower's arrival, devastating diseases brought over by European sailors, merchants and slavers had transformed the political and cultural landscape of Turtle Island. The Wampanoag were devastated by 'The Great Dying,' a plague that spread along the East Coast between 1616 and 1618.⁸³ A member of the *Mayflower 400* Wampanoag Advisory Committee, Linda Coombs (Aquinnah Wampanoag), writes in her educational book for school students:

everywhere the plague touched experienced a 75 percent to 90 percent death rate. Prior to this illness, the Wampanoag nation had sixty-nine villages or towns...so approximately seventy thousand people... Using an 80 percent death rate figure...That is 56,000 people.⁸⁴

The Wampanoag describe this period as 'The Great Dying', in which the region of Patuxet, where the Mayflower docked, was entirely depopulated.⁸⁵ The Wampanoag's historic rivals the Narragansett, had been less profoundly impacted by disease, which potentially motivated Ousamequin to see the potential of a defensive partnership with the English.

Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Philip's War* (Yale University Press, 2008); Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*.

⁸¹ See Thrush, *Indigenous London*.

⁸² Robert Miller, 'American Indians, The Doctrine of Discovery, Manifest Destiny,' *Wyoming Law Review* 11, no. 2 (January 2011): 113-133, 10.59643/1942-9916.1254.

⁸³ Coombs, *Colonization and the Wampanoag*, 47.

⁸⁴ Coombs, *Colonization and the Wampanoag*, 48.

⁸⁵ Coombs, 'Thirteen Moons.'

The Mayflower voyage was funded by the Merchant Adventurers, English investors looking to enter the established North American trade:

Their goals were to establish a colony, obtain the riches (profit) of the land – furs, timber, and gold, were it to be found – and have the colony thrive so that the riches would keep flowing back to Europe. To get control of the land for these purposes, they had to dominate or annihilate Indigenous people. The whole story of the Pilgrims seeking religious freedom became mythologized when it began to be presented as the *only* reason they came here, thereby erasing the rest of this history.⁸⁶

The passengers agreed to pay off the costs of the voyage and colony by sending back to England goods such as fur and timber. Less than half of the Mayflower's passengers were motivated by a fear of religious persecution. These were Separatists, predominantly from a small group in the village of Scrooby, Nottinghamshire.⁸⁷ They were pursuing a radical separation from the Church of England, recorded in the Presentment Bills of North Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire, England, which detail 'offences against church law'.⁸⁸ These bills suggest that Separatists refused to attend the Church of England services and communion, hosted illegal congregations, and acted as unauthorised preachers.⁸⁹ The Separatist Mayflower passengers had first moved to Leiden, 'that haven of English separatism'.⁹⁰ They lived there for 12 years but feared their children were becoming culturally Dutch. They believed they would be able to build a colony according to their religious and cultural values in America and so they agreed with the Merchant Adventurers that all profit would be returned to the Company for seven years, in return for funding their voyage.

It is by adding details to the life and intentions of Tisquantum that the Mayflower voyage can be resituated from a positive national foundation story, into an established pattern of English violence and land seizure in Turtle Island. The dominant Thanksgiving narrative describes

⁸⁶ Coombs, *Colonization and the Wampanoag*, 110.

⁸⁷ Brachlow, 'John Robinson and the Lure of Separatism,' 289.

⁸⁸ Manuscripts and Special Collections, 'Protestant Dissent in the Archdeaconry of Nottingham Presentment Bills 1587–1699,' *University of Nottingham Manuscripts & Special Collections* (2021), accessed 1 June, 2025, <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/manuscriptsandspecialcollections/Collectionsindepth/archdeaconry/presentmentbills/protestant-dissent.aspx>.

⁸⁹ Manuscripts and Special Collections, 'Protestant Dissent.'

⁹⁰ Brachlow, 'John Robinson and the Lure,' 289.

Tisquantum only to the extent that he helped the English. Why Tisquantum could speak English is overlooked. He appears as a narrative tool, foreshadowing a divinely ordained English arrival, and evoking later ideas of manifest destiny. Tisquantum was a member of the Patuxet Wampanoag Nation, who ‘by 1621 had been kidnapped by an English slaver.’⁹¹ Thomas Hunt, a close friend of John Smith who helped establish the English colony in Jamestown, ‘captured two dozen Wampanoag men and women to sell into slavery in Spain’ in 1614.⁹² Tisquantum was sold into Malaga, Spain. He then escaped to London and joined voyages to Newfoundland; during this time, he learnt English. After six years, he returned to his home in Patuxet, where he was confronted with the aftermath of the complete destruction of all other Patuxet Wampanoags in the Great Dying.⁹³ The English contemporary perspective of the devastating plagues is exemplified by Smith, who travelled the coast of New England and recorded the devastation as proof that ‘God hath provided this country for our Nation (England), destroying the natives by the plague, it not touching one Englishman’.⁹⁴ On his return to Patuxet, Tisquantum was at first distrusted by the Wampanoag, however, his ability to speak English makes him an asset to Ousamequin once the Mayflower passengers arrived. By adding a few historical details of Tisquantum’s life, the sanitised Thanksgiving narrative which claims that the English benevolently and peacefully built colonies in Turtle Island is undone. The suppression of Indigenous histories, which persists into the present, appears as a tool by which colonialism is justified.

The dominant Mayflower narrative makes several key omissions to intentionally reverse the historical power dynamics between the Wampanoag and the English colonists. I suggest that this is best captured in the painting below, *The First Thanksgiving* by Jean Leon Gerome Ferris, painted around 1912. Ferris was a nineteenth-century painter historian; a movement associated with capturing grand nation-building scenes.⁹⁵ The painting evokes the Classical foundations of the history painting genre, through an idealised landscape and ‘timeless dress’.⁹⁶ The painting also echoes the genre’s early eighteenth-century focus on capturing key

⁹¹ Ben Railton, ‘On the 48th Annual Convention Theme Remembering and Celebrating America’s Translingual, Transcultural, Global Past,’ *Modern Language Studies* 46, no. 2 (2017): 87.

⁹² Thrush, *Indigenous London*, 48.

⁹³ Thrush, *Indigenous London*, 56.

⁹⁴ Coombs, *Colonization and the Wampanoag*, 106.

⁹⁵ ‘Art Term History Painting,’ *TATE*, accessed, July 2, 2025, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/h/history-painting>.

⁹⁶ ‘Art Term History Painting,’ *TATE*, accessed, July 2, 2025, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/h/history-painting>.

events from the Empire.⁹⁷ The painting was one of 78 by Ferris in his series 'The Pageant of a Nation'.



Figure 4. Jean Leon Gerome Ferris, *The First Thanksgiving, 1621, ca. 1912*

Reproduction of an oil painting from the series *The Pageant of a Nation*, no. 6 (The Foundation Press, 1932), www.loc.gov/item/2001699850.

The woman at the centre of Ferris's painting gifts food from a bountiful English table to a small Indigenous retinue who sit on the floor; this is a total reversal of the historical power dynamics. Stephanie Pratt (Dakota) described this as a "violence to the reality of the situation".⁹⁸ The English colonists were entirely reliant on the knowledge, resources and protection of the Wampanoag. Roughly 53 of the 102 Mayflower passengers survived to this successful harvest, and just under half of these were children. Far from a small group of Wampanoag guests, Mayflower passenger Edward Winslow's primary account details the arrival of 'their greatest king Massasoyt, with some ninetie men'.⁹⁹ In Ferris's painting the feather headdresses, a feature of Plains Indian and not Wampanoag regalia, are used to evoke a generalised Indigenous identity. Historian of colonial Mesoamerica, Michael Restall details how feathers have consistently been used by Europeans to symbolise the other, having been first applied to the Middle Eastern or oriental other, then in the nineteenth century to the Native American.¹⁰⁰ The Wampanoag thereby come to represent Indigenous Nations more generally. The painting makes the claim that is central to the dominant Mayflower narrative, that colonists benevolently supported the Indigenous peoples who welcomed their presence in Turtle Island. BBC New

⁹⁷ TATE, 'Art Term History Painting.'

⁹⁸ Mulcahey, 'The Beginning of the End,' 36.

⁹⁹ Edward Winslow, *Mourt's Relation*.

¹⁰⁰ Restall, '2018 Presidential Address.' 7.

York correspondent, Nick Bryant analyses the meaning of the dominant Mayflower narrative in its 400th anniversary year:

Yet most of what American schoolchildren are taught about that holiday does not withstand close scrutiny. It's a mythology, not a history. There are the inconsequential inaccuracies... But it's the larger fiction that's more damaging. In a fraudulent retelling, the place of the Native Americans at that table has commonly been misappropriated and misunderstood. Thanksgiving has encouraged the idea that indigenous Americans gladly greeted white, European settlers; helped teach the new arrivals how to survive in the New World; lived together harmoniously; joined together for this slap-up celebration and then vanished from the story. It's a narrative of colonial validation; of contrived acceptance; of white comfort... Thanksgiving has consequently become an American veil, an invisibility cloak under which the inconvenient truths of history have for centuries been concealed.¹⁰¹

Through the Thanksgiving story and Ferris's painting, the Wampanoag are undermined and erased from their own land. As Wampanoag historian Nanepashemet succinctly explains, 'Saying that Massasoit welcomed the English, that's a big fat, self-serving, American lie, justifying their presence here!'¹⁰² Far from 50 years of peace, the Wampanoag – English relationship was characterised by growing tensions and violent altercations that ultimately exploded into the bloody King Philip's War, led by Metacom, Ousamequin's son. Between 1630 and 1640, approximately 13,000 English colonists arrived in Massachusetts. The English colonists broke the original trade agreements, took Wampanoag land, and, despite written agreements, tried Wampanoag men under English law while English men escaped Wampanoag justice. Ultimately, this would lead to three years of conflict in which Metacom led a confederation of Indigenous Nations including the Wampanoag, Narragansett, Nipmuc, and Abenaki, in an unsuccessful fight to secure their lands, laws and ways of life from English colonisation.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Nick Bryant, 'Mayflower at 400: What we all get wrong about the Pilgrim Fathers,' *BBC*, September 18, 2020, accessed June 1, 2025, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-54199565>.

¹⁰² Ancientlightsvideo, 'Nanepashemet interviewed for Kevin Costner's "500 Nations" (1993) – Part 1,' YouTube, 2011, 9 min., 32 sec., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vbs_yX0cEsM&t=348s.

¹⁰³ See Lisa Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin*.

2.5 The 350th Anniversary of the Mayflower Voyage

Contextualising the Mayflower voyage within British colonial and Wampanoag histories has been repeatedly recognised as presenting an unacceptable challenge to the dominant, nation-building narrative of Thanksgiving. While the New Zealand Wars are forgotten to preserve a national narrative of Indigenous peoples welcoming benevolent colonisation, the Mayflower voyage and the Thanksgiving story are remembered, or more accurately, misremembered, to achieve the same. In Plymouth, England, for the 350th anniversary of the Mayflower voyage (1970), locals celebrated in parades, and many, who would later become *Mayflower 400* volunteer guides, recounted making costumes and dancing in their school classes. In America, organisers of the 350th anniversary events invited Aquinnah Wampanoag elder, Wamsutta Frank James, to deliver a speech. They seemed to have intended that his inclusion would symbolise both a close contemporary Wampanoag–American partnership and the historical union between the Wampanoag peoples and the 1620 Mayflower passengers. Instead, Wamsutta wrote:

It is with mixed emotion that I stand here to share my thoughts. This is a time of celebration for you – celebrating an anniversary of a beginning for the white man in America. A time of looking back, of reflection. It is with a heavy heart that I look back upon what happened to my People. Even before the Pilgrims landed it was common practice for explorers to capture Indians, take them to Europe and sell them as slaves for 220 shillings apiece. The Pilgrims had hardly explored the shores of Cape Cod for four days before they had robbed the graves of my ancestors and stolen their corn and beans...Massasoit, the great Sachem [leader] of the Wampanoag, knew these facts, yet he and his people welcomed and befriended the settlers of the Plymouth Plantation. Perhaps he did this because his Tribe had been depleted by an epidemic. Or his knowledge of the harsh oncoming winter was the reason for his peaceful acceptance of these acts [grave robbing and the stealing of food]. This action by Massasoit was perhaps our biggest mistake. We, the Wampanoag, welcomed you, the white man, with open arms, little knowing that it was the beginning of the

end; that before 50 years were to pass, the Wampanoag would no longer be a free people.¹⁰⁴

The American event organisers prevented Wamsutta from delivering his speech. He led a protest to Cole's Hill near Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts, where they boarded the replica Mayflower that was docked in the Plymouth harbour. They removed the Union Jack, replacing it with the flag that had flown over the briefly liberated Alcatraz Island, a symbol of Indigenous presence and resistance. This historical interpretation of the Mayflower voyage as 'the beginning of the end' is held by many Wampanoag and observed each year through a National Day of Mourning for the Wampanoag Nations.

When Plymouth Council, England, chose the anniversary of the Mayflower voyage for its City of Culture moment, they did not yet relate to it as a contested history. They saw its potential to positively engage both American and local audiences, as it showed how English men and women leaving Plymouth had shaped global events – a grandeur bestowed on the Mayflower through its mythologising. *Mayflower 400* interpreters learnt the colonial context of this story and its lasting impacts on Indigenous people through their partnership with the Wampanoag Advisory Committee. *Mayflower 400* pursued a more complex and explicitly commemorative narrative than previous anniversaries. Through my Master's research into the 2020 Mayflower commemorations, I discovered that historical interpreters felt a great responsibility to move away from a 'flawed story'.¹⁰⁵ Despite these intentions, *Mayflower 400* historical interpreters were exhausted and at times overwhelmed by the weight of the dominant Thanksgiving Mayflower narrative, which has limited their knowledge and that of their audiences.¹⁰⁶

2.6 Literature Concerning Contested Histories

I have demonstrated that *Mayflower 400* and the *Histories Curriculum* engaged with violent, affective histories with lasting legacies, which have been sanitised and mythologised as positive, nation-building stories. Within this literature review, I situate my research within a diverse body of work examining contested histories, primarily from heritage studies and educational theory. I review how the forgetting and suppression of colonial history has been

¹⁰⁴ UAIINE, 'The Suppressed Speech'.

¹⁰⁵ Mulcahey, 'The Beginning of the End,' 111.

¹⁰⁶ Mulcahey, "The Beginning of the End."

described and challenged within a large body of accessible, public histories. I then situate my work within academic studies of colonial amnesia, nostalgia, and forgetting. Finally, I consider how England, whose colonial historical memory mirrors that of the settler colonial states of Aotearoa and Turtle Island, can be conceptualised as a fieldsite for this study of British colonial and Indigenous histories. This is therefore a concise literature review, focusing on a key theme of this thesis: contested histories.

My research builds upon a substantial body of work on ‘difficult heritage’ within heritage studies, and difficult histories within educational theory.¹⁰⁷ These concepts emerged distinctly, yet there are key similarities. ‘Difficult heritage’ was coined by Macdonald in her 2009 study of the memorialisation of Nazi histories in Nuremberg.¹⁰⁸ She defines ‘difficult heritage’ as ‘a past that is recognised as meaningful in the present but that is also contested and awkward for public reconciliation with a positive, self-affirming contemporary identity.’¹⁰⁹ Her work, including her research on ‘undesirable heritage’ has been enormously influential. Later studies of ‘difficult heritage’ examine how sites of violence are mobilised within contemporary national narratives and international relations; how digital media transforms difficult heritage engagement; and how co-curation and participatory museums spaces can challenge the silencing of violent histories.¹¹⁰ From communication studies, Ingrida Kelpšienė et al., reviews 80 studies concerning engagement with ‘difficult heritage’ on social networking sites.¹¹¹ They affirm that the difficulty of heritage is determined by the

¹⁰⁷ Knudsen and Andersen, ‘Affective politics and colonial heritage.’; Christoph Bareither, ‘Difficult heritage and digital media: ‘selfie culture’ and emotional practices at the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe,’ *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 27, no. 1 (2020): 57-72; Carmen Belmonte, *A Difficult Heritage The Afterlives of Fascist-Era Art and Architecture* (Silvana Editoriale: 2023); Magdalena H. Gross and Luke Terra, ed., *Teaching and Learning*; Harcourt, ‘New Zealand’s difficult history.’; Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage*; Macdonald, “Is ‘Difficult Heritage’.”; Epstein and Peck, *Teaching and Learning Difficult Histories*.

¹⁰⁸ Macdonald. *Difficult Heritage*.

¹⁰⁹ Macdonald. *Difficult Heritage*, 13.

¹¹⁰ Carmen Belmonte, *A Difficult Heritage The Afterlives*; Shu-Mei Huang and Hyun-Kyung Lee, ‘Difficult heritage diplomacy? Re-articulating places of pain and shame as world heritage in northern Asia,’ *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 25 (2019): 143-149, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2018.1475410>; Britta Timm Knudsen and Andersen, ‘Affective politics and colonial heritage.’; Bareither, ‘Difficult heritage and digital media.’; Colleen Leah Morgan, ‘Digital Media, Participatory Culture, and Difficult Heritage: Online Remediation and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade,’ *Journal of African Diaspora Archaeology and Heritage* 4, no. 3 (2015): 260-278; Ingrida Kelpšienė et al., ‘Difficult heritage on social network sites: an integrative review,’ *New Media & Society* 25, no., 11 (September 29, 2022): 3137-3164; Macdonald. *Difficult Heritage*; Agiatis Bernardou and Anna Maria Droumpouki, *Difficult Heritage and Immersive Experiences* (Routledge, 2023); Magdalena Weiglhofer et al., ‘Learning about conflict: the role of community museums in educating on difficult heritage in a divided society,’ *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 29, no. 5 (2023): 365-381. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2023.2189741>.

¹¹¹ Macdonald. *Difficult Heritage*; Kelpšienė et al., ‘Difficult heritage on social network sites.’

nation's specific history.¹¹² Unsurprisingly, they find that 'the most contested' topic in North America was slavery, and in Europe, 'colonial history and post-colonial discourses'.¹¹³ Difficult histories, applied predominantly in educational theory, developed earlier than theories of 'difficult heritage', from Deborah Britzman's 1998 work on 'difficult knowledge'.¹¹⁴ The similarities to theories of difficult heritage are apparent in educational theorists, Magdalena H. Gross and Luke Terra's definition of difficult histories as 'central to a nation's history' and involving 'violence, usually collective and sanctioned by the state... [which] may be committed by citizens of good standing'.¹¹⁵ Interestingly, in their review, Kelpšienė et al., search for research using the key terms of 'difficult heritage' and 'contested past' and so identify works where there was no clear division between theories of 'difficult heritage' and histories.¹¹⁶ The large number of studies they identify demonstrates that the interpretation of history is not neutral but emboldens specific identities and justifies existing power relations.

Central to many studies of 'difficult heritage' and histories is the notion that the difficulty is determined by the discomfort of the nation state. While these studies crucially interrogated the relationship between history, power and inequality, I suggest they can obscure Indigenous interpreters' experience. Even in 2015, as Macdonald debates whether difficult heritage was 'Still 'Difficult'?', revealing a new feeling that it was a nation's responsibility to acknowledge past atrocities, she assumes her audience are those who the nostalgic national narrative flattered.¹¹⁷ For the Māori observer, watching the replica Endeavour, the nostalgic, nationalistic interpretation of this heritage is difficult, and "actually quite devastating".¹¹⁸ Similarly, the dominant Mayflower narrative, the Thanksgiving story, has been sanitised and mythologised to justify settler-colonial presence and erase Wampanoag from their lands. For Indigenous people, a nationalist narrative does not reduce but exacerbates the difficulty and harm of these histories. The difference between the experiences of Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences, therefore, raises a vital challenge: for whom is a nuanced historical interpretation that challenges national mythmaking difficult? The review by Kelpšienė et al., included Britta Timm Knudsen and Casper Andersen's comparative study of the Rhodes

¹¹² Kelpšienė et al., 'Difficult heritage on social network sites.'

¹¹³ Kelpšienė et al., 'Difficult heritage on social network sites,' 3149.

¹¹⁴ Deborah Britzman, *Lost Subjects, Contested Objects* (State University of New York Press: 1998).

¹¹⁵ Magdalena H. Gross and Luke Terra, ed., *Teaching and Learning*, 4.

¹¹⁶ Kelpšienė et al., 'Difficult heritage on social network sites.'

¹¹⁷ Macdonald, *Is Difficult Heritage*.

¹¹⁸ BBC, "NZ anniversary: New Zealand divided".

Must Fall campaigns at the Universities of Cape Town, South Africa and Oxford, England.¹¹⁹ In their article, Knudsen and Andersen do not use the term ‘difficult heritage’ but instead use ‘contested’.¹²⁰ I suggest this is a meaningful choice based on their fieldsites’ colonial and settler colonial contexts.¹²¹ These contexts complicate the traditional meaning of ‘difficult heritage’ and histories which Macdonald designed to investigate Germany’s memorialisation of sites of violence that the public and state agreed were difficult but necessary to acknowledge.¹²² In contrast, colonial materiality in Europe is often celebratory, intentionally detached from histories of violence; slave traders and colonists are cleaned up and placed on pedestals. Knudsen and Andersen demonstrate that in Oxford and Cape Town, colonialism is ‘resilient’, a ‘continuous process’ against which the [Rhodes Must Fall] movements are battling.¹²³ The students of the Rhodes Must Fall Movement are required to demonstrate the difficulty of positive, nationalistic narratives.¹²⁴ Put simply, they engage in the hard work of persuading others that colonial history is difficult, contesting their universities’ acceptance of celebratory colonial histories.¹²⁵

Studies of ‘difficult heritage’ that focus on affect provide the tools to critically engage with histories that are contested and distinctly remembered by Indigenous and non-Indigenous interpreters in settler colonial and colonial contexts. Christoph Bareither applies ‘difficult heritage’ in an ethnographic study of selfie-taking at the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, in Berlin.¹²⁶ In doing so, he reveals how the history of genocide is ‘felt’, as visitors used digital media to create meaningful personal and affective relationships with a difficult past.¹²⁷ Bareither’s study, much like my research, applies an ethnographic methodology, to understand how ‘difficult heritage’ is made sense of by the individual.¹²⁸ Through this, Bareither reveals that the meaning participants place on their own selfie remains troubled and unsettled, ‘she now feels ‘conflicted’ about her self-representation.’¹²⁹ In this short article, Bareither demonstrates that affective relationships with history are personal, not just national,

¹¹⁹ Kelpšienė et al., ‘Difficult heritage on social network sites,’ 3149; Knudsen and Andersen, ‘Affective politics and colonial heritage.’

¹²⁰ Knudsen and Andersen, ‘Affective politics and colonial heritage.’

¹²¹ Knudsen and Andersen, ‘Affective politics and colonial heritage.’

¹²² Macdonald, *Is Difficult Heritage*.

¹²³ Knudsen and Andersen, ‘Affective politics and colonial heritage,’ 242.

¹²⁴ Macdonald, *Is Difficult Heritage*, 8.

¹²⁵ Knudsen and Andersen, ‘Affective politics and colonial heritage.’

¹²⁶ Bareither, ‘Difficult heritage and digital media,’ 70.

¹²⁷ Bareither, “Difficult heritage and digital media,” 70.

¹²⁸ Bareither, ‘Difficult heritage and digital media.’

¹²⁹ Bareither, ‘Difficult heritage and digital media,’ 67.

and can be transformed. While he reveals that the memorial visitors are re-making heritage by sharing their interpretations of the site online, his research is not unlike traditional ‘difficult heritage’ studies in focusing on the experience of the memorial and heritage site visitors, rather than heritage site workers.

Studies of ‘difficult heritage’ and histories have often overlooked the work of the historical interpreter, heritage worker or teacher, to focus on national ideas of identity and visitor or students’ experiences; this is even true of research written by educators.¹³⁰ I suggest that further analysis of the historical interpreter’s experience would enrich these studies. From educational studies, Keith Barton’s 2001 examination of school history students in Ireland and the US investigated how national narratives shape the frameworks through which history is interpreted.¹³¹ Barton observes that American students apply a ‘narrative approach’, that assumes a shared sense of belonging to the nation and a meritocratic society that was continually progressing.¹³² Barton concludes that this method of historical analysis is the result of an official memory that emphasises individual success and national progress.¹³³ Contrastingly, Barton argues that Irish students apply an ‘analytical approach’, having been taught to interpret ‘static portrayals of life’ rather than the details of a national narrative.¹³⁴ He concludes that Ireland’s highly contested history and fraught political environment discourages ‘schools...most museums and other public historical sites’ from siding with one historical narrative.¹³⁵ Barton therefore, demonstrates that historical narratives are shaped by national identity.¹³⁶ However, with limited analysis of the teachers’ experiences, this study does not reveal how these interpretive frameworks can be challenged, resisted, or transformed. The question remains: how does the teacher recognise and respond to national frameworks in the construction of their historical interpretation?

Aotearoa teacher, Bronwyn Houliston, in her 2019 doctoral thesis, briefly reveals the rich potential of examining the work of the historical interpreter. Houliston’s study largely

¹³⁰ Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage*.

¹³¹ Keith Barton, ‘History Education and National Identity in Northern Ireland and the United States: Differing Priorities,’ *Theory into Practice* 40, no. 1 (2001): 48-54.

¹³² Keith Barton, ‘A Sociocultural Perspective on Children’s Understanding of Historical Change: Comparative Findings from Northern Ireland and the United States,’ 38, no. 4 (2001): 881-913.

¹³³ Barton, ‘A Sociocultural Perspective on Children’s Understanding,’ 898.

¹³⁴ Barton, ‘A Sociocultural Perspective on Children’s Understanding,’ 899.

¹³⁵ Barton, ‘A Sociocultural Perspective on Children’s Understanding,’ 901.

¹³⁶ Barton, ‘A Sociocultural Perspective on Children’s Understanding.’

investigates how Pacific learners' 'sense of identity in the New Zealand context' impacts their historical interpretation and engagement.¹³⁷ She observes 70 Pacific students within class activities and talanoa [transparent dialogue] at a South Auckland Catholic girls' high school.¹³⁸ She demonstrates that Pacific learners 'engage with historical content in complex and nuanced ways', through an interpretive framework that she describes as a 'lens of marginalisation'.¹³⁹ With this framework, shaped by their identity as Pacifica, students privilege historical accounts that were motivated by social justice, they recognise power imbalances between 'dominant Eurocentric discourse' and 'minority perspectives', and find personal connections with histories they could approach through their cultural understandings.¹⁴⁰ Houliston encourages her students to critically consider how she as their teacher, shapes the histories they learnt. However, she only briefly reflects on how her experience of historical interpretation is shaped by her Pākehā lens: 'The participants' more specific critique of the [module]...forced me to reflect, at times uncomfortably, on my role in perpetuating a dominant Eurocentric approach to teaching and learning history.'¹⁴¹ This small insight into the complex affective work of navigating distinct relationships with history, reveals that historical interpreters' practice carries significant potential for further study.

Studies that critically engage with heritage sites' British colonial history, and their claims to 'authoritative knowledge', commonly overlook how historical interpreters (curators, managers, and volunteer guides) understand, resist or perpetuate colonial narratives. Most commonly, the museum is presented with its own identity; it is 'The Museum' that has a colonial history and preserves contemporary inequalities and the erasure of Indigenous voices. Interdisciplinary researcher, Caitlin Gordon-Walker presents the museum in this way in her powerful examination of Indigenous representation and sovereignties in contemporary Canadian museums:

Ironically, given their common association with dominant forms of power, museums' acknowledgement of these oppositional perspectives [such as those of Indigenous peoples] can act as a way to contain them, especially when they are framed in relation to ideas of the nation... the assertion of

¹³⁷ Bronwyn Houliston, 'A Lens of Marginalisation Pacific Learners in Aotearoa/ New Zealand and their Understanding of History' (PhD diss., University of Auckland, 2019), 174.

¹³⁸ Houliston, 'Pacific Learners in Aotearoa.'

¹³⁹ Houliston, 'Pacific Learners in Aotearoa,' i.

¹⁴⁰ Houliston, 'Pacific Learners in Aotearoa,' 121.

¹⁴¹ Houliston, 'Pacific Learners in Aotearoa,' 150.

these perspectives within the authoritative space of the museum also recognizes their authority.¹⁴²

Here, Gordon-Walker echoes Macdonald's 2015 article, in which Macdonald considers whether 'difficult heritage' remains a challenge, describing an increasingly common practice of heritage sites feeling it is right to provide space for multiple, conflicting historical perspectives.¹⁴³ Both Macdonald and Gordon-Walker warn that the inclusion of marginalised histories and voices does not ensure a radical change in museums' historical interpretation. I suggest that this shift in sentiment, and the potential that efforts to include can restrict or 'contain' Indigenous voices, makes examining the work of historical interpreters who produce and interpret these exhibitions even more vital.¹⁴⁴

Difficult histories attend to both the representation of violent histories within the curriculum and teacher and student interactions with them through pedagogy.¹⁴⁵ These studies of pedagogy provide a theoretical foundation for considering the challenging and affective work of those who interpret histories to others. A significant theoretical development for this thesis came from social studies researcher, Maia Sheppard's 2010 doctoral thesis.¹⁴⁶ Through a study of an urban classroom in Turtle Island she concludes that histories are not inherently difficult but 'co-constructed... by the teacher and students as difficult history'.¹⁴⁷ Sheppard defines difficult histories as '(a) content centred on traumatic events; (b) a sense of identification between those studying the history and those represented in history; and (c) a moral response to these events.'¹⁴⁸ This definition allows her to examine individuals' distinct relationships with history, which she suggests are shaped by personal background and, as Houliston's work shows, the interpersonal relationship between student and teacher.¹⁴⁹ Sheppard observes that, 'personal beliefs and experiences, especially those related to issues of race and ethnicity, remained crucial to students' historical understanding.'¹⁵⁰ These can be 'vehicles to better understand distant others' and at other times 'they were barriers.'¹⁵¹ Sheppard's definition provides a foundation to understand how Indigenous and non-

¹⁴² Caitlin Gordon-Walker, 'Beyond Inclusion,' *BC Studies* no. 199 (2018): 132.

¹⁴³ Gordon-Walker, 'Beyond Inclusion.'; Macdonald, *Is Difficult Heritage*.

¹⁴⁴ Gordon-Walker, 'Beyond Inclusion.'

¹⁴⁵ Sheppard, 'Difficult Histories in an Urban Classroom.'

¹⁴⁶ Sheppard, 'Difficult Histories in an Urban Classroom.'

¹⁴⁷ Harcourt, 'Teaching and learning New Zealand's,' 15.

¹⁴⁸ Sheppard, 'Difficult Histories in an Urban Classroom,' iii.

¹⁴⁹ Sheppard, 'Difficult Histories in an Urban Classroom.'; Houliston, 'Pacific Learners in Aotearoa.'

¹⁵⁰ Sheppard, 'Difficult Histories in an Urban Classroom,' 136.

¹⁵¹ Sheppard, 'Difficult Histories in an Urban Classroom.'

Indigenous interpreters might experience histories profoundly differently, and allows for the possibility of a transformation of historical understanding through partnership.

Aotearoa history teacher, Michael Harcourt's 2020 doctoral study, explores teachers' and students' experiences of the affective and pedagogical complexities of teaching and learning colonial history in Aotearoa secondary schools.¹⁵² His mixed methods approach involves a survey of 298 history and social studies teachers and 1,889 students, alongside ethnographic research. Harcourt's study reveals that most teachers were critical of colonisation and acknowledged its links to the present.¹⁵³ However, most of the surveyed teachers had not meaningfully formed relationships with iwi and hapū, and teachers' 'struggled to engage pedagogically with Māori perspectives' and could avoid contentious histories in response to Pākehā students' discomfort.¹⁵⁴ His work, like my own, identifies distinct experiences among historical interpreters. He also highlights that teachers critical of colonial history could still engage in topic avoidance, and pedagogies that preserved historical silences.¹⁵⁵ By examining the experiences of teachers and students, Harcourt reveals meaningful differences in students' and teachers' perceptions of Aotearoa's histories. Teachers shared 'critical views' about colonisation and recognised that it had ongoing 'destructive' effects, 'primarily for Māori'.¹⁵⁶ In contrast, many students, predominantly Pākehā, failed to recognise that these histories impacted the present, even if they were 'critical' of colonisation.¹⁵⁷ Harcourt's study uncovers the key challenges impacting a large group of educators and students, in order to inform 'educational reform at local and national levels'.¹⁵⁸ By following the experiences of a smaller number of interpreters across multiple interviews, my thesis hopes to reveal more about how teachers' relationships with Aotearoa's Indigenous and colonial history changed overtime.

2.7 The Affective Work of Historical Learning and Teaching

In this section, I reflect on how my research responds to over a decade of calls by educational and heritage theorists to recognise the role of affect in historical learning. I review literature

¹⁵² Harcourt, 'New Zealand's difficult history.'

¹⁵³ Harcourt, 'New Zealand's difficult history.'

¹⁵⁴ Harcourt, 'New Zealand's difficult history,' ii.

¹⁵⁵ Harcourt, 'New Zealand's difficult history,' 107.

¹⁵⁶ Harcourt, 'New Zealand's difficult history,' ii, 117, 118.

¹⁵⁷ Harcourt, 'New Zealand's difficult history,' ii, 117, 118.

¹⁵⁸ Harcourt, 'New Zealand's difficult history,' 1.

on historical empathy, which has been a central focus of studies of affect within heritage and educational pedagogies.¹⁵⁹ I define empathy as it appears in these studies of school-based history teaching as well as in the context of collaborative heritage practices. I suggest that empathy describes a breadth of affective expressions and meaningfully draws attention to the role of affect and cognition in historical learning. Ultimately, I argue for an examination of affect beyond the potentially limiting term ‘empathy’, and in chapter four, I develop a definition of affect from my ethnographic data to support a more detailed analysis of Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners’ interpretive practices.

The acknowledgement of students’ affective experience of learning history marked a major shift in educational studies. In 2010, educational theorist Jason L. Endacott tried to persuade his peers that historical learning involves affect.¹⁶⁰ He shared his theory of historical empathy and defined it as ‘cognitive-affective’ work; this is now a well-established argument in both education and heritage studies.¹⁶¹ In Endacott’s later 2014 work, he acknowledges this growth in the field and analyses students’ engagement with historical empathy and how it shapes their historical learning.¹⁶² He focuses on high school students’ engagement with Harry Truman’s decision to use nuclear weapons, revealing how they ‘incorporated cause and consequence, continuity and change, significance, agency, and judgement’ through tasks that encouraged historical empathy.¹⁶³ Endacott’s definition of historical empathy meaningfully challenges what cultural sociologist Carolyn Pedwell describes as the dominant Euro-American characterisation of empathy.¹⁶⁴ Rooted in the work of Scottish philosophers Adam Smith and David Hume, this dominant characterisation associates empathy ‘reductively with knowledge, accuracy and prediction.’¹⁶⁵ Endacott instead warns against pedagogies that focus

¹⁵⁹ Geerte M. Savenije and Pieter de Bruijn, ‘Historical empathy in a museum: uniting contextualisation and emotional engagement,’ *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 23, no. 9 (June 2017): 832 – 845, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2017.1339108>; Endacott, ‘Affective Engagement in Historical Empathy’, 6; Endacott, ‘Negotiating the Process of Historical Empathy,’; Melanie Innes, and Heather Sharp, ‘Historical Empathy and Museum Culture,’ *Journal of Museum Education* (2021 January): 307-320, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10598650.2021.1954771>; Smith, Wetherell, and Campbell, *Emotion, Affective Practice*; Michalinos Zembylas, ‘Refusal as affective and pedagogical practice in higher education decolonization: a modest proposal’ (2020): 953-968, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2021.1900816>.

¹⁶⁰ Endacott, ‘Affective Engagement in Historical Empathy’.

¹⁶¹ Endacott, ‘Affective Engagement in Historical Empathy,’; Endacott, ‘Negotiating the Process of Historical Empathy,’; Savenije and Bruijn, ‘Historical empathy in a museum,’; Innes and Heather Sharp, ‘Historical Empathy and Museum Culture.’

¹⁶² Endacott, ‘Negotiating the Process of Historical Empathy’.

¹⁶³ Endacott, ‘Negotiating the Process of Historical Empathy,’ 29.

¹⁶⁴ Carolyn Pedwell, ‘De-colonising Empathy: Thinking Affect Transnationally,’ *Samyukta: A Journal of Gender and Culture* 1, no. 1(2016): 13.

¹⁶⁵ Pedwell, ‘De-colonising Empathy,’ 13.

on affect without historical understanding, the full ‘cognitive-affective’ practice of historical empathy.¹⁶⁶ He argues that this would risk encouraging ‘presentism’ or an ‘egoistic drift’, an affective engagement that fails to account for the different contexts and motivations of past actors.¹⁶⁷ There is a self-aware tension in Endacott’s definition; he offers a social, cultural and contextual definition of empathy, shaped by the student’s personal background; however, he also emphasises that the cognitive work of ‘historical empathy’ involves critically identifying and challenging the influence of contemporary perspectives.¹⁶⁸

Social behavioural scientist Geerte M. Savenije, and philosopher, Pieter de Bruijn similarly argue the importance of analysing the affective and cognitive work of historical learning in museum-based historical interpretation.¹⁶⁹ Their study, although limited to an analysis of the impacts of specific educational goals within a single exhibition, powerfully demonstrates that pedagogies of historical empathy must also focus on building knowledge of historical context.¹⁷⁰ They observe 22 students aged 15 to 19 engaging in a class on children’s experiences in the Second World War, at the Museon in The Hague.¹⁷¹ They show that a lack of knowledge of historical details can lead to harmful misunderstandings. One student asks, ‘Why as a Jew would you walk on the street with a Jewish badge when that was exactly the danger?’¹⁷² Endacott, Savenije, and Bruijn demonstrate that historical empathy, or the use of affect within pedagogy, should be part of a ‘cognitive-affective’ approach to cultivate historical learning.¹⁷³ It is this focus that encourages my examination of the role of affect and cognition in the historical interpreters’ practices of both learning and teaching British colonial and Indigenous histories.

Collaborative heritage and teaching practices can fail to achieve historical empathy when empathy is conceived of as simply a positive feeling of sympathy.¹⁷⁴ I argue instead that

¹⁶⁶ Endacott, ‘Negotiating the Process of Historical Empathy’.

¹⁶⁷ Endacott refers here to a historical presentism, which he defines as the danger of misinterpreting the past by applying the morality and contexts of the present. Endacott, ‘Negotiating the Process of Historical Empathy,’ 29.

¹⁶⁸ Endacott, ‘Affective Engagement in Historical Empathy’; Endacott, ‘Negotiating the Process of Historical Empathy’.

¹⁶⁹ Savenije and Bruijn, ‘Historical empathy in a museum,’ 839.

¹⁷⁰ Savenije and Bruijn, ‘Historical empathy in a museum.’

¹⁷¹ Savenije and Bruijn, ‘Historical empathy in a museum.’

¹⁷² Savenije and Bruijn, ‘Historical empathy in a museum,’ 841.

¹⁷³ Endacott, ‘Affective Engagement in Historical Empathy,’; Endacott, ‘Negotiating the Process of Historical Empathy,’; Savenije and Bruijn, ‘Historical empathy in a museum.’

¹⁷⁴ Pedwell, ‘De-colonising Empathy,’ 2.

within the context of co-production, as with school-based pedagogies, historical empathy involves cognition and a breadth of affective experiences that generate an understanding of how historical events shape the everyday lives of the interpretive partner in shared and distinct ways. In the case of Indigenous and non-Indigenous partnership, Tuck and Yang argue that empathy without understanding of difference risk a ‘settler move to innocence,’ where the empathetic individual co-opts or appropriates the others’ experience without recognising the self’s position in a social structure that perpetuates discrimination.¹⁷⁵ Museologists Bernadette Lynch and Samuel Alberti’s study of exhibition co-production between Manchester Museum and diaspora communities, reveals how empathy as an ‘endpoint’ can preserve rather than radically challenge museums’ claims to power.¹⁷⁶ Curators at the Manchester Museum hoped to use this collaboration to facilitate a constructive challenge to ‘traces’ of institutional racism and colonialism within the Museum’s practices.¹⁷⁷ However, Lynch and Alberti reveal that the heritage workers engaged with empathy to create agreement rather than to open and examine difference. To avoid conflict, the Museum interpreters engaged in articulating ‘pre-determined’ topics, subtly avoiding ‘differences of opinion and effectively overriding group members’ passion and anger,’ as well as minimising topics or requests they felt did not ‘fit the remit of the exhibition’.¹⁷⁸ Ultimately the interpreters’ confronted and complied with numerous institutional norms, and their own expectations for collaboration and appropriate affective behaviour meant that the intended collaborative partnership never involved a shared authority or transformation of Museum practice.¹⁷⁹ Throughout its psychological analysis, empathy has been defined along different intensities of engagement, from ‘fellow feeling’, a sympathy without shared feeling, to ideas of vicarious trauma, a lived experience of the others’ affect.¹⁸⁰ However, as the partnership at the Manchester Museum reveals, empathy cannot only be understood as an expression of sympathy. I agree with Pedwell that, ‘empathy is not singular, nor does it emerge or become intelligible outside the presence of other affects, both

¹⁷⁵ Tuck and Yang, ‘Decolonization is not a metaphor.’

¹⁷⁶ Bernadette T. Lynch and Samuel J.M.M. Alberti, ‘Legacies of prejudice: racism, co-production and radical trust in the museum,’ *Museum Management and Curatorship* 25, no. 1 (2010): 13-35.

¹⁷⁷ Lynch and Alberti, ‘Legacies of prejudice’.

¹⁷⁸ Lynch and Alberti, ‘Legacies of prejudice,’ 22.

¹⁷⁹ Lynch and Alberti, ‘Legacies of prejudice’.

¹⁸⁰ John Muller, “Max Scheler,” In *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, December 8, 2011, accessed April 6, 2026, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/scheler>; Lisa McCann and Laurie Anne Pearlman, ‘Vicarious traumatising: A framework for understanding the psychological effects of working with victims’ *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 3, no. 1 (1990): 131-149, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00975140>.

‘good’ and ‘bad’.¹⁸¹ Our definition seeks to reflect, ‘empathy’s ambivalence, complexity and contingent relationships with other emotions and affects’.¹⁸² I suggest that it was through a limited but dominant view of empathy as sympathy that interpreters at the Manchester Museum failed to support transformative affective discourse and ‘genuine co-production’.¹⁸³

While empathy can be defined as a breadth of affective engagements and intensities, I suggest the term can fail to capture the role of resistance and affective disengagement in historical learning. The evaluation of affective reactions to exhibitions on the bicentenary of the slave trade by Smith et al., reveal that visitors share broad and unpredictable ‘registers of [affective] engagement’.¹⁸⁴ Smith et al., demonstrate that despite the interpreters’ pedagogical aims of generating historical empathy, empathy emerged not as an intrinsic reaction to suffering, but rather an interaction between the design of the Museum and the background knowledge of the visitors.¹⁸⁵ For example they show that the white British response was ‘dominated by emotional avoidance and disengagement with exhibition content’.¹⁸⁶ Educational theorist Michalinos Zembylas similarly explores a denial of the vulnerability of the other, which he shows to be produced through ‘everyday pedagogical practices and discourses’.¹⁸⁷ Zembylas analyses how teachers’ affective expressions and very identity as teachers, are shaped by ‘feeling rules’, which he characterises as ‘affective’ or ‘emotional regimes’, that encourage certain ‘affective norms’ including emotional avoidance.¹⁸⁸ Here,

¹⁸¹ Carolyn Pedwell, *Affective Relations The Transnational Politics of Empathy* (2014, Palgrave Macmillan), 105-7.

¹⁸² Pedwell, ‘De-colonising Empathy,’ 28.

¹⁸³ Lynch and Alberti, ‘Legacies of prejudice,’ 23.

¹⁸⁴ Laurajane Smith et al., *Representing Enslavement and Abolition in Museums: Ambiguous Engagements* (Routledge, 2011).

¹⁸⁵ Laurajane Smith, ‘Man’s inhumanity to man’ and other platitudes of avoidance and misrecognition: an analysis of visitor responses to exhibitions marking the 1807 bicentenary,’ *museum and society* 8, no. 3 (2010):193-214.

¹⁸⁶ Smith, ‘Man’s inhumanity to man,’ 193.

¹⁸⁷ Zembylas, ‘Wilful Ignorance,’ 501.

¹⁸⁸ Michalinos Zembylas, ‘Theorizing the affective regime of “best practice” in education policy,’ *European Educational Research Journal* 22, no. 2 (2023): 281-287; Zembylas, ‘The emotional regimes of reconciliation in history textbook revision: reflections on the politics of resentment and the politics of empathy in post conflict societies,’ *Pedagogy, Culture & Society* 24, no 3 (2016): 329-342; Zembylas, ‘Rethinking race and racism as *technologies of affect*: theorizing the implications for anti-racist politics and practice in education,’ 18, no. 2 (2015): 3; Zembylas, ‘Teacher resistance to engage with ‘alternative’ perspectives of difficult histories: the limits and prospects of affective disruption,’ *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 5, no. 38 (2017): 659-675; Zembylas, ‘Wilful Ignorance and the Emotional Regime of Schools,’ *British Journal of Educational Studies* 65, no. 4 (2017): 499 – 515; Michalinos Zembylas, ‘Refusal as affective and pedagogical practice.’; Zembylas, ‘Understanding the Emotional Regimes of Reconciliation in Engagement with ‘difficult’ Heritage.’ In *Emotion, Affective Practices, and the Past in the Present* (Routledge, 2018): 198-208; Lynn Isenbarger and Michalinos Zembylas, ‘The emotional labour of caring in teaching,’ *Teaching and Teacher Education* 22, no. 1 (2006): 120-134; Zembylas, “‘Structures of Feeling” in Curriculum and Teaching: Theorizing the Emotional Rules,’ *Educational Theory* 52, no. 2 (2005): 187; Zembylas, ‘Discursive Practices,

Zembylas draws on sociologist Arlie Hochschild's 'feeling rules', cultural tools specifying the kinds of emotions appropriate in different situations.¹⁸⁹ However, Zembylas moves beyond Hochschild's theory to reveal how these affective regimes impress upon the teacher but can be adopted, resisted, embraced or overlooked.¹⁹⁰ Within chapter four, I develop a definition of affect that emerges from my ethnographic data and recognises this agency. Building on the literature I have reviewed above, I approach my analysis of historical interpreters' practice with a focus on cognitive-affective work, and I move beyond the term 'empathy' to examine how affect is experienced, mobilised, resisted and transformed by Indigenous and non-Indigenous interpreters working in partnership.

2.8 'A Forgotten History' or 'Race & Class in the Ruins of the Empire'

The title of this section combines two incisive works exploring British colonial history and its contemporary impact, by historian David Olusoga and rapper and activist Akala.¹⁹¹ Their work details a rich, global Black British history, which they stress has been 'ignored completely or else reduced to footnotes' within England's dominant national memory.¹⁹² Forgotten histories stress that the suppression of British colonial and Black British histories is a mechanism of racism, which hides and maintains contemporary racial inequalities. Within Britain and former British colonies, academic and non-academic historical interpreters are carefully constructing accessible accounts of the histories of colonisation, to challenge colonial legacies.¹⁹³ I borrow a term from Olusoga's work *Black and British: A Forgotten History*, grouping all these accessible Imperial histories under the title, forgotten histories.¹⁹⁴ I thereby acknowledge their shared core arguments and emphasise that forgotten histories

Genealogies, and Emotional Rules: A Poststructuralist View on Emotion and Identity in Teaching,' *Teaching and Teacher Education* 21, no. 8 (2005): 935-948; Zembylas, 'Interrogating "Teacher Identity": Emotion, Resistance, and Self-formation,' *Educational Theory* 53, no. 1 (2003): 107-127.

¹⁸⁹ Arlie Hochschild, 'Emotion Work, Feeling Rules, and Social Structure,' *American Journal of Sociology* 85, no. 3 (1979): 551-575.

¹⁹⁰ Hochschild, 'Emotion Work, Feeling Rules'; Zembylas, 'Theorizing the affective regime.'; Zembylas, 'Understanding the Emotional Regimes.'

¹⁹¹ Olusoga, *A Forgotten History*; Akala, *Natives Race & Class in the Ruins of Empire* (Two Roads, 2018).

¹⁹² Olusoga, *A Forgotten History*, xx.

¹⁹³ See Akala, *Natives Race & Class*; Thrush, *Indigenous London*; Charlie Brinkhurst-Cuff, ed., *Mother Country Real Stories of the Windrush Children* (Headline Book Publishing, 2018); Corinne Fowler, *Green Unpleasant Land* (Peepal Tree Press Limited, 2020); Olusoga, *A Forgotten History*; David Olusoga, *Black and British A Short, Essential History* (Pan Macmillan: 2020); Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History*; Sathnam Sanghera, *Stolen History The Truth About The British Empire and How it Shaped us*, 2nd ed. (Puffin Books, 2023); Sathnam Sanhera, *Empireland* (Penguin, 2021); Shashi Tharoor, *Inglorious Empire What the British Did to India* (Penguin Books, 2018).

¹⁹⁴ Olusoga, *A Forgotten History*.

have cumulatively shaped national conversations. Forgotten histories represent a change in colonial historiography, a growing focus on the colonial foundations of contemporary British and settler-colonial constructions of race and racial hierarchies, classism, and inequalities between nations.¹⁹⁵ Within the foreword of *Mother Country: Real Stories of the Windrush Children*, a compilation of autobiographical accounts of Caribbean immigrants to England, David Lammy, Labour MP, describes the media coverage of the Windrush Generation as characterised by a ‘failure of story-telling’.¹⁹⁶ This compilation of short personal recollections joins a growing call not to sterilise or overly simplify British history, but to share it comprehensively within its full colonial context.¹⁹⁷ Delivering a speech at Oxford University in 2015, senior Indian politician Sashi Tharoor encountered a surprising reaction from audiences, when ‘they reacted as if I had opened their eyes instead of reiterating what they had already known’. He emphasises that what he shared was ‘Indian Nationalism 101’.¹⁹⁸ The recorded speech, in which Tharoor argues that Britain owes India reparations, went viral and he was celebrated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for saying ‘the right things at the right place’.¹⁹⁹ Tharoor, shocked by his audiences’ absences of knowledge, wrote an accessible and detailed history of the British Empire’s actions in India, *Inglorious Empire: What the British Did to India*.²⁰⁰ He writes, ‘The moral urgency of explaining to today’s Indian - and Britons - why colonialism was the horror it turned out to be could not be put aside’.²⁰¹ The urgency to provide foundational historical information and cultivate critical engagement in colonial histories, has inspired such authors of British colonial histories to also write children’s books.²⁰² British journalist Sathnam Sanghera adapted his bestseller, *Empireland*, into a short, illustrated book for children, entitled *Stolen History: The Truth About the British Empire and How It Shaped Us*. He explained:

¹⁹⁵ See Akala, *Natives Race & Class*; Thrush, *Indigenous London*; Brinkhurst-Cuff, ed., *Mother Country*; Fowler, *Green Unpleasant Land*; Olusoga, *A Forgotten History*; Olusoga, *Black and British A Short*; Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples’ History*; Sanghera, *Stolen History*; Sanghera, *Empireland*; Tharoor, *Inglorious Empire*.

¹⁹⁶ Brinkhurst-Cuff, ed., *Mother Country*, xxi.

¹⁹⁷ Brinkhurst-Cuff, ed., *Mother Country*.

¹⁹⁸ Tharoor, *Inglorious Empire*.

¹⁹⁹ Tharoor, *Inglorious Empire*, 2.

²⁰⁰ Tharoor, *Inglorious Empire*.

²⁰¹ Tharoor, *Inglorious Empire*, 2.

²⁰² Adeola, *Hey You!*; *An Empowering Celebration of Growing up Black* (Penguin Young Readers Group, 2022); David Olusoga, *Black and British A Short, Essential History* (Pan Macmillan, 2020); Coombs, *Colonization and the Wampanoag*; Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States for Young People*, adapted, Debbie Reese and Jean Medoza (Beacon Press, 2019); Sathnam Sanghera, *Stolen History*.

The British Empire (and don't worry, I'll be explaining exactly what this is very soon!) was the biggest empire in human history, covering a quarter of the planet at its height, and is the biggest thing Britain ever did as a nation.'²⁰³

I returned to this statement throughout my research. As Sanghera reassures the reader that he will soon explain 'the biggest thing Britain ever did', he captures the strangeness of the magnitude of what the English have forgotten. These authors write with urgency, explicitly linking absences of knowledge of British colonial histories to the violent deportation, incarceration, and marginalisation of Black British communities. The backlash the authors of forgotten histories receive highlight that the silencing of British colonial history is actively preserved. Many of these writers have been met with surprise, scepticism, and even death threats, with Black writers facing racist claims that they are not British.²⁰⁴ I argue that these popular works draw vital attention to the presence and impact of a profound lack of knowledge of British colonial history. The interpreters' experiences also expose the challenging work of historical interpretation and point to structures and behaviours that continue to suppress England's histories and perpetuate colonial violence.

2.9 Colonial Amnesia, Nostalgia and The Art of Forgetting

Studies of colonial history and memory have struggled to reconcile sincere absences of knowledge or colonial amnesia with colonial nostalgia. I define colonial amnesia as an absence of knowledge of the details of British Colonial and Indigenous histories, while colonial nostalgia is a calculated disavowal of colonial violence and its legacies. Studies of colonial nostalgia show that the eighteenth-century pathological definition of nostalgia, as a desperate disease experienced by the displaced individual, persists. As historian Hannah Woods reflects, 'Britain's fixation upon the fading glories of the national past has been likened to a collective illness.'²⁰⁵ Despite this pathological language, contemporary definitions of nostalgia have undergone significant transformation. Mitchell argues that even as we seek to define nostalgia as it was in the eighteenth century, contemporary ideas of 'the

²⁰³ Sathnam Sanghera, *Stolen History*, 4.

²⁰⁴ For a broader discussion of the Culture Wars and threats made against colonial history research, see Creamer, 'Uk within British empire'; Jamie Doward, 'I've been unfairly targeted, says academic at heart of National Trust 'woke' row,' *The Guardian*, December 20, 2020, accessed 17, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/dec/20/ive-been-unfairly-targeted-says-academic-at-heart-of-national-trust-woke-row>. Mitchell, *Imperial Nostalgia*.

²⁰⁵ Hannah Rose Woods, *Rule, Nostalgia A Backwards History of Britain* (Penguin Random House, 2022), 6.

political valences of nostalgia...something which happens to cultures more than it does to people' is evident.²⁰⁶ Cultural theorist Svetlana Boym, and social geographer Alastair Bonnett look to explain nostalgia within a globalised world, as 'a chronic facet of political life'.²⁰⁷ For Woods, nostalgia is an 'enduring and seductive emotion over hundreds of years of change'.²⁰⁸ Across these definitions the sense of nostalgia as both a cultural and personal feeling is preserved.²⁰⁹

Historian and geographer, David Lowenthal's traditional definition remains a significant influence within contemporary studies of nostalgia, as a longing for a past that has been transformed or sanitised.²¹⁰ However, he presents a conservative view of nostalgia as a negative distortion of history through heritage.²¹¹ Contemporary definitions have deviated from this to acknowledge nostalgia's creative power.²¹² Bonnet argues against the criticism of nostalgia as a 'paralysing structure of historical reflection', to show it can instead be a site of creativity that results from and 'disturbs modern life'.²¹³ Boym similarly describes a 'reflexive nostalgia', which involves a critical, self-conscious engagement with the past in which new futures can be made.²¹⁴ Despite this increasingly nuanced perception of nostalgia, Imperial or colonial nostalgia is still reminiscent of Lowenthal's traditional definition, as it is most commonly used as an accusation of an uncritical, damaging and conservative longing for an Imperial history that is itself poorly understood.²¹⁵

The concept of disavowal, a denial of responsibility or connection to violent histories, has been profoundly influential in debates over historical memory and is fundamental to theories of colonial nostalgia. Commonly, studies of colonial memory refer to both an active denial and a sincere forgetting. Harcourt argues that all settler-colonial societies are 'characterized

²⁰⁶ Mitchell, *Imperial Nostalgia*, 19.

²⁰⁷ Svetlana Boym, 'Nostalgia and Its Discontents,' *Hedgehog Review* 9, no. 2 (2007): 7-18; Alastair Bonnett, *Left in the Past Radicalism and the Politics of Nostalgia* (Continuum, 2010).

²⁰⁸ Woods, *Rule, Nostalgia A Backwards History*, 3.

²⁰⁹ Bonnett, *Left in the Past*; Boym, 'Nostalgia and Its Discontents'; Mitchell, *Imperial Nostalgia*; Woods, *Rule, Nostalgia A Backwards History*, 3.

²¹⁰ David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge University Press, 1985); David Lowenthal, 'Nostalgia Tells It Like It Wasn't,' in *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia*, edited by Malcolm Chase and Christopher Shaw (Manchester University Press, 1989): 18-32.

²¹¹ Lowenthal, 'Nostalgia Tells It Like It Wasn't.'

²¹² Bonnett, *Left in the Past*; Boym, 'Nostalgia and Its Discontents'; Mitchell, *Imperial Nostalgia*; Woods, *Rule, Nostalgia A Backwards History*, 3.

²¹³ Bonnett, *Left in the Past*, 10.

²¹⁴ Boym, 'Nostalgia and Its Discontents.'

²¹⁵ Creamer, 'Uk within British empire'; Mitchell, *Imperial Nostalgia*. Nadine El Enany, "Things Fall Apart," *University of Bath*, May 2, 2017; Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia*.

by a denial, sanitization and ‘cultural forgetting’ of their violent histories of colonisation and invasion of Indigenous lands’.²¹⁶ In 2017, legal scholar Nadine El-Enany argues that ‘imperial nostalgia’ profoundly shapes England’s national and international politics.²¹⁷ El-Enany uses ‘nostalgia’ not to suggest a comprehensive understanding of Empire, but an absence of knowledge.²¹⁸ In her later 2020 work, she argues that both ‘imperial nostalgia’ and amnesia ‘fester’ across Britain.²¹⁹ In a study of the contested memorialisation of the New Zealand Wars, sociologists Joanna Kidman (Ngāti Maniapoto and Ngāti Raukawa) et al., reveal a profound lack of knowledge of the New Zealand Wars, and Māori histories among the Aotearoa public.²²⁰ However, in their introduction they describe this ‘art of forgetting’ colonial history as ‘a process involving the ‘deliberate purposeful and regulated’ judgement about what, at a collective level, a nation, society or group wishes ‘to keep’.²²¹ Some studies argue for the use of either colonial amnesia or nostalgia only. Law teacher Dr Kojo Koram proposes that Britain’s colonial memory is defined by an amnesia not a nostalgia.²²² He argues that nostalgia obscures the profound, sincere absence of knowledge of colonial history in England.²²³ Koram stresses that colonial amnesia does not refute that this absence of historical memory preserves colonial inequalities.²²⁴ He explains that forgetting began during the colonial project, in which British colonists presented themselves as ‘absentminded imperialist’.²²⁵ In stark contrast, Kevin Bruyneel labels amnesia a ‘misdiagnosis’, pointing to how British colonial and Indigenous histories are altered and suppressed in Turtle Island, to intentionally preserve colonial power dynamics.²²⁶

I suggest that the tension between amnesia and nostalgia is part of a broader debate over intentionality that we may never fully resolve. Academics have sought to evaluate and challenge a sincere absence of knowledge without removing culpability from those who produce it. While forgotten histories have identified a profound absence of knowledge, theories of nostalgia help to explain why the provision of historical information has been

²¹⁶ Harcourt, ‘New Zealand’s difficult history.’

²¹⁷ Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia*; Mitchell, *Imperial Nostalgia*; Nadine El-Enany, “Things Fall Apart”.

²¹⁸ El-Enany, ‘Things Fall Apart.’

²¹⁹ El-Enany, *Bordering Britain: Law, Race and Empire* (Manchester University Press, 2020), 16.

²²⁰ Joanna Kidman et al., *Fragments from a Contested Past*.

²²¹ Joanna Kidman et al., *Fragments from a Contested Past*, 2.

²²² Race in Britain, ‘Britain’s Colonial Amnesia.’

²²³ Race in Britain, ‘Britain’s Colonial Amnesia.’

²²⁴ Race in Britain, ‘Britain’s Colonial Amnesia.’

²²⁵ Race in Britain, ‘Britain’s Colonial Amnesia.’

²²⁶ Bruyneel, ‘The trouble with amnesia.’

insufficient to overcome this amnesia. British historian Robert Fletcher provides a theoretical foundation for this thesis in his conclusion that different forms of amnesia coexist. Fletcher presents a theory of ‘imperialist amnesia’, which he defines as a ‘fetishistic disavowal of the legacy of European colonisation’.²²⁷ He argues that colonial histories operated as a ‘public secret’, drawing on Michael Taussig’s definition of this as a ‘magnificent deceit in whose making all members of a society, so it would seem, conspire...relying on an ‘active not-knowing’ or ‘knowing what not to know’ by those complicit in its production’.²²⁸ It is this quality of the ‘public secret’, that Fletcher says makes sense of why the provision of historical information is not enough to affect ‘change in authorities’ perceptions and behaviour’.²²⁹ As such, Fletcher’s theory of amnesia draws on the traditional qualities of theories of nostalgia. Significantly for this study, Fletcher presents ‘imperialist amnesia’ not as an alternative explanation to ‘imperialist nostalgia’ but ‘a related, yet distinct, characteristic’.²³⁰ Throughout this thesis, I consider where sincere absences of knowledge coexist with practices of disavowal. In this manner I take Fletcher’s claim that a multiplicity of ways of forgetting coexist.²³¹ I also agree with Fletcher’s conclusion that imperial amnesia and nostalgia exist within academia.²³² I therefore look for, and identify, amnesia and nostalgia in the work of those who teach British colonial and Indigenous histories.

This thesis contributes to a movement within educational theory to apply affect theory to the examination of colonial historical memory. Zembylas, in his 2024 study, addresses the question, how does an absence of knowledge ‘operate affectively’? He examines how teachers can perpetuate a denial of others’ vulnerability in the context of difficult history teaching. He demonstrates that particular ‘emotional regimes...a constellation of practices and power relations’ perpetuate forms of ignorance.²³³ Zembylas is clearly influenced by his extensive experience interpreting the teaching and learning of histories of conflict in Cyprus, and so limits his article to an examination of teachers’ affective refusal to acknowledge others’ vulnerability.²³⁴ In contrast, Harcourt demonstrates that we can examine different forms of ‘ignorance’ and how they operate affectively, by revealing the numerous and

²²⁷ Fletcher, ‘The Art of Forgetting,’ 423.

²²⁸ Fletcher, ‘The Art of Forgetting,’ 434.

²²⁹ Fletcher, ‘The Art of Forgetting,’ 435.

²³⁰ Fletcher, ‘The Art of Forgetting,’ 423.

²³¹ Fletcher, ‘The Art of Forgetting.’

²³² Fletcher, ‘The Art of Forgetting,’ 427.

²³³ Zembylas, ‘Wilful Ignorance,’ 500.

²³⁴ Zembylas, ‘Wilful Ignorance.’

complex motivations for teachers' avoidance of Aotearoa's histories.²³⁵ In chapters four, five and six, I explore affective detachment as a form of 'ignorance' which coexists with and exacerbates colonial amnesia and nostalgia.²³⁶

2.10 England

Studies of contested history have presented England as a country that not only effected change abroad but was itself profoundly transformed by Empire. Koram argues that colonial amnesia has enabled Britain to construct an image of itself as a 'racially homogenous island nation', a self-characterisation that is particularly pronounced in England.²³⁷ While historian Corinne Fowler similarly concludes that 'collective historical amnesia' has masked the colonial origins of the wealth of the English countryside.²³⁸ She stresses that this amnesia is so profound that England's 'green and pleasant land' is remembered as having 'everything to do with whiteness'.²³⁹ Canadian historian Coll Thrush writes of the many historical Indigenous visitors and their influences on London, stressing, 'The problem of London's Indigenous history is an enforced silence, not the hidden-ness of past events. The people in this book, it turns out, did not need discovering. Indigenous people never do.'²⁴⁰ England is a colonial country, its colonial history is built into the architecture, embedded in the landscape, and in our political structures. Thrush's presentation of London as the 'heart of Empire' recognises the city's history and encourages a critical analysis of England's colonial memory, in the manner of studies of settler-colonial states. In turn, the model of England at the centre and its former colonies at the peripheries has shaped Aotearoa's self-identity in ways that influenced their educational landscape before the implementation of the *Histories Curriculum*. As I analyse in chapter five, Aotearoa students have long been taught English history instead of Aotearoa histories; a practice that was 'shaped by a national narrative that situated New Zealand largely on the margins'.²⁴¹ By presenting London through the lens of its Indigenous visitors, Thrush, like Koram and Fowler, also highlights a deep material and cultural entanglement between England and Indigenous territories.²⁴² Indigenous tobacco,

²³⁵ Harcourt, 'New Zealand's difficult history.'

²³⁶ Harcourt, 'New Zealand's difficult history.'

²³⁷ Race in Britain, 'Britain's Colonial Amnesia.'

²³⁸ Fowler, *Green Unpleasant Land*, 18.

²³⁹ Fowler, *Green Unpleasant Land*, 18.

²⁴⁰ Thrush, *Indigenous London*, 6.

²⁴¹ Houliston, *Pacific Learners in Aotearoa*, 36.

²⁴² Thrush, *Indigenous London*, 15; Race in Britain, 'Britain's Colonial Amnesia.'; Fowler, *Green Unpleasant Land*.

beaver and deer skins transformed London, while Indigenous visitors, received excitedly as ‘spectacles’, advocated for their territories and ways of life and impressed their knowledge and ways of being on the city.²⁴³ From this perspective Thrush presents London as both the ‘heart of Empire’ and at the periphery of Indigenous lands. This view is enormously helpful as I bring together England and Aotearoa with their deeply entwined histories.²⁴⁴

2.11 Conclusion

Within this chapter, I began by providing foundational historical details, an essential intervention given the profound absence of knowledge of British colonial histories in both England and Aotearoa. I have shown that both *Mayflower 400* and the *Histories Curriculum* engaged with histories that were contested, mythologised and remembered differently. I have demonstrated that a substantial body of work from heritage and educational studies has examined, sought to define, and challenged how these histories have been sanitised, forgotten, and disavowed. I have argued that there is an urgent need to examine the complex and affective work of historical interpreters who can reinforce but also transform sanitised and mythologised narratives of British colonial and Indigenous histories that continue to cause harm.

²⁴³ Thrush, *Indigenous London*, 15

²⁴⁴ Thrush, *Indigenous London*, 6.

Chapter Three: Understanding the Field(s), an Analysis of Methods

In this chapter, I detail my transdisciplinary, Indigenous studies research methodology. I define a transdisciplinary methodology as a synthesis of methods from different disciplines to address real-world problems holistically.²⁴⁵ I advocate for a detailed specification of transdisciplinary research methods to identify and critically engage with their colonial histories and legacies. I explain how I identified, collected, and analysed my data, detail the methods I applied, and explain how they addressed my research ethics. I argue that institutional consent processes that rely on broad consent and short-term relationship-building are poorly suited to the goals of Indigenous studies research. I propose a Collaborative Consent Process, inspired by the Indigenous wampum belt, to achieve specific, informed consent. I also openly discuss the limitations of my methods in response to calls for a more honest sharing of methodological challenges.²⁴⁶

3.1 A Developing Field

A central challenge of my research was investigating the work of teaching British colonial and Indigenous histories through Indigenous partnership, from the vantage point of institutions that are yet to do this comprehensively. My research journey was shaped by the lack of institutionalised teaching of Indigenous studies in England. As of 2025, no English university offers undergraduate or postgraduate programmes in Indigenous studies. In 2023, my supervisor, Professor David Stirrup, relocated. The University of Kent, where this PhD began, acknowledged that it no longer had the expertise to support my research. I followed my supervisor to the University of York and the Department of English and Related Literature, which is increasingly engaging in transdisciplinary methodologies. Despite a growing number of active researchers, Indigenous studies in England is mostly limited to informal university researcher groups. These groups include the Indigenous Studies

²⁴⁵ Andrew C. Sparkes and Brett Smith, *Qualitative Research Methods in Sport, Exercise and Health From Process to Product* (Routledge, 2014); Chris Andersen and Jean M. O'Brien, ed., 'Introduction Indigenous Studies: An appeal for methodological promiscuity,' in *Sources and Methods in Indigenous Studies* (Routledge, 2016); Jace Weaver, 'More Light Than Heat: The Current State of Native American Studies,' *American Indian Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 238.

²⁴⁶ Annika Lindberg and Tobias Georg Eule, 'Organisational ethnography as a project of unease,' *Journal of Organizational Ethnography* 9, no. 2 (2020): 237-247, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JOE-12-2019-0043>; Sarah Van Duijn, 'Everywhere and nowhere at once: the challenges of following in multi-sited ethnography,' *Journal of Organizational Ethnography* 9, no. 3 (2020): 281-294, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JOE-12-2019-0045>; Ulf Hannerz, 'Being there...and there...and there! Reflections on multi-site ethnography,' *Ethnography* 4, no.2 (2003): 201-216.

Discussion Group at Cambridge University; the Indigenous Studies Group at Oxford University; an Indigenous Ecologies research cluster at University College London; and a growth of Indigenous research within the Menzies Australia Institute at King's College London.²⁴⁷ I joined the University of Kent for the UK's only Centre for Indigenous and Settler Colonial Studies (CISCS), founded by Stirrup in 2019.²⁴⁸ Within the Centre, I greatly benefited from a network of Indigenous studies scholars, reading groups, and Indigenous-led workshops on methods and theory. The University of York is now supporting CISCS in its long-term goals for international Indigenous partnerships and a formalised PhD programme. Nevertheless, significant institutional barriers persist. To develop a structured training programme the Centre needs the resources and authority to recruit Indigenous scholars to leadership positions. Currently, the Centre relies on a memorandum of understanding with the Faculty of Native Studies at the University of Alberta to ensure Indigenous involvement at the leadership level.

Geographical and financial obstacles hamper the growth of Indigenous studies in England, yet these do not fully explain the striking absence of Indigenous-focused teaching. Thrush emphasises that England has been 'entangled with Indigenous territories, resources, knowledges, and lives from the very beginning of its experiments with colonization'.²⁴⁹ He demonstrates that London was both the 'center of empire' and on the peripheries of Indigenous territories.²⁵⁰ Yet, Thrush explains that London's Indigenous history has been suppressed through 'an enforced silence', and similarly, Fowler stresses 'If rural England's relationship to empire was once self-evident later generations have largely forgotten it.'²⁵¹ Because of this colonial amnesia and nostalgia, England remains a challenging place to conduct Indigenous studies research. The difficulties facing CISCS exemplify this. Along with many centres and institutes, CISCS is fighting against the current financial crisis in

²⁴⁷ 'The Cambridge Indigenous Studies Discussion Group (ISDG): Five years on 2021-2024,' CRASSH, accessed December 19, 2024, <https://www.crassh.cam.ac.uk/research/networks/indigenous-studies-discussion-network>; 'Indigenous Studies Group,' *TORCH*, accessed October 20, 2024, <https://www.torch.ox.ac.uk/indigenous-studies-group>; Stiles, Olivia and Adriana Suarez Delucchi, 'Blog: Learning from Indigenous ecologies in the era of the Anthropocene,' *UCL Anthropocene*, February 28, 2023, accessed August 18, 2025, <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/anthropocene/blog/blog-learning-indigenous-ecologies-era-anthropocene>; 'Menzies Australia Institute,' *Kings College London*, accessed April 1, 2025, <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/menzies>.

²⁴⁸ 'Centre for Indigenous and Settler Colonial Studies,' *University of Kent*, accessed 10th April 2025, <https://research.kent.ac.uk/centreforindigenousandsettlercolonialstudies>.

²⁴⁹ Thrush, *Indigenous London*, 15.

²⁵⁰ Thrush, *Indigenous London*, ix.

²⁵¹ Thrush, *Indigenous London*, 6; Fowler, *Green Unpleasant Land*, 160.

English universities, the lack of extra-institutional funding for pedagogical rather than research activities, and the bureaucratic challenges of cross-institutional collaboration. CISCs researchers are, like the historical interpreters I describe in this thesis, also facing a profound absence of knowledge of Indigenous and British colonial histories by students and publics, and a related lack of support for Indigenous studies within their academic institutions.

In settler-colonial countries, Indigenous studies is similarly institutionally under-supported. Writing of her discipline of creative writing, Tina Makereti (Te Ātiawa, Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Rangatahi-Matakore, Pākehā), warns that despite an abundance of both historic and contemporary Indigenous writers, analysis of their work is scarce.²⁵² She explains that this gap had been ‘institutionalized by the absence of university courses that focus primarily on Indigenous literatures in English’.²⁵³ Rauna Kuokkanen (Sámi) calls out ‘ignorance and benevolent Imperialism’ within academia which she argues relies on ‘narrow, selective epistemic and intellectual traditions’.²⁵⁴ Aotearoa’s first university, the University of Otago, was the last in the country to establish a Māori Studies Department, founded in 1990. Similarly, in Turtle Island, Indigenous studies academics often operate out of other departments. At Brown University, for instance, Critical Native American and Indigenous Studies sits within the Department of American Studies.²⁵⁵ This lack of institutionalisation of Indigenous studies limits access to appropriate ethics training, reading lists, in-person teaching, and feedback from Indigenous and specialist academics.

As calls for ‘Indigenising’ universities grow across settler-colonial states, Indigenous academics stress that decolonisation requires radical change.²⁵⁶ As a visiting researcher at the University of Otago, I saw the value of Indigenous studies programmes for the growth of the field. The University includes Te Tumu, the School of Māori, Pacific and Indigenous

²⁵² Tina Makereti, ‘Indigenous Studies: Aotearoa/ New Zealand’ *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Literature*, June 30, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.013.984>.

²⁵³ Makereti, ‘Indigenous Studies.’

²⁵⁴ Rauna Kuokkanen, *Reshaping the University: Responsibility, Indigenous Epistemes and the Logic of the Gift*, (UBC Press, 2007), 2.

²⁵⁵ ‘Critical Native American and Indigenous Studies,’ *Brown University*, accessed February 10, 2025, <https://www.brown.edu/undergraduate-programs/critical-native-american-and-indigenous-studies-ab>.

²⁵⁶ Jane Williamson and Priya Dalal, ‘Indigenising the Curriculum or Negotiating the Tensions at the Cultural Interface? Embedding Indigenous Perspectives and Pedagogies in a University Curriculum,’ *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Studies* 36, no. 1 (2007): 51-58, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1326011100004701>; Te Kawehau Hoskins and Alison Jones, ‘Indigenous Inclusion and Indigenising the University,’ *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies* 57 (July 2022): 307.

studies.²⁵⁷ With a department and floor at the University, students can engage with Indigenous studies academics, attend a comprehensive programme of lectures, and learn in a community committed to tikanga (ritually correct behaviour). I suggest that the establishment of Indigenous studies programmes in England could provide structured reading lists, lectures and methodological guidance, and attract Indigenous experts. The geographical distance to Indigenous academics working in their communities would remain, and researchers would still need to pursue creative solutions to establish courses with Indigenous leadership. However, the mere addition of Indigenous studies programmes can amount to a form of Indigenous ‘inclusion’, which educational theorists Te Kawehau Hoskins (Ngāti Hau) and Alison Jones, characterise as ‘a largely unchanged or superficially-changed institutional structure’.²⁵⁸ They call for the ‘normalisation of indigenous ways of being and knowing’ within institutions that have deep colonial heritages.²⁵⁹ To move on from this colonial heritage, institutional support is needed for the radical reimagining of programmes’ epistemological frameworks. In the following section, I demonstrate how transdisciplinary methodologies support critical, cross-disciplinary and collaborative research; however, even with this methodology, my research is limited in its response to calls for radical transformation and the reimagining of research to a plural Indigenous knowledge system.²⁶⁰

I faced similar challenges to English Indigenous studies research centres as I worked to build relationships across large geographical distances. I chose an ethnographic methodology of semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and fieldwork to detail the experiences of my participants within the contexts of their professional roles and cultural backgrounds. I recognise that such long-term international fieldwork is not accessible to most English researchers. I believe it is essential to be transparent about the personal costs and necessary privileges required to undertake research. I developed my participant and advisory network through my personal and professional connections, my PhD funding, family financial support, and an extensive international network I had already developed through my private school education and previous international travel. My Turtle Island and Aotearoa research contacts kindly hosted me for free, and the University of Otago provided a desk and library

²⁵⁷ ‘Study at Te Tumu,’ *University of Otago*, accessed April 1, 2025, <https://www.otago.ac.nz/te-tumu/study-at-te-tumu>.

²⁵⁸ Hoskins and Jones, ‘Indigenous Inclusion and Indigenising,’ 307.

²⁵⁹ Hoskins and Jones, ‘Indigenous Inclusion and Indigenising,’ 307.

²⁶⁰ Jo-ann Archibald et al., *Decolonizing Research Indigenous Storywork as Methodology* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019).

access. While financially prohibitive research costs are a challenge faced by PhD students of all disciplines, I argue that Indigenous studies discussions in England have consistently overlooked this expectation of socio-economic privilege.²⁶¹ Classism and the economic divisions that underwrite it are as much a product of colonialism as non-Indigenous privilege.²⁶² In a new wampum belt, artisan and key participant of this thesis, Hartman, included three white pillars, symbolising the interrelated structures of colonisation: classism, sexism and racism.²⁶³ We cannot interpret multi-perspective histories if historical and ethnographic research are not accessible to the very communities whose histories have been silenced.²⁶⁴

3.2 Transdisciplinary Research and the Four Rs

I orientated my research towards the ethical goals established by Indigenous studies scholars Verna J. Kirkness (Fisher River Cree) and Ray Barnhardt. In this section, I detail how I addressed each of their four R's, the four principles of reciprocity, respect, relevance, and responsibility through my transdisciplinary methodology.²⁶⁵ Kirkness and Barnhardt present 'reciprocity' as the building of 'personalized "human" relationships' that are collaborative and involve a commitment to 'vulnerable', open, and accountable research practices.²⁶⁶ They describe 'Respect' as an openness to Indigenous values and ways of knowing.²⁶⁷ I sought to achieve 'Relevance' through ethnographic methods, presenting 'a First Nations (oral) perspective' and working to Indigenous standards of practice.²⁶⁸ I addressed Kirkness and Barnhardt's last principle, 'responsibility' – a commitment to critically analysing the structures of power that erase and marginalise Indigenous peoples, by evaluating and challenging the extractive histories of my methods.²⁶⁹

²⁶¹ These discussions were notably absent at Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities, *Thinking with and alongside Critical Indigenous Scholarship Conference* (TORCH, April 2024).

²⁶² Akala, *Natives Race & Class*; Brinkhurst-Cuff, ed., *Mother Country*; James Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me* (Touchstone, 1995); Mitchell, *Imperial Nostalgia*.

²⁶³ 'In exhibition at Brown, Wampanoag artist draws on tradition to celebrate Indigenous Rights,' *Brown University*, accessed April 17, 2025, <https://www.brown.edu/news/2021-10-07/wampum>.

²⁶⁴ Louise Morley, 'Does class still matter? Conversations about power, privilege and persistent inequalities in higher education,' *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 42, no. 1 (2020): 5-6. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2020.1855565>.

²⁶⁵ Kirkness and Barnhardt, 'First Nations and Higher Education.'

²⁶⁶ Kirkness and Barnhardt, 'First Nations and Higher Education,' 12-13.

²⁶⁷ Kirkness and Barnhardt, 'First Nations and Higher Education,' 6-8.

²⁶⁸ Kirkness and Barnhardt, 'First Nations and Higher Education,' 8-12.

²⁶⁹ Kirkness and Barnhardt, 'First Nations and Higher Education,' 11-13.

The potential ‘reciprocity’ of my research gradually became apparent through transparent conversations with my participants.²⁷⁰ I discovered that I could support my Indigenous participants by providing insight through my insider positionality in non-Indigenous conversations. I had access to spaces where non-Indigenous historical interpreters spoke openly about gaps in their knowledge, and shared concerns about Indigenous partnership building. Furthermore, for non-Indigenous interpreters in England, my friendship and working relationship with Native American interpreters helped facilitate new partnerships. English participants asked me to provide insight into appropriate language, and information on Wampanoag and British colonial histories. While this intermediary position helped my work to be reciprocal, I was careful not to position myself as a gatekeeper or claim an alternative expertise to Indigenous partners. During my Aotearoa fieldwork, I was an outsider to all my participants. However, my research was encouraged by their interest in a critical and multi-sited analysis of the new *Histories Curriculum*. I also made a commitment to ‘vulnerable’, relational research practices focused on relationship building by designing a Collaborative Consent Process which I detail in section 3.4.²⁷¹ Finally, I tried to be practically helpful to my participants and their communities; I volunteered on heritage sites, cooked meals for host families, looked after their children, and provided transport to cultural events.

I chose a transdisciplinary methodology to meet my goals of conducting respectful and relevant research.²⁷² The methodology of Indigenous studies is challenging to define, whether perceived with nervousness as a ‘mess’, or with delight as ‘methodologically promiscuous’.²⁷³ Indigenous studies academics come from and continue to draw upon ‘a huge array of disciplines,’ such as anthropology, educational theory, ethnohistory, history, archaeology, and the Arts.²⁷⁴ My methodology is transdisciplinary rather than interdisciplinary in its attention to the ‘intersection, duplication, obfuscation, and omission between these disciplines’.²⁷⁵ Linguist and social theorist Norman Fairclough details this approach as the work of seeing a “‘dialogue” between them [disciplines] as a source for the theoretical and methodological

²⁷⁰ Kirkness and Barnhardt, ‘First Nations and Higher Education,’ 12 -13.

²⁷¹ Kirkness and Barnhardt, ‘First Nations and Higher Education,’ 12 -13.

²⁷² Kirkness and Barnhardt, ‘First Nations and Higher Education.’

²⁷³ Weaver, ‘More Light Than Heat,’ 238; Andersen and O’Brien, ed., ‘Introduction Indigenous Studies.’

²⁷⁴ Andersen and O’Brien, ed., ‘Introduction Indigenous Studies.’; Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*; David Treuer, *The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee Native America from 1890 to the Present* (Corgisair, 2019); Verna J. Kirkness and Ray Barnhardt, ‘First Nations and Higher Education: The Four R’s – Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, Responsibility,’ *Journal of American Indian Education* 30, no. 3 (May 1991): 1-15.

²⁷⁵ Meredith A. Whitley et al., ‘Moving beyond disciplinary silos: The potential for transdisciplinary research in Sport for Development,’ *Journal of Sport for Development* 10, no. 2 (2022): 2.

development of each'.²⁷⁶ I drew ethnographic methods and rhetorical theory from social anthropology, decolonising methods and affect theory from educational studies, and was inspired by ethical questions raised through the consent process of medical trials. The cross-disciplinary application of Kirkness and Barnhardt's four R's, showed that I could develop transdisciplinary research with this ethical orientation. Kirkness and Barnhardt's four R's have informed Indigenous studies methodology compilations, Indigenous literary studies and story research, and even public health research. For example, health scientists, Sara Dada et al., apply the four R's to produce a methodology for trust-building in Sierra Leone vaccine trials.²⁷⁷ Kirkness and Barnhardt originally designed the four R's to convince Canadian universities' to commit to building 'culturally-sensitive' relationships with Indigenous students that would increase students' educational outcomes.²⁷⁸ Drawing methods from different disciplines allowed me to critically engage with my participants' experiences as part of holistic, contemporary cultures. I therefore applied a transdisciplinary methodology in agreement with Native American studies academic, Jace Weaver, that 'dealing with the totalizing systems that we know as Native cultures...each view from traditional disciplines is limited and partial'.²⁷⁹ My transdisciplinary research journey, moving from social anthropology with its ethnographic methods, to an English department increasingly engaging in transdisciplinary methodologies, provided a firm foundation for my Indigenous studies research.

Simply borrowing methodologies from disciplines that are 'exogenous' to Indigenous world views would present a threat to the production of respectful, relevant and responsible research.²⁸⁰ Indigenous studies researchers, Candace Brunette-Debassige (Mushkego Cree iskwew) and Pauline Wakeham, further define 'relevance' as 'making genuine space for

²⁷⁶ Norman Fairclough, '1 Critical discourse analysis,' in *The Routledge handbook of discourse analysis*, ed., James Paul Gee, and Michael Handford (Routledge, 2013), 12.

²⁷⁷ Jo-ann Archibald et al. ed., *Decolonizing Research Indigenous*; Judy Iseke, 'Indigenous storytelling as research,' *International Review of Qualitative Research* 6, no.4 (2013): 559-577, <https://doi.org/10.1525/irqr.2013.6.4.559>; Ranalda L. Tsosie et al. 'The Six Rs of Indigenous Research,' *Tribal College* 33, no. 4 (Summer 2022), accessed 1 January, <https://tribalcollegejournal.org/the-six-rs-of-indigenous-research>.

Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Context* (University of Toronto Press, 2009); Sara Dada et al., 'Lessons learned from engaging communities for Ebola vaccine trials in Sierra Leone: reciprocity, relatability, relationships and respect (the four R's),' *BMC Public Health* 19, no. 1665 (December 2019): 1-13, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-019-7978-4>.

²⁷⁸ Kirkness and Barnhardt, 'First Nations and Higher Education,' 8.

²⁷⁹ Weaver, 'More Light Than Heat,' 235.

²⁸⁰ Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, 'Who Stole Native American Studies?' *Wicazo Sa Review* 12, no. 1 (Spring, 1997): 10, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1409161>.

Indigenous practices and ways of knowing'.²⁸¹ I recognised that this could not be achieved by uncritically drawing on disciplines that have propagated colonial ideologies and frameworks, and which are embedded with claims to the universality of eurocentric knowledge systems. Through my ethnographic methods, I explicitly sought to incorporate my participants' perspectives and ways of being. To achieve this, I critically engaged with ethnography's colonial and settler-colonial histories, actively amending my methods to move away from these extractive uses. During my Master's fieldwork, I was confronted with the reputation of ethnography as a method of Indigenous erasure and misrepresentation:

My informants, Kerri [of the Mashpee Wampanoag], Andrew and Dylan [of Shinnecock Descent], sat in the Nushwetu [traditional Wampanoag home with three fires] in the Wampanoag Homesite [at Plimoth Patuxet Museum]. We were discussing the stereotypes they commonly encounter from non-Native people. Following a rapid back and forth of examples, Dylan, explained that, 'They think that we are super primitive, that we are not social, that we roll around in the dirt. They don't see that we are a complex society. It's these stereotypes from early anthropologists.' They all laughed and exclaimed 'anthropologist', as though it was a dirty word and the harm that the discipline had done was clearly apparent.²⁸²

Studies of Indigenous communities dominate the anthropological canon, and yet their inaccuracies contribute to a daily navigation of erasure and misrepresentation by Indigenous people. Educational theorist Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Porou), works with Māori communities that describe anthropology 'in terms of its absolute worthlessness to us, the indigenous world, and its absolute usefulness to those who wielded it as an instrument.'²⁸³ This experience reverberated in the laughs of Kerri, Andrew and Dylan. I encountered such distrust and disgust for the discipline throughout my fieldwork.

To address the potential harm of social anthropological methods to Indigenous communities, I suggest we must first critically analyse the field's history and supposed shift to ethical practice. In his comprehensive history of the field, anthropologist Alan Barnard suggests that

²⁸¹ Candace Brunette-Debassige and Pauline Wakeham, 'Reimagining the Four Rs of Indigenous Education for Literary Studies,' *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 32, no. 3-4 (Fall-Winter 2020): 22.

²⁸² Mulcahey, 'Beginning of the End,' 69.

²⁸³ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies Research and Indigenous Peoples* 3rd ed. (Zed Books, 1999), 3.

since anthropology's conception it has been characterised by evolutionist thinking.²⁸⁴ He explains that anthropology was initially dominated by 'unilinear evolutionism,' the belief that all societies progress through the same stages 'within a grand evolutionary scheme', though at different speeds.²⁸⁵ By the early twentieth century, these 'precise unilinear phases' had still not been identified and 'universal evolutionism' took precedence with broader categories 'such as the classical division between 'savagery', 'barbarism,' and 'civilization'.²⁸⁶ In this structure, Indigenous people were presented as being at a more primitive stage of human evolution, a characterisation that anthropologist Ter Ellingson explains explicitly sought to justify colonial expansion.²⁸⁷

Franz Boas, 'the father of 20th-century anthropology in America', is celebrated for instituting a significant shift in anthropological thinking from Social Darwinism to a cultural relativist framework.²⁸⁸ A reader of the celebratory histories of Boas would be excused for thinking that he, and the Boasian anthropologists who followed him, stamped out racist ideologies within anthropological methodologies and writing. They might also believe that the concerns of Indigenous participants reflect methodologies long past. Boas differs from social evolutionist or eugenicist researchers in three core ways: he demonstrates that all peoples have culture, that all peoples were 'capable of rational knowledge', and that cultures should be viewed within their own context 'as integrated wholes'.²⁸⁹ Historian Michael S. Roth, writes that Boas's views were different to those whose 'Theories of evolution were used to justify imperial ambitions, and anthropologists [who] served up accounts of primitive cultures left far behind in the march of modernity.'²⁹⁰ Anthropologist Regena Darnell, shares this dominant view that Boas's 'enduring legacy...is that he turned anthropology to confront a question of race, and through his writing and activism, to combat racism itself.'²⁹¹ The problem is, that Boas's views were not meaningfully different to those of his predecessors.

²⁸⁴ Barnard, *History and Theory in Anthropology*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2021).

²⁸⁵ Barnard, *History and Theory in Anthropology*, 33.

²⁸⁶ Barnard, *History and Theory in Anthropology*, 38.

²⁸⁷ Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (The University of California Press, 2001).

²⁸⁸ Michael S. Roth, 'Boas and His Students,' *Los Angeles Review of Books*, August 13, 2021, accessed February 1, 2025, <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/boas-and-his-students>; Geoff Bill, 'Boas in the Age of BLM and Idle No More: Re-Evaluating the Boasian Legacy,' *History of Anthropology Review* 44 (2020), <https://histanthro.org/reviews/re-evaluating-the-boasian-legacy>.

²⁸⁹ Bill, 'Boas in the Age of BLM.'

²⁹⁰ Roth, 'Boas and His Students.'

²⁹¹ Regena Darnell, 'Who was Franz Boas and why should we read him today?' *Routledge*, December 6, 2024, accessed August 18, 2025, <https://blog.routledge.com/social-sciences/who-was-franz-boas-and-why-should-we-read-him-today>.

Boas did not leave behind ideas of primitivism or manifest destiny. Whilst Boas recognised Native peoples had cultures, he maintained they had ‘no complexity, class or history that really mattered’.²⁹² In 1898, Boas designed a survey of the ‘Vanishing Tribes of North America’ which explicitly supported the vanishing race myth.²⁹³ Anthropologist Audra Simpson (Kahnawà:ke Mohawk Nation) explains:

The presumed inevitability of Indigenous decline and disappearance is present throughout Boas’s thinking. This declensionist narrative – a story about Indigenous culture loss and demographic weakness necessitating Boas’s salvage of those whose displacement he pretends is inevitable – seems rather remarkable, coming...from an ethnographer and linguist who spent considerable time with Native people, living and dead.²⁹⁴

The theory of vanishing Indigenous races was the dominant discourse in anthropology throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s. It supported a widespread misrepresentation of Indigenous Nations as sadly but inevitably disappearing in the face of modernity. This narrative accepted colonial expansion and justified extractive salvage methodologies. Historian, Jean O’Brien (White Earth Band of Ojibwe) reveals that the vanishing race myth is so pervasive, both within and outside of academia, that to this day, whole communities believe Indigenous people no longer exist.²⁹⁵ My Indigenous participants described having to fight against the vanishing race myth just to be recognised as Indigenous people. A central and repeated message throughout *Mayflower 400* and the *Histories Curriculum* was a statement of Indigenous presence.

To conduct relevant and responsible research, I critically adapted my methodology to challenge the vanishing race myth. Salvage ethnographers imposed external rather than endogenous research questions and sought to address concerns that emerged from the ideologies of the academy rather than the realities of the field. As recently as 1990, anthropologist Robert Bieder wrote, ‘Aware of the urgency of their task, Boas and his

²⁹² Michael-Rolph Trouillot, *Global Transformations: Anthropology and the Modern World* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 102.

²⁹³ Tony Bennett et. al., ‘Boas and After: Museum Anthropology and the Governance of Difference in America.’ In *Collecting, Ordering, Governing: Anthropology, Museums, and Liberal Government* (Duke University Press, 2017), 136.

²⁹⁴ Audra Simpson, ‘Chapter 7 Why White People Love Franz Boas; or, The Grammar of Indigenous Dispossession,’ in *Indigenous Visions Rediscovering the world of Franz Boas*, ed., Ned Blackhawk and Isaiah Lorado Wilner (Yale University Press, 2018), 167.

²⁹⁵ O’Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*.

students produced numerous tribal studies by the 1940s'.²⁹⁶ Such accounts continue to normalise the externally determined research problem of the vanishing race. To write against the vanishing race myth, I employed an iterative, fieldwork-based approach to identify endogenous research questions and problems. I openly discussed my evolving ideas and questions with participants, and they suggested new readings, contacts and different perspectives. I also designed my anthropological methods and methodology to study growing, complex cultures, actively engaging with contemporary problems. Practically, this meant attending to diverse perspectives and addressing my participants' aspirations and concerns for the future. Wherever possible, I re-interviewed participants to capture their developing views.

3.3 Comparative Case Studies

Within this thesis, I applied a comparative case-study approach, investigating Indigenous and non-Indigenous partnerships within two historical education projects: *Mayflower 400* (England) and the *Histories Curriculum* (Aotearoa). Weaver characterises Native American studies as 'comparative in nature', 'a borderless discourse, encompassing all the Indigenous peoples of the hemisphere'.²⁹⁷ Anthropology, from which I have drawn my ethnographic research methodology, has similarly been described as a 'comparative discipline'.²⁹⁸ Even so, anthropologists Daniel Miller et al., argue that the field is plagued by a fear that comparison can only be achieved at the expense of understanding the 'specific cultural and historical context' of each fieldsite.²⁹⁹ How do we ensure our comparisons are rigorous, revealing and overcome such fears over their 'legitimacy'?³⁰⁰ I argue that a comparative case study approach allows for a holistic and detailed engagement with each fieldsite, supporting health scientists' Helena Harrison et al., argument for 'an in-depth analysis of an issue, within its context with a view to understanding the issue from the perspective of participants'.³⁰¹ Collections related to Indigenous studies topics, theories and methodologies, have normalised

²⁹⁶ Robert E. Bieder, 'Anthropology and History of the American Indian,' *American Quarterly* 33, no. 3 (1981): 316, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2712468>.

²⁹⁷ Weaver, 'More Light Than Heat,' 6.

²⁹⁸ Daniel Miller et al., 'Contemporary Comparative Anthropology – The Why We Post Project,' *Ethnos Journal of Anthropology* 84, no. 2 (2019): 283.

²⁹⁹ Miller et al., 'Contemporary Comparative Anthropology,' 284.

³⁰⁰ Miller et al., 'Contemporary Comparative Anthropology,' 286.

³⁰¹ Helena Harrison et al., 'Case Study Research: Foundations and Methodological Orientations,' *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 18, no. 1 (January, 2017): 9, <https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-18.1.2655>.

the comparison of research on an astonishing breadth of Indigenous Nations.³⁰² The 2016 compilation, *Sources and Methods in Indigenous Studies*, includes contributions on: Sámi history, May-Britt Ohman (Lule and Forest Sámi of Lule River/Julevädno); Nahua writings from Indigenous studies scholar, Kelly McDonough (White Earth Ojibwe); and a study of how Indigenous communities have been misrepresented in official quantitative data by Indigenous studies scholar, Chris Andersen (Métis) and sociologist, Tahu Kukutai (Ngāti Tīpā, Ngāti Mahanga, Ngāti Kinohaku, Ngāti Ngawaero and Te Aupōuri).³⁰³ My multi-sited methodology follows the example of these studies, which acknowledge the specificity of Indigenous cultures, as well as the shared experiences of colonialism and settler colonialism among Indigenous Nations.

Mayflower 400 and the *Histories Curriculum* engaged and were influenced by hugely complex national and, in the case of *Mayflower 400*, international networks of stakeholders. With eleven UK partner destinations, 2,000 stakeholders and an international network, there was no clear geographical boundary to the work of *Mayflower 400*, and therefore no single physical field site. Similarly, the MoE implemented the *Histories Curriculum* nationally, engaging a breadth of schools, freelance educators, Māori partners, iwi (tribes) and hapū (subtribes), as well as local and national government stakeholders. While I defined my focus as Indigenous and non-Indigenous partnerships within these two projects, I discovered that this still included a broad, geographically disparate group of historical interpreters engaging with national historical narratives in specific local circumstances. Furthermore, an even wider group of stakeholders influenced these exchanges, through funding and resourcing as well as through policy, and performance expectations. These complex networks and the unexpected interjections of stakeholders were the messy realities of partnership-building. To analyse this, I chose a multi-sited methodology. For *Mayflower 400*, I conducted interviews with historical interpreters in Plymouth and Nottinghamshire, England, as well as follow-up interviews with Indigenous interpreters in their homes in Massachusetts, Turtle Island. My multi-sited research enabled me to investigate recurring themes and develop insights on historical interpretive practice more broadly. For the *Histories Curriculum*, I interviewed historical interpreters in Pukekohe and Te Whanganui-a-Tara (Wellington) on the North Island, and in

³⁰² Archibald et al. ed., *Indigenous Storywork as Methodology*; Chris Andersen and Jean M. O'Brien, 'Introduction Indigenous Studies.'; Brendan Hokowhitu et al., ed., *Routledge Handbook of Critical Indigenous Studies*, 1st ed., (Routledge/Taylor & Francis, 2021).

³⁰³ Andersen and O'Brien, 'Introduction Indigenous Studies.'

Ōtepoti (Dunedin) on the South Island. Sarah Duijn, social scientist, argues that capturing this boundlessness is vital to understanding participants' experiences. Historical interpreters, like Duijn's participants, 'encounter everyday complexities, irregularities, and uncertainties...precisely because they, too, were required to act in multiple settings.'³⁰⁴ She concludes that the bounded fieldsite is a creation of the anthropologist as 'there is, in fact, no "whole" to be found'.³⁰⁵ My participants suggested that I would not capture these projects and the complexities of their interpretive work through an analysis of one site. They repeatedly encouraged me to visit other destinations, "Definitely go to the Box Museum," "Are you going to the South Island on your trip?", "You must speak to the activists who really brought this about", "You're going to Dunedin? That's great, their perspective will be completely different." My flexible and multi-sited research methodology thereby emerged from the urging of my participants. This methodology was essential to capture their experiences of working within multi-sited, multi-stakeholder projects.

Aotearoa's new *Histories Curriculum* emerged as an analytically robust comparative field site for my study of *Mayflower 400* during the first few months of my research.

Anthropologist Ulf Hannerz explains that 'site selections are to an extent made gradually and cumulatively, as new insights develop, as opportunities come into sight and to some extent by chance.'³⁰⁶ I became aware of the *Histories Curriculum* from a 2021 article in *The Guardian* by O'Malley, entitled 'New Zealand's children will all soon study the country's brutal history'.³⁰⁷ My previous work with *Mayflower 400*, during my Master's, revealed the richness of a study of the early development stages of historical interpretations and Indigenous and non-Indigenous partnerships.³⁰⁸ I observed that in these early meetings anxieties were shared, gaps in knowledge were apparent and differences in perspective were troubling and transformative. Like *Mayflower 400*, the *Histories Curriculum* focused on British colonial and Indigenous (in this case Māori) histories, was national in scope, and newly engaged a larger group of educators in the interpretation of these histories.

Sociologists, Avril Bell and Elizabeth Russell present the compulsory *Histories Curriculum*

³⁰⁴ Duijn, 'Everywhere and nowhere,' 292.

³⁰⁵ Duijn, 'Everywhere and nowhere,' 292.

³⁰⁶ Hannerz, 'Being there...and there.'

³⁰⁷ Vincent O'Malley, 'New Zealand's children will all soon study the country's brutal history – it's not before time,' *The Guardian*, November 2, 2021, accessed 10 August, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/commentisfree/2021/nov/02/new-zealands-children-will-all-soon-study-the-countrys-brutal-history-its-not-before-time>.

³⁰⁸ Mulcahey, 'Beginning of the End'.

as a watershed moment.³⁰⁹ They propose that ‘The new curriculum will upend a long history of ‘forgetting’ the nation’s contentious and conflictual past.’³¹⁰ As a recently announced national project, teachers were excited to talk about the *Histories Curriculum* and were interested in receiving an analysis. I obtained interviews quickly, supported by the New Zealand History Teachers’ Association (NZHTA) who sent out an email asking teachers across the country if they were interested in participating in my research. I received more than fifty responses. I chose teachers who were actively engaged in the *Histories Curriculum*, were working with Māori partners, and were well-connected to other educators who were struggling with, and anxious about, learning and teaching Aotearoa’s histories and building Māori partnerships. Several of these teachers generously offered to host me and invited me to observe their partnership meetings. I identified three sites and I conducted fieldwork in Pukekohe, Te Whanganui-a-Tara and Ōtepoti.

In conducting this cross-cultural analysis of Indigenous and non-Indigenous partnerships, I am not suggesting that there is a homogenous Indigenous identity. 7,789 miles apart at their closest points, there are enormous cultural and historical differences between, as well as among, Māori iwi and Native American Nations, the Indigenous partners of this thesis. Throughout this thesis, I include ethnographic vignettes to give space for my participants’ perspectives. As with my comparative case-study approach, this ethnographic methodology supported my aim to conduct respectful research, recognising multiple ‘knowledges’.³¹¹ Sports scientists Andrew Sparkes and Brett Smith describe this as a defining feature of transdisciplinary research:

transdisciplinary researchers do not need to develop a single unified ‘truth.’ Rather they can aim to integrate the different knowledges by looking for correspondences, coherence...generating knowledge by finding, identifying and communicating patterns across diverse disciplines and discourses.’³¹²

An ethnographic approach also helped me to address the tension between cultural specificity and commonality within Indigenous studies. Indigenous studies scholar Brendan Hokowhitu

³⁰⁹ Bell and Russell, ‘New National History Curriculum,’ 57.

³¹⁰ Bell and Russell, “New National History Curriculum.”

³¹¹ Andrew C. Sparkes, and Brett Smith. *Qualitative Research Methods in Sport, Exercise and Health From Process to Product* (Routledge, 2014) 244.

³¹² Sparkes and Smith, *Qualitative Research Methods*, 244.

(Ngāti Pūkenga) explains that the term ‘Indigenous’ ‘is epistemologically limited because of the ontological importance of local contexts, languages, and culture’.³¹³ I drew my data from the comparison of international field sites and carefully contextualised it within specific local tensions and dynamics. In a special issue on ‘Hemispheric Indigenous Studies’, Antonio Barrenechea, literature scholar, and Heidrun Moertl, from Inter-American studies, warn contemporary researchers of ‘the dangers of embracing a pan-Indianism that is indiscriminating, and politically advantageous, rather than comparative’.³¹⁴ Taking time to emphasise the limits of the term Indigenous is a common practice among Indigenous studies scholars who write against a historical and persistent misrepresentation of Indigenous people as lacking cultural diversity.³¹⁵ Indigenous interpreter Dylan shared with frustration, “they [Americans] think we are all the same, we are one hundred times more diverse than Europeans”. As I wrote this paragraph, I considered that writers of European histories do not need to dedicate such space and time to clarifying that ‘European’ is a limited term for diverse cultures, languages and aspirations. However, all aspects of Indigenous studies research must meaningfully challenge historical and colonial misrepresentations of Indigenous peoples.

My experience as a researcher shaped my methodological choices and the boundaries of my fieldsites. In ‘A Manifesto for Patchwork Ethnography’, anthropologists Gökçe Günel, Saiba Varma, and Chika Watanabe call for researchers to honestly reflect on how their ‘multiple personal and professional commitments’ shape their fieldwork.³¹⁶ I penned my reflections in Melbourne Airport, uncomfortable and anxious, during the mammoth trip from England to Aotearoa:

I have been on a plane for more than twenty hours with another four-hour flight ahead of me. The last thirteen hours were awful. There was not a single seat free, and at least thirty frustrated children were stuck in their parents’ laps. Jetting off to the other side of the planet seems like classic fieldwork, in the same vein as Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown. Yet I am

³¹³ Brendan Hokowhitu and Vijay Devadas *The Fourth Eye Māori Media in Aotearoa New Zealand* (University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 112.

³¹⁴ Antonio Barrenechea and Heidrun Moertl, ‘Hemispheric Indigenous Studies: Introduction,’ *Comparative American Studies An International Journal* 11, no. 2 (2013): 111, <https://doi.org/10.1179/1477570013Z.00000000041>.

³¹⁵ Harcourt, ‘New Zealand’s difficult history,’ 5.

³¹⁶ Gökçe Günel, Siba Varma and Chika Watanabe et al., ‘A Manifesto for Patchwork Ethnography,’ *Member Voices, Fieldsights*, June 6, 2020, accessed August 18, 2025, <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/a-manifesto-for-patchwork-ethnography>.

only here for six weeks – I worry that it is too short a stay for ethnographic research, yet it is barely affordable, and a wrenching amount of time to be away from home.

I was (and remain) anxious to admit that my discomfort, financial limits and commitments to home shaped my research. In 2021, I attended a seminar of Durham University academics who were reviewing the potential of ‘patchwork ethnography’, which is supportive of online interviews and shorter fieldwork periods.³¹⁷ After a presentation, the academics concluded that such research could not have the necessary rigour.³¹⁸ However, Duijn’s description of the artificial boundaries of the fieldsite remind us that the researcher’s capacity has always influenced research design.³¹⁹ International fieldwork is not only affectively challenging but often financially prohibitive. Fieldwork is also rightly bounded by the capacity of participants to host, make time for interviews or feel comfortable with participant observation. Before and after my fieldwork, I conducted online interviews, which revealed my participants’ changing relationships with the British colonial and Indigenous histories they interpreted. By engaging with participants online, as well as in person, I was able to build lasting relationships and enact a Collaborative Consent Process, inspired by the technology of the wampum belt.

3.4 The Wampum Belt and my Collaborative Consent Process

I argue that the typical English university consent procedure presents a fundamental challenge to efforts to conduct non-extractive, relational research. The wampum belt, a relationship-building technology made up of woven purple and white quahog-shell beads, provided a powerful framework to design my own consent process. In this section, I examine the wampum belt as a tool for relationship-building. I then detail my Collaborative Consent Process, which I designed, inspired by the process of sharing, returning and co-reading the wampum belt. Wampum belts became so synonymous with treaty making in the early colonisation of Turtle Island that they were also relied upon by Europeans ‘to extend an invitation, to confirm the terms of an agreement, or to recall mutual commitments.’³²⁰

³¹⁷ Gökçe Günel, Siba Varma and Chika Watanabe et al., ‘A Manifesto for Patchwork Ethnography.’

³¹⁸ Durham University Anthropology, ‘A discussion of patchwork ethnography,’ (Discussion Group, 2021).

³¹⁹ Sarah Van Duijn, ‘Everywhere and nowhere at once.’

³²⁰ Jonathan Lainey, ‘Europeans and the use of wampum belts,’ *McCord Stewart Museum Montreal*, October 11, 2023, accessed August 18, 2025. <https://www.musee-mccord-stewart.ca/en/blog/europeans-use-of-wampum-belts>.

Angela M. Haas, Professor of Rhetoric, describes the wampum belt as a form of ‘hypertext’, a binary of purple and white quahog-shell beads created to represent a complex agreement.³²¹



Figure 5. Paula Peters (Mashpee Wampanoag) Reads a Wampum Belt Commissioned by *Mayflower 400*

From Joanne Briana-Gartner, ‘Films With Cape Connections Pepper Festival,’ *The Enterprise*, July 20, 2021, accessed August 1, 2025, https://www.capenews.net/arts_and_entertainment/films-with-cape-connections-pepper-festival/article_f83d8a4c-011d-5a6e-beb2-fa130d546765.html.

The wampum belt provided a framework for my research as I sought to align with ‘Indigenous research paradigms that centre relationality’.³²² Indigenous studies researcher Lauren Tynan (Pairrebenne Trawlwoolway), advocates for ‘relational accountability’ with the thesis as kin.³²³ Inspired by this, I sought to relate to this thesis, as a ‘living rhetoric’ formed of relationships with and between my participants.³²⁴ Cultivating relationships and trust was essential to my research methodology. To gain insight into the experiences of historical interpreters, I asked Indigenous interpreters to share the challenges they face in their work and their personal experiences of settler colonialism. I also encouraged English and Pākehā historical interpreters, who prided themselves on an empathetic global outlook, to discuss openly their lack of knowledge of colonial history and the contemporary experiences

³²¹ Angela M. Haas, ‘Wampum as Hypertext: An American Indian Intellectual Traditional of Multimedia Theory and Practice,’ *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 19, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 80.

³²² Lauren Tynan, ‘Thesis as kin: living relationality with research,’ *AlterNative: An Internal Journal of Indigenous Peoples* 16, no. 3 (August 2020): 163.

³²³ Tynan, ‘Thesis as kin,’ 163.

³²⁴ Haas, ‘Wampum as Hypertext,’ 80.

of Indigenous peoples. By considering the thesis to be ‘kin’ in relationship with myself and my participants, I was struck by the similarities between my thesis and the wampum belt. Haas describes Wampum belts as demanding relational accountability:

Wampum records are maintained by regularly revisiting and re-“reading” them through community memory and performance, as wampum is a living rhetoric that communicates a mutual relationship between two or more parties.³²⁵

To recognise and respect the relations of my thesis, I realised I too needed to facilitate a process of ‘re-reading’, whereby my participants and I returned to the thesis together, to collaboratively amend and develop it. I therefore designed a Collaborative Consent Process, inspired by the technology of the wampum belt, which embedded relationship-building, respect and reciprocity into the thesis’s methodology.

I designed my Collaborative Consent Process to recognise that knowledge is entrusted rather than surrendered. I sought specific, informed consent, through a collaborative sharing and analysis of quotations within their final context with participants.³²⁶ Health scientists, Emily F.M. Fitzpatrick et. al., review the consent procedures of 1,447 medical studies involving Indigenous communities.³²⁷ They conclude that ‘non-Indigenous researchers have not always addressed community priorities, nor collaborated in research with Indigenous people.’³²⁸ Fitzpatrick et. al., identify that few articles clearly define or exemplify the ‘communication methods used in seeking informed consent’.³²⁹ My Collaborative Consent Process is not intended as a definitive solution. I propose a practical, actionable method that researchers can test, debate, and refine. The diagram below compares the key features of my Collaborative Consent Process with a typical English university consent process, summarised from the consent forms and participant information sheets of Durham University, the University of York, and the University of Kent.

³²⁵ Haas, ‘Wampum as Hypertext,’ 80.

³²⁶ Haas, ‘Wampum as Hypertext,’ 80.

³²⁷ Emily F. M. Fitzpatrick et al., “Seeking consent for research with indigenous communities: a systematic review,” *BMC Medical Ethics* 17, no. 65 (October 2016): 1-18, <http://doi.org/10.1186/s12910-016-0139-8>.

³²⁸ F. M. Fitzpatrick et al., ‘Seeking consent for research,’ 1.

³²⁹ F. M. Fitzpatrick et al., ‘Seeking consent for research,’ 15.

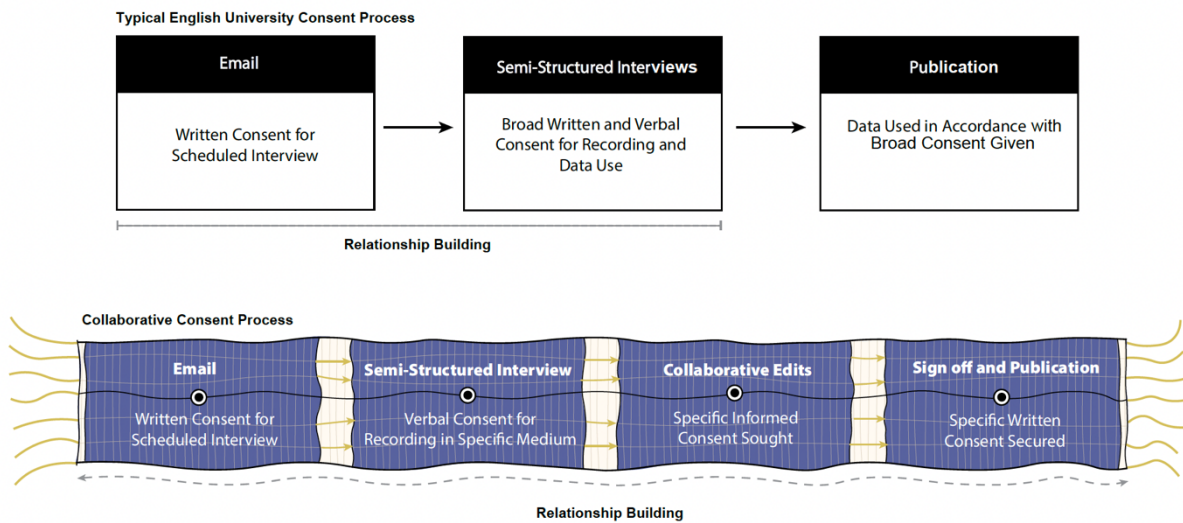


Figure 6. Collaborative Consent Process Inspired by the Technology of the Wampum Belt

Graphic by the Author, January 10, 2025.

My Collaborative Consent Process moves away from ‘broad consent’ to specific informed consent.³³⁰ I define broad consent as consent given by participants for the use of quotations in various research outputs and without knowledge of their final analysis. Broad consent offers a more streamlined approach for researchers with large datasets or for whom a long-term relationship with the participant would be undesirable or inappropriate. A typical consent process at an English university involves participants signing a consent form prior to their interview. In signing this, they give broad consent to the storing and sharing of their data through a breadth of research outputs:

Those written quotations [notes taken by researchers during interviews] will be used in future publications and other research outputs, including but not limited to journal articles and public presentations.³³¹

In the case of PhD research, the researcher might publish the participant’s data three years (full-time) or even six years (part-time) after the participant gave consent. Furthermore, as the researcher produces their consent forms in the first few weeks of their PhD programme, their

³³⁰ F. M. Fitzpatrick et al., ‘Seeking consent for research,’ 13.

³³¹ Consent form template shared by the University of Kent, March 2021, private document in author’s possession.

focus will likely have changed by the time of publication. Institutional consent forms do allow for the later removal of data by the participant:

I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the study at any time and I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part. I can ask for my recording/ transcript to be withdrawn.³³²

However, it is not clear how the participant would revoke consent in practice, particularly if the researcher has not remained in contact with them. With this institutional consent process, there is a significant risk that the participant may forget about the interview and miss their chance to withdraw their data.

In a typical English university consent process, participants would only come to understand the argument their quotation supported after publication. In my Collaborative Consent Process, there is an obligation for reciprocity as the researcher must remain in contact with and accountable to their participants. I sought specific consent from participants, sending them their quotations within the context of my final analysis. I committed to request consent again if I were to analyse the data differently in a future publication. I detailed this in my consent form as:

I understand that if a named quotation is to be shared in a publication or research output that is not the final PhD thesis, I will be informed and given a period of seven days to ask for that quotation to be anonymised or redacted.³³³

My Collaborative Consent Process recognises that a research project undergoes significant changes during the research period. The significance of the difference between my Collaborative Consent Process and the typical English university consent form was exemplified by participant, former Aotearoa Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, who reiterated my commitment to specific, informed consent on the form: ‘approval for direct quotes in advance of publishing please’ and ‘either [real name or anonymised] but real name only if approval sought.’

³³² Consent form template shared by the University of Kent, March 2021, private document in author’s possession.

³³³ Consent Form for Amelia Mulcahey-Knight research project, private document in author’s possession.

I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs. (approval for direct quotes in advance of publishing please)	☒	☐
I understand that any voice or video recordings taken will not be shared publicly but will be transcribed in writing and then deleted.	☒	☐
Please choose one of the following two options:		
I would like my real name used in the above.	☐	
I would not like my real name to be used in the above. (either, but real name only if approval sought)	☐	

Figure 7. Consent Form Amended by Participant Jacinda Ardern

Amelia Mulcahey-Knight. Amended consent form in the possession of the author.

February 7, 2023.

Inspired by my fieldwork in Aotearoa, I added a disclosure of shared connections to my Collaborative Consent Process, which became central to meeting my commitment to ‘relational accountability’.³³⁴ My participants, Māori and Pākehā, encouraged me to locate myself within their network of connections. They asked, “Who have you spoken to?”, “Who are you connected to?”. We then explored our connectedness within this web, laughing that “everyone here knows each other.” I soon realised that this practice was not simply the product of a small country, but a cultural paradigm of te ao Māori (the Māori world). Nō hea koe? (Where are you from?) is part of whakawhanaungatanga, the ‘process of establishing relationships, relating well together’.³³⁵ Simpson describes the importance of a similar practice of relating within her Nation in Turtle Island, the Mohawks of Kahnawà:ke.³³⁶ She explained that people are made sense of through this practice: ‘There is always an answer with genealogic authority...reckoning moments between people’.³³⁷ Simpson stresses that it is only after this recognition of kinship that, ‘We are done; we can proceed’.³³⁸ I am not practised at introducing myself in this way. I initially introduced myself as “a researcher from England, a PhD student at Kent [later York] University”. However, this practice of relating became integral to my methodology and Collaborative Consent Process. Most superficially, it built credibility: “Your colleague Gregor recommended I speak with you”, establishing that I could be trusted. More deeply, this practice reminded me that I was accountable to this community; I was no longer a spectator but part of these networks.

³³⁴ Tynan, ‘Thesis as kin,’ 163.

³³⁵ Moorfield, *Te Aka Māori-English*, under ‘whakawhanaungatanga’.

³³⁶ Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Duke University Press, 2014).

³³⁷ Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*, 9.

³³⁸ Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*, 9.

By reconnecting with participants and focusing on ‘relatedness’, I often developed or built upon existing friendships.³³⁹ While I use the term participant in my thesis, conversationally, I used friends. Anthropologists have debated the value of friendship within fieldwork.³⁴⁰ I recognise that statements of ‘friendship’ within anthropological accounts can be strategically, and problematically, mobilised to claim ‘ethnographic authority and authenticity’.³⁴¹ I agree that to claim a friendship with all my participants would be artificial. This thesis is the culmination of interviews with more than fifty people in the UK, Turtle Island, and Aotearoa. Some of these engagements were fleeting and expected to be so by my participants who provided contextual information in passing. Despite a Collaborative Consent Process that fostered re-engagement with quoted participants, it would not have been possible to maintain lasting connections with all. Medical anthropologist, Sjaak van der Geest warns that claims to friendship do not prove that the researcher sees ‘this person has intrinsic value in him-/herself’.³⁴² Geest even reflects that researchers may fail to see their ‘friends’ as people at all, but as ‘interesting, beautiful or awe-inspiring (landscape)’.³⁴³ While this is a salient warning for my research, recalling dehumanising colonial characterisations of Indigenous peoples, ethnographic fieldwork does involve sincere personal relationship and trust building. I stayed with families for weeks at a time. We shared personal information, and continue to reconnect to discuss films, politics, and upcoming family weddings. Friendship alone might not guarantee a sense of responsibility, but I agree with Geest’s conclusion that sincere friendship ‘improves the quality of research and enriches the personal lives of both [the researcher and participant]’.³⁴⁴

Finally, my commitment to ‘relatedness’ presents a theoretical finding with methodological implications.³⁴⁵ By examining the competing intentions and changing relations of historical interpreters in Indigenous and non-Indigenous partnerships, I expand the concept of the heritage site and school. I reveal them to be formed of complex networks of relations reaching beyond the boundaries of any single institution. Due to the national structures of *Mayflower*

³³⁹ Tynan, ‘Thesis as kin,’ 163.

³⁴⁰ Henk Driessen, ‘The Notion of Friendship in Ethnographic Fieldwork,’ *Anthropological Journal on European Cultures* 7, no. 1 (1998): 43-62.

³⁴¹ Driessen, ‘The Notion of Friendship,’ 132.

³⁴² Sjaak Van Der Geest, ‘Friendship and fieldwork: A retrospect a ‘foreword’,’ *Curare* 38, no. 1/2, (2015): 4.

³⁴³ Geest, ‘Friendship and fieldwork,’ 4.

³⁴⁴ Geest, ‘Friendship and fieldwork,’ 7.

³⁴⁵ Tynan, ‘Thesis as kin,’ 163.

400 and the *Histories Curriculum*, interpreters at schools and heritage sites across Aotearoa shared resources and confronted common challenges. Studying these complex networks, I also found it was not appropriate to follow the specific ethics procedures of a single institution or Indigenous Nation as my participants came from, and worked with, numerous tribal groups. Indigenous historical interpreters in both projects often worked as freelancers alongside several public institutions and for a broad range of tribal governments. Even so, I gained access to participants by building trust in previous interviews. In this way, consent was given by the community, not just the participant. Furthermore, through my relational practice, I recognised my accountability to these communities and to preserving both projects' networks of relations.

3.5 Anonymisation (or Not)

Within this thesis, you will find the names, institutional affiliations and Indigenous Nations of most of my participants. This identification is a deviation from the 'automatic' anonymisation practised by many researchers.³⁴⁶ In their critique of anonymisation in Indigenous studies, "You Can Use My Name; You Don't Have To Steal My Story", theologian Anna-Lydia Svalastog, and bioethicist Stefan Eriksson, argue that researchers have uncritically accepted anonymisation as ensuring the protection of participants from harm.³⁴⁷ Svalastog and Eriksson instead propose that 'in some cases the default of anonymisation should be replaced by a careful deliberation, together with research subjects, of how to handle the issues of identification and confidentiality'.³⁴⁸ It is vital to decolonisation that Indigenous communities retain ownership over their histories and cultural narratives. Therefore, the researchers' consent processes must not make claims of authority over these narratives, which Svalastog and Eriksson argue, could enact a form of 'entitlement' and represent 'stealing someone's identity and history'.³⁴⁹ Practically, anonymisation was challenging within this thesis as I examined partnerships that are both uncommon and public. The identification of my participants was, however, an intentional decision to recognise their authority over their knowledge. The process was complex. I interviewed more than fifty participants, and as such,

³⁴⁶ Anna-Lydia Svalastog, and Stefan Eriksson, 'You can use my name; you don't have to steal my story --a critique of anonymity in Indigenous Studies,' *Dev World Bioeth* 10, no. 2 (August 2010): 104, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-8847.2010.00276>.

³⁴⁷ Svalastog and Eriksson, 'A Critique of Anonymity,' 104.

³⁴⁸ Svalastog and Eriksson, 'A Critique of Anonymity,' 105.

³⁴⁹ Archibald et al., *Indigenous Storywork as Methodology*; Svalastog and Eriksson, "A Critique of Anonymity," 109.

I did not quote many of these interviews directly, but used them to support my analysis. Some participants requested anonymity, in which case we collaborated to rewrite their quotations to ensure this was achieved to their satisfaction. I only imposed anonymity in cases where I was seriously concerned that the comments made would threaten my participants' personal or professional relationships. Through a discussion with the University of Kent Ethics Committee, I altered my consent form to secure written or verbal consent for the use of quotations without anonymisation.

3.6 Borrowing from Journalists: Access and Consent

The moral imperative lies with the writer. You will make a thousand moral decisions in the course of reporting and writing each story...If you can't face your subjects after the stories are published, then you should ask yourself whether you really told the truth.³⁵⁰

The above quotation is from The New Yorker journalist and Pulitzer Prize winner, Katherine Boo.³⁵¹ She identifies three key challenges which my Collaborative Consent Process addresses: it is foremost the researcher's responsibility to practice ethical, non-extractive research; choices about data use are 'moral decisions' that are difficult to formalise to ensure equivalent experience for all participants; divisive and overly critical analysis may endanger long-term relationship building and may suggest a breach of ethics and understanding.³⁵² As I conducted interviews in England, Massachusetts Turtle Island, and across Aotearoa, and met new contacts in transient moments between their work commitments, I realised that anthropological language did not offer a sufficiently shared frame of reference to achieve informed consent. The journalistic framework of on the record or off the record aligned better with my relationship-building focus. This method facilitated a re-balancing of power dynamics between the researcher and the participant, as those I interviewed could revoke consent for recording at any time. Off the record also offered an internationally shared frame of reference for discussions of information sharing as opposed to referencing the commonly misunderstood GDPR guidelines.³⁵³ Ultimately, this journalistic framework supported free-flowing interviews, as participants shared private or proprietary information off the record and

³⁵⁰ Mark Kramer and Wendy Call, *Telling True Stories: A Nonfiction Writers' Guide from the Neiman Foundation at Harvard University* (Plume, 2007), 177.

³⁵¹ Kramer and Call, *Telling True Stories*, 177.

³⁵² Kramer and Call, *Telling True Stories*, 177.

³⁵³ 'What is GDPR, the EU's new data protection law?' *GDPR.EU*, accessed August 26, 2025, <https://gdpr.eu/what-is-gdpr>.

then transitioned back on the record. Living with participants made it even more crucial to set aside time for on the record interviews. On several occasions, I excused myself from conversations in which participants were discussing relevant information among close friends while drinking, to ensure that I did not include statements in my research for which consent could not be given.

Nevertheless, information shared by participants off the record will have undoubtedly influenced my theoretical argument. Interestingly, participants encouraged this, they shared confidential experiences to encourage me to rethink my research questions and analysis, such as urging me to be less optimistic about the extent to which a school was collaborating with iwi. This on the record, off the record framework could be frustrating. Participants shared experiences off the record that could have powerfully supported my theoretical arguments. In these cases, I conducted extensive research and held further conversations to acknowledge my participants' experiences within my theoretical argument, without placing any pressure on them to be quoted directly. This approach was more time-consuming, and sometimes I was simply unable to share any related information. The aim of my thesis, however, is not just to investigate Indigenous and non-Indigenous partnerships but to develop long-term relationships that take another step towards redressing extractive colonial and settler-colonial research.

3.7 Analysing Ethnography

To analyse my ethnography, I drew on the study of rhetoric, a growing focus of social anthropology, and in particular the work of Durham University anthropologist, Michael Carrithers.³⁵⁴ I sought to 'open the world' of historical interpreters without transforming affective and living statements into 'harmless but eloquent and instructive mementos'.³⁵⁵ Summarising Carrithers' body of work, he defines rhetoric as culture's 'tools'; 'mental schemes and images, values and attitudes, dispositions, forms of speech and organization, narratives, and commonplace knowledge' that are mobilised to persuade.³⁵⁶ Carrithers demonstrates that rhetoric is both inherently interactive and 'persuasive', echoing the

³⁵⁴ Michael Carrithers, 'Story Seeds and the inchoate,' *Durham Anthropology Journal* 14, no. 1 (2007): 36; Michael Carrithers, *Culture, Rhetoric and the Vicissitudes of Life* (Berghahn Books, 2009).

³⁵⁵ Michael Carrithers, 'How to Open a World 1: humanism as method,' in *Anthropology as Homage: Festschrift for Ivo Strecker*, ed., F. Girke, S. Thubauville, and W. Smidt (Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 2018), 41; Carrithers, 'Story Seeds and the inchoate,' 33.

³⁵⁶ Carrithers, *Culture, Rhetoric*, 3-4.

Classical use of the term.³⁵⁷ The rhetoric user seeks to change the direction of those they engage.³⁵⁸ Carrithers also emphasises that this attempt to persuade, to draw on a shared cultural narrative and mobilise it to a particular end, is not necessarily successful.³⁵⁹ By attending to ‘rhetorical imagery and narrative’ within speech, I critically analyse these ‘cultural tools’, evaluating how historical interpreters’ use rhetorical strategies, histories and claims to power.³⁶⁰

My use of Carrithers’ theory of rhetoric is exemplified in my analysis of a powerful rhetorical moment during a Zoom meeting between English curators and an Indigenous historical interpreter. In this meeting, the English curators hoped that Darius, a highly experienced Mashpee Wampanoag historical interpreter, would advise them on their upcoming exhibition. Darius is a key participant in this thesis; he advised *Mayflower 400* and now works in educational outreach for the Mashpee Wampanoag Nation. While this conversation took place after the events of *Mayflower 400* and with a different English partner, the exchange was illustrative of those earlier partnership-building meetings. The exchange also exemplified the use of rhetoric as both a form of historical interpretation and a method for navigating differences in interpretation among Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners. Having listened to the curators’ presentation on their plans for the exhibition, Darius quickly emphasised the importance of acknowledging the long history of the Wampanoag, which pre-dates colonial “disruption” and continues to the present day. He stated:

“We haven’t gone anywhere. We do not have the numbers we once had but that is not our fault.” He leans back and adds quietly, “Those were things that were done to us.” He adjusts in his seat and his voice shakes, “Some things we can never regain, our ceremony, our songs in our language”. Darius pauses, before firmly clarifying “We are creating new ones.” He leans forwards to engage the English team, “I caught myself doing that, talking in the past tense,” He pauses to let the admission resonate, “We are still here. Even that slight wording matters. The sign on a school in Mashpee says that we honour the Wampanoag who lived here. The past tense, ‘lived here’. We wrote to them about changing that

³⁵⁷ Carrithers, *Culture, Rhetoric*, 3-4.

³⁵⁸ Carrithers, ‘Story Seeds and the inchoate,’ 39.

³⁵⁹ Carrithers, ‘Story Seeds and the inchoate,’ 47-48.

³⁶⁰ Carrithers, *Culture, Rhetoric*, 3, 8.

- we live here. They don't see anything wrong with it. That is not their fault, it is how it is and how it was."

Darius 'enacted' rhetoric through his pauses, leaning away or moving towards the camera, in his changing volume and how his voice shook slightly.³⁶¹ The above statement was a pedagogical intervention; Darius gave the curators 'guidance on how to take the [/his] talk.'

³⁶² Darius highlighted the disastrous impact of denying Indigenous contemporality. He was then able to direct interpreters not to use the past tense. He warned that their interpretive work had the potential not only to educate, but to harmfully perpetuate misrepresentations of Indigenous peoples. Darius himself demonstrated the continued care needed to interpret a history of profound loss and survivance as he corrected himself: "Some things we can never regain... We are creating new ones." Darius also described using the past tense himself, a rhetorical act which we can analyse as cultural rhetoric.³⁶³ Firstly, this was an impactful example of how colonial violence denies Indigenous presence and futures even in the minds of Indigenous people. Secondly, this statement involved a 'slippage' between us and I, from the Wampanoag Nation to the self: "I caught myself doing that, talking in the past tense... We are still here." Through the use of I, Darius skilfully positioned his existence and presence on the Zoom call as an absolute contradiction of the dominant narrative of Indigenous 'diminution and death'.³⁶⁴ Finally, this phrase is an 'enacted' rhetorical movement.³⁶⁵ Darius sought to develop a connection between the curators and himself, he suggested we could all make this mistake of using the past tense. In doing so, Darius's 'rhetorical strategy' appeared to effectively create a sense of camaraderie, delivering a high-stakes lesson on interpretive practice that would be positively experienced and accepted.³⁶⁶ However, as I reveal throughout this thesis, when using cultural rhetoric to persuade groups from different cultural backgrounds, with hugely different relationships with British colonial and Indigenous histories, there is a significant risk of failure.

My method of rhetorical analysis and this final intervention are influenced by how rhetoric has been studied in critical heritage discourse, specifically through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Whereas Carrithers presents rhetoric as a field of study, CDA is a '*position*

³⁶¹ Carrithers, *Culture, Rhetoric*, 47.

³⁶² Carrithers, *Culture, Rhetoric*, 46.

³⁶³ Carrithers, *Culture, Rhetoric*.

³⁶⁴ Treuer, *The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee*, 1.

³⁶⁵ Michael Carrithers, 'Why Anthropologists Should Study Rhetoric,' *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 11, no. 3 (September 2005): 577-583.

³⁶⁶ Carrithers, 'Story Seeds and the inchoate,' 44.

or *stance* [italicised in original]'.³⁶⁷ CDA is more explicitly 'oppositional', calling for attention to 'elite discourse', presupposing that social relationships such as class, gender and ethnicity structure discourse, can be both analysed and reimagined.³⁶⁸ CDA involves historical and systematic analysis and attention to power and persuasion. Social Scientists Emma Waterton, Laurajane Smith and independent researcher Gary Campbell, define CDA as a 'rigorous' method to 'penetrate the complex layering of linguistic, rhetorical and semantic devices'.³⁶⁹ Emerging from 'critical linguistics', it is much the same in its attention to everything from every-day to body-politic discourse and 'the relations between discourse and power'.³⁷⁰ In line with the goals of CDA, I made practical recommendations that seek to produce alternate futures. My final methodological intervention was to create a policy document at the end of the thesis, outlining clear actions for historical interpreters seeking to interpret British colonial and Indigenous histories with sensitivity and accuracy.

3.8 Conclusion

I have shown that engaging in Indigenous Studies requires a critical evaluation of existing methods, their disciplinary backgrounds and histories. I have evaluated the methods of researchers across disciplines in order to create a transdisciplinary and multi-sited methodology that is relevant to the work of historical interpreters. I recognised my responsibility to my participants and their networks. My ethnographic approach relied on trust, relationship building, and, as much as possible, reciprocity, which I argue requires a reimagining of the typical English university consent process towards specific and informed consent.

³⁶⁷ Tuen A. Van Dijk, 'Critical Discourse Analysis,' in *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, ed. Deborah Tannen, Heidi E. Hamilton and Deborah Schiffrin, 2nd ed. (John Wiley & Sons, 2018): 466-485.

³⁶⁸ Van Dijk, 'Aims of Critical Discourse Analysis,' *Japanese Discourse* 1, no. 1 (1995): 17.
<https://hdl.handle.net/11245/1.117953>.

³⁶⁹ Emma Waterton, Laurajane Smith, and Gary Campbell, 'The Utility of Discourse Analysis to Heritage Studies: The Burra Charter and Social Inclusion,' *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 12, no. 4 (August 16, 2006): 344, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527250600727000>.

³⁷⁰ Van Dijk, 'Critical Discourse Analysis,' 467, 469.

Chapter Four Vignette: Coffee Shop, Ōtepoti (Dunedin), Aotearoa

We have arranged to meet at a warm and busy coffee shop across the road from the University of Otago College of Education, where Amie works as a lecturer and researcher in early childhood professional practice. I have not met Amie before, so I keep looking down at my phone, where I have found a photo of her online, then up again to scan the faces around me. I see only teenage undergraduate students, so I find a space in the corner. More students arrive before class, carrying reusable coffee mugs balanced alongside folders and brightly coloured laptop cases. They discuss upcoming classes, groaning and laughing as they enjoy Aotearoa's proud coffee culture. Others sit slouched over, headphones in, staring at screens with their second mug placed between books and defaced essay drafts. A little late, Amie runs over, "Milly!? My meeting ran over, even though we both had to be at another meeting at 9:30!" She speaks with great warmth and the energy of someone who is back-to-back busy. I ask if I can take notes, and we make space for my notebook between our coffees and large slices of cake - interviews are rightly done over kai [food].

I ask Amie about her work, and she describes being an advisor, teacher and mentor for a breadth of programmes for both the College of Education and her hapū [subtribe]. She works for Kāi Tahu [the largest South Island tribe] and traces her whakapapa [genealogy] to this iwi [tribe], along with Kāti Māmoe, Waitaha and Ngāti Kahungunu iwi. Across Amie's roles, she is committed to supporting whānau [family or community] in her iwi. She speaks with passion as she explains:

"I'm working with schools to find out where our whānau are and bring them home. Not all of them know they are from this iwi; others have been told but don't know where to start. We must work through the trauma and

the barriers to find our whakapapa. Revitalising the language is also very important for me.”

Amie explains that it is not only Aotearoa’s national history of colonisation that necessitates this cultural survivance work, but the specific local histories of Ōtepoti, over-written by Scottish colonists as ‘Dunedin’. Amie has a deep ancestral connection to Te Waipounamu [the South Island] through her ancestors from the Kāi Tahu, Kāti Māmoe, and Waitaha iwi. She shares:

“Down here, in the South Island, we had earlier contact with Europeans, earlier intermarrying, and we lost our language and culture earlier. For perspective, the last Native speaker in my family was four generations ago. Revitalising this dialect reveals place names and food-gathering sites and allows us to proudly identify ourselves as being from the South. People who don’t know about this dialect think we are one blanket language and people.”

Amie speaks conversational te reo Māori [Māori language] and has significant experience interpreting Aotearoa’s histories to whānau and Pākehā [non-Indigenous New Zealander] students and educators. She describes the research work she is doing for the *Histories Curriculum*:

“The MoE offered some funding to make resources for schools. We came together to write a Cultural Narrative, a biography.”

Cultural Narratives are sought after by schools. Through these, Māori researchers share geographically specific historical, geographical and celestial information for a specific school. The Cultural Narratives share bi-cultural Māori and Pākehā histories.¹ The hapū had worked tirelessly on this Cultural Narrative to shape how local teachers would teach Māori histories and ways of knowing. However, Amie recounts her distressing experience sharing this knowledge:

¹Aukaha Ltd, *Logan Park High School Cultural Narrative* (Aukaha Ltd, 2022), 3.

“When we released it, I went to a hui [meeting] and a Pākehā teacher was holding up the Cultural Narrative. The teacher said: ‘Finally, we have got this.’ Finally!? That was two years of hard work. I cried when we finished. It is treasured knowledge! And our whānau don’t have it! We want to give it to our whānau so that they can share it. We can empower them, but this can be missed if it goes past them. Trauma has stopped this transmission. Be humble! Our whānau are hearing [their history] from you first. Someone who does not understand the mana [prestige] and importance of our narratives.”

During Amie and the schoolteacher’s short interaction, multiple affective relationships with Aotearoa’s history coexisted and collided. For the Pākehā teacher, the Cultural Narrative was a helpful resource to “Finally” have, as they faced the pressure of implementing the new *Histories Curriculum*. In stark contrast, for Amie, and she asserted for other Māori whānau, this Cultural Narrative presented treasured knowledge reclaimed from colonial suppression. The teacher’s response is, therefore, deeply upsetting. When, as part of my Collaborative Consent Process, I returned this chapter to Aimee for her comments, she added:

“After our kōrero [conversation], the teacher that I referred to enrolled in my te reo Māori course. They were one of my most dedicated students and became a good friend. The relational aspect of the journey has been life-changing for us both and also for whānau and the tamariki [children] in his school.”

Amie stressed that historical interpretation is deeply personal and affective work, both when encountering partners’ lack of understanding, and when successfully transforming their relationships with these histories.

Chapter Four: Defining Affect within Historical Interpreters’ Practice

The following three chapters form part two of this thesis, in which I examine the critical and disruptive role of affect within my participants’ work. In this chapter, I define how affect emerged, transformed and was operationalised within the historical interpreters’ practice. I bring my work into conversation with the ‘turn to affect’, non-representational definitions of

affect as unconscious, immediate feelings, and emotion as conscious, categorised reactions.² I argue that the centrality of affective transformation and culturally specific affective experiences to historical interpreters' practice presents an insurmountable critique to these non-representational definitions and the traditional distinction between affect and emotion. A fast-growing body of research has argued for the normative and potentially transformative role of affect and/or emotion in historical education, within classrooms and heritage sites.³ However, Laurajane Smith, Gary Campbell and Professor of Psychology Margaret Wetherell, reveal that the question of how we define affect remains 'a persistent dilemma'.⁴ These researchers present a broad definition of affect as, 'phenomena that have some psychological presence'.⁵ Within this chapter, I argue that a specific definition of affect is both possible and essential for examining the complexity of Indigenous and non-Indigenous interpreters' work. I draw on Margaret Wetherell's discursive theory of affective practice, and the social and cultural contextual approach to affect, to define affect as it appears in the work of historical interpreters as a form of historical knowledge, and as an embodied and cognitive 'intensity' that can be mobilised, expressed, and transformed by the interpreter.⁶ This theory is therefore, 'contextual and relational'.⁷ As Simpson argues in her analysis of theory within Nishnaabeg thought, "'Theory" isn't just an intellectual pursuit It is intimate and personal, with individuals themselves responsible for finding and generating meaning within their own lives.'⁸ I argue that Indigenous and non-Indigenous professionals brought distinct 'affective repertoires', shaped by cultural, social and political contexts, which collided through their collaboration.⁹

² Brian Massumi, 'The Autonomy of Affect,' *The Politics of Systems and Environments*, no. 31(1995): 83-109. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1354446>; Derek P. McCormack, *Refrains for Moving Bodies Experience and Experiment in Affective Spaces* (Duke University Press, 2014); Julian Henriques, 'The Vibrations of Affect and their Propagation on a Night Out on Kingston's Dancehall Scene,' *Body & Society* 16, no. 1 (2010): 57-89, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1357034X09354768>; Lisa Blackman and Couze Venn, 'Affect,' *Body & Society* 16, no. 1 (2010): 57-89, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1357034X09354768>; Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, *The Affect Theory Reader* (Duke University Press, 2010).

³ Endacott, 'Affective Engagement in Historical Empathy.'; Endacott, 'Negotiating the Process of Historical Empathy.'; Zembylas, 'Refusal as affective.'; Innes and Sharp, 'Historical Empathy and Museum Culture.'; Savenije and Bruijn, 'Historical empathy in a museum.'

⁴ Smith et al., *Emotion, Affective Practice*.

⁵ Smith et al., *Emotion, Affective Practice*.

⁶ Margaret Wetherell, *Affect and Emotion A New Social Science Understanding* (Sage, 2012); Margaret Wetherell, 'Affect and discourse – What's the problem? From affect as excess to affective/discursive practice,' *Subjectivity* 6, no. 4 (2013): 349-368, doi:10.1057/sub.2013.13; Margaret Wetherell, "Feeling Rules, Atmospheres and Affective Practice: Some Reflections on the Analysis of Emotional Episodes," in *Privilege, Agency and Affect*, edited by Claire Maxwell and Peter Aggleton (Palgrave macmillan, 2013), 221-240; Anita Von Poser et al., 'Emotion Repertoires.'

⁷ Simpson, 'Land as Pedagogy,' 7.

⁸ Simpson, 'Land as Pedagogy,' 7.

⁹ Von Poser et al., 'Emotion Repertoires'.

4.1 The Conventional definition of Affect and Emotion

In one of the most quoted theoretical papers within affect studies, 'The Autonomy of Affect', philosopher Brian Massumi argues that 'affect' and 'emotion' describe fundamentally different phenomena.¹⁰ He distinguishes affect as unconscious, immediate feelings, and emotion as conscious, categorised reactions.¹¹ Massumi defines affect as an 'intensity', as 'nothing less than *the perception of one's own vitality*, one's sense of aliveness, of changeability.'¹² This definition of affect is supported by Melissa Gregg from Management and Business studies, and Gregory J. Seigworth, from Communication Studies. They argue against the need for further clarification, which they claim would falsely restrict affect's vastness and changeability.¹³ Affect is for them,

the name we give to those forces—visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing, vital forces existing beyond emotion—that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension.¹⁴

In keeping with Massumi's theory, Gregg and Seigworth argue that affect emerges everywhere; as a pre-cognitive force, they suggest affect is ineffable. Massumi states, and Gregg and Seigworth imply that the only decisive boundary to affect is emotion.¹⁵

Massumi describes emotion as marking the curtailing of affect's potential, the point at which affect is fixed, 'owned and recognised'.¹⁶ Emotion can therefore be understood as a categorised state such as happiness, sadness, excitement or grief. This distinction between affect as pre-cognitive 'intensity' and emotion as a defined experience reflects an ancient debate.¹⁷ Aristotelian studies define emotions through a 'cognitivist view'.¹⁸ For Aristotelian theorists, emotions involved 'appraisals, judgements...which are irreducible to bodily sensations'.¹⁹ Put simply, Aristotelian theorists argue that emotions are shaped by conscious thought. Contrastingly, Cartesian studies define emotion as 'the feeling of bodily change',

¹⁰ Massumi, 'The Autonomy of Affect.'

¹¹ Massumi, 'The Autonomy of Affect.'

¹² Massumi, 'The Autonomy of Affect,' 85, 97.

¹³ Gregg and Seigworth, *The Affect Theory Reader*.

¹⁴ Gregg and Seigworth, *The Affect Theory Reader*, 1.

¹⁵ Massumi, 'The Autonomy of Affect'; Gregg and Seigworth, *The Affect Theory Reader*.

¹⁶ Massumi, 'The Autonomy of Affect,' 87.

¹⁷ Massumi, 'The Autonomy of Affect,' 85.

¹⁸ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*.

¹⁹ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 5.

an immediacy without ‘processes of thought, attribution or evaluation’.²⁰ Massumi defines both emotion and affect as ‘immediately embodied’.²¹ However, by mobilising the term affect alongside emotion, Massumi, Gregg and Seigworth preserve a distinction between the Aristotelian idea of considered, categorised feelings and Descartes’ pre-cognitive ‘bodily change’.²² This ancient debate thereby continues to influence contemporary researchers. Within the following sections, I test this traditional definition of emotion and affect against my ethnography, challenging the implied chronology and the claim that emotion is fixed, showing how affect is deeply shaped by culture and history, and can construct the self and the other.

4.2 A Dubious Chronology

Throughout my interviews, my participants shared, reanimated, and experienced affect outside of its original context. Amie carefully and emphatically voiced her lasting feelings of shock after reenacting the teacher’s dismissive statement, “Finally”. When discussing welcoming whānau to the iwi, Amie also expressed affect subtly; she leant back in her chair with open body language. These expressions appear as the ‘purely autonomic reactions’ described by Massumi as characterising affect, ‘directly manifested in the skin – at the surface of the body’.²³ However, in these examples, intense affect does not describe immediate feelings but has emerged in the description of past events. Affect has therefore not been fixed as a categorised emotion, as Massumi, Gregg and Seigworth suggest.²⁴ My interview with Andrew, at the Wampanoag summer powwow, an extract from which starts chapter one, similarly challenged Massumi, Gregg, and Seigworth’s definitions of affect and emotion.²⁵ Andrew re-experienced the affect of previous encounters. He paused, breathed deeply, sped up his speech, and moved his hands for emphasis in response to my questions:

I ask, “I wanted to ask you about the kind of expectations placed on you as a Native person - you guys [Andrew and his brother Dylan] referred to yourselves as the bad boys of the Museum [Plimoth Patuxet].” Andrew smiles and laughs. I continue, “Do you feel there are expectations on how you behave when you are teaching this history that can be in anyway

²⁰ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 5.

²¹ Massumi, ‘The Autonomy of Affect,’ 85.

²² Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 5.

²³ Massumi, ‘The Autonomy of Affect,’ 85, 86.

²⁴ Massumi, ‘The Autonomy of Affect,’ 85.

²⁵ Massumi, ‘The Autonomy of Affect.’; Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, *The Affect Theory Reader*.

limiting – are you expected to be positive? Maybe limiting is not the right word. Is there an expectation that even when you are talking about the most emotional thing that you are just like”, I move my hand downwards across my face to suggest a flat emotional state.

“No”, Andrew responds immediately with friendly inflection, “Because I think when you get emotional, people can connect to that. They may not be able to connect to the living part, because they might have never lived through the experiences that I have, you know. And they don’t have to go through the same struggles that I have but if you are emotional about something, people often see that, and feel that, and connect with that.”

“I think that we were the ‘bad boys’ because we just spoke our minds.”

“Right”, I nodded.

“We were not going to take people telling us what we could and couldn’t do with our culture. We weren’t going to be quiet about the things that people didn’t want us to talk about because the truth of it is that it is very ugly. There are not. That. Many. Great parts. Once you hit colonisation. And we were going to talk about it, and it is still emotional for us, and it still affects us to this day. But we weren’t going to be quiet about it, we were not going to be silenced.

I don’t care if you come down and you are offended, that you are hurt, I hope that you are! So that you actually feel something about what has happened to Native people.

I am not trying to attack you.

I am not trying to argue with you as a person.

But the fact that you might be offended,
you might be upset,

means that you are realising what happened.

So, take that emotion, I am definitely emotional about it, there were definitely times where I got emotional about it. But take that emotion and see that emotion that I have and that you have and do something about it. Process that. Why do you feel that way?’

Massumi presented emotion as fixing affect’s ineffability.²⁶ He argued that emotion marked a curtailing of potentials, they are fixed, ‘owned and recognised’.²⁷ However, Andrew presented the possibility that he could transform visitors’ emotions as a central motivation for his work. Furthermore, Amie and Andrew’s emotive statements were overflowing with intense affect. In these interviews, affect was not only apparent in immediate feelings but also emerged in the description of past events.

Andrew persuasively argued that the value of sharing personal “emotion” through historical interpretation is that it can transform the visitors’ emotional relationship with British colonialism and Indigenous histories. Andrew presented the visitors’ offence and “upset” as starting points from which historical understanding and a transformed perspective on Indigenous people can develop. Andrew and Amie are both motivated by the belief that non-Indigenous individuals’ relationships with British colonial and Indigenous history can be changed. More specifically, they asserted that changing the heritage visitor or students’ affective engagement with this history can improve their historical understanding and contemporary behaviour towards Indigenous peoples: “take that emotion and see that emotion that I have and that you have and do something about it.” Amie’s call to feel differently about this history moved the teacher from dismissive to affectively engaged, and she became ‘one of my [Amie’s] most dedicated students’. Furthermore, Amie stressed that the transformation of the teachers’ affect positively shaped the historical interpretation shared with students.

I argue that despite affect’s less common usage, the term’s association with uncategorised states better represented the complexity and changeability of feelings experienced by historical interpreters. During our exchange, both Andrew and I used the word emotion,

²⁶ Massumi, ‘The Autonomy of Affect,’ 87.

²⁷ Massumi, ‘The Autonomy of Affect,’ 87.

reflecting the colloquial use of the term. Andrew used affect only once as a verb and interestingly alongside emotion as an adjective: ‘it is still emotional for us, and it still affects us to this day’. Andrew differentiated affect and emotion within this statement. Like Massumi, Gregg and Seigworth’s definitions, Andrew used affect to describe the structures and forces that make Indigenous people have emotions. However, his usage cannot fully be understood using their definitions.²⁸ Andrew’s use of “emotional”, describes a reaction that is not definable or categorised, a fluidity that Massumi, Gregg and Seigworth reserve for their definition of affect. Furthermore, for Andrew, affect is not only immediate but also experienced repeatedly, from the colonial period to the present day. The intensity of affect was re-experienced by historical interpreters as they re-narrate specific moments of partnership, or as they reflect on their interpretive practice more broadly.

My definition of affect has to include this potential for change to support an analysis of the motivations and experiences of historical interpreters. Smith, Wetherell and Campbell so thoroughly reject the ‘dubious chronology’ of affect fixed and followed by emotion that they argue there is not a useful definitional distinction between the terms affect and emotion.²⁹ Within their introduction to their edited compilation, *Emotion, Affective Practices, and the Past in the Present*, they propose an all-inclusive, broad definition of affect and emotion:

The contributors to this volume are interested in phenomena that have some psychological presence, involving mild to strong degrees of turbulence in bodies and minds.³⁰

My ethnographic data supports Smith, Wetherell and Campbell’s denunciation of the chronology of affect and emotion.³¹ Feminist affect theorist Sara Ahmed advocates for the use of one term to understand the full complexity of ‘emotion’ beyond ‘subjects’ and ‘interiority’, which the researcher might avoid by shifting to ‘another term (such as affect) that belongs to a different order’.³² I, like Smith, Wetherell and Campbell, choose to use affect alone; however, I propose a more detailed definition by further examining the challenges my ethnography presents to the traditional distinction of affect and emotion.

²⁸ Massumi, ‘The Autonomy of Affect.’; Gregg, and Seigworth, *The Affect Theory Reader*.

²⁹ Smith et al., *Emotion, Affective Practice*, 6.

³⁰ Smith et al., *Emotion, Affective Practice*, 2.

³¹ Smith et al., *Emotion, Affective Practice*, 6.

³² Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*.

The above ethnographic challenges to Massumi, Gregg, and Seigworth's theory of affect and emotion, reflect not only a criticism of definition and chronology but also a substantial shift in affect theory.³³ Within the rest of this chapter, I explore how historical interpreters' affect was shaped by historical and cultural context, was distinctly experienced by Indigenous and non-Indigenous interpreters, and was relational in creating the self and other. This analysis is supported by a significant shift in theories of affect towards a discursive, social and cultural contextual approach, which I briefly outline here.

Hochschild's 1979 work on 'feeling rules', though shaped by the notion of affect as an 'unreflective bodily response', marked a significant step away from a 'bio-cultural' view of affect, towards a social, cultural theory.³⁴ Examining the work of flight attendants and bill collectors on Delta Air Lines flights, Hochschild identifies how affect was produced and mobilised by the staff as affective work, and as a valuable commodity for Delta.³⁵ She defines the affective behaviour expected of Delta staff as 'feeling rules', cultural tools specifying the kinds of emotions appropriate in different situations.³⁶ She builds upon her own theory of 'emotional work', which can be enacted in private, to propose 'emotional labour' which describes the feeling rules of commercial employment.³⁷ Expressing this affect involves 'surface acting' as well as 'deep acting', a process of trying to induce the desired feelings in the self.³⁸ While her theory still relies on a non-discursive sense of spontaneous feeling, like Massumi, Gregg and Seigworth's affect, Hochschild argues that affect is at all moments shaped by the person and their cultural contexts.³⁹ Significant to my examination of the distinct affective work of Indigenous and non-Indigenous interpreters, Hochschild reveals that emotional labour is structurally unequal.⁴⁰ Her proposal that the challenge or magnitude of emotional labour is shaped by social and historical structures, provides a foundation for my examination of the more significant affect challenges faced by Indigenous interpreters at the end of this chapter.⁴¹ Hochschild's 'feeling rules' provide the foundation for a growth in

³³ Gregg and Seigworth, *The Affect Theory Reader*; Massumi, 'The Autonomy of Affect.'

³⁴ Wetherell, 'Feeling Rules, Atmospheres and Affective Practice,' 234; Hochschild, 'Emotion Work, Feeling Rules.'

³⁵ Hochschild, 'Emotion Work, Feeling Rules.'

³⁶ Hochschild, 'Emotion Work, Feeling Rules.'

³⁷ Arlie Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (University of California Press, 2012).

³⁸ Hochschild, 'Emotion Work, Feeling Rules,' 556.

³⁹ Gregg, and Seigworth, *The Affect Theory Reader*; Hochschild, 'Emotion Work, Feeling Rules.'; Massumi, 'The Autonomy of Affect.'

⁴⁰ Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*.

⁴¹ Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*.

social and cultural theories of affect by establishing that affect is something you do, act, and perform.⁴² Later theorists would go further in contending that ‘*affects* and emotions are internalized cultural practices rather than universal categories of primordial bio-psychological states’.⁴³

Wetherell develops a theory of ‘affective practice’ that builds upon and addresses the fixity of Hochschild’s ‘feeling rules’, seeking to explain how, ‘affected subjectivities with particular histories can also actively work to bring about, alter, maintain, resist and challenge affective atmospheres.’⁴⁴ Wetherell draws on practice theory (from the late 1990s to the early 2000s) to develop ‘affective practice’.⁴⁵ She defines this theory as a configuration of bodily potential, discourse, personal history and social contexts that are entangled in situated moments of doing that are simultaneously felt and meaningful, ‘flexible and creative’, shaped by power and repetition.⁴⁶ For this thesis, Wetherell’s theory of ‘affective practice’ explains how certain affective relationships with British colonial and Indigenous history become normalised and dominant, while still having the potential to be transformed through interpretive intervention and partnership, as I explore in the following section.

‘Affective practice’ makes the theoretical claim that affect is always entangled in meaning-making and can be productively studied through discursive methods.⁴⁷ Wetherell draws on linguistic anthropologist Marjorie Godwin’s work on the interaction of school children, where ‘Body movements and facial expressions and so on are intimately choreographed and patterned with talk’, as well as critical theorist Eve Sedgwick’s exploration of the textured assemblage of the cognitive and embodied experienced, where, ‘to touch is already to reach out’.⁴⁸ ‘Affective practice’ is also a methodological proposal, a ‘pragmatic way of thinking about affect and emotion as a basis for social research’ in response to Massumi’s work, and the turn to affect more broadly.⁴⁹ Wetherell describes the turn to affect as a deliberate ‘turn

⁴² Hochschild, ‘Emotion Work, Feeling Rules.’

⁴³ Simon Mabon, ‘Social Theory: Sara Ahmed,’ *Sectarianism, Proxies & De-sectarianisation*, December 6, 2022, accessed April 4, 2026, <https://www.sepad.org.uk/announcement/social-theory-sara-ahmed>.

⁴⁴ Wetherell, ‘Feeling Rules, Atmospheres and Affective Practice,’ 235.

⁴⁵ Wetherell, ‘Feeling Rules, Atmospheres and Affective Practice,’; Wetherell, *Affect and Emotion*; Wetherell, ‘Affect and discourse – What’s the problem?’

⁴⁶ Wetherell, ‘Feeling Rules, Atmospheres and Affective Practice,’ 234; Wetherell, *Affect and Emotion*; Wetherell, ‘Affect and discourse – What’s the problem?’

⁴⁷ Wetherell, ‘Feeling Rules, Atmospheres and Affective Practice,’ 234; Wetherell, *Affect and Emotion*; Wetherell, ‘Affect and discourse – What’s the problem?’

⁴⁸ Wetherell, ‘Affect and discourse – What’s the problem?’ 361, 358.

⁴⁹ Wetherell, *Affect and Emotion*, 3.

away from discourse methods'.⁵⁰ The movements' authors advocate for a non-representational methodology, a critique of a fine-grain discursive analysis which they argue flattens affect and its embodied, ineffable nature.⁵¹ Wetherell questions the possibility of conducting a truly non-discursive study of affect.⁵² She reviews Derek McCormack's analysis of Dance Movement Therapy as a rigorous attempt at non-representational research.⁵³ Yet, even as McCormack articulates the movements he observes, he is inevitably drawn into discursive analysis.⁵⁴ In developing her theory of 'affective practice', Wetherell demonstrates that discursive analysis offers a practical methodology. It is a methodology I apply throughout this chapter to capture the multi-layered, changeable nature of affect in the work historical interpreters. I also draw on 'emotion repertoires', a theory by Von Poser et al. which builds on the work of Wetherell, to present a dynamic and 'actor-centred' theory of affect.⁵⁵ 'Emotion repertoires' are affective practices, 'deeply embodied' developed through repeated expression, shaped by socialisation and as such varying between cultures.⁵⁶ Essential to this thesis, Von Poser et al. provide a theoretical foundation to understand distinct affect, and conflicting affective relationships with history, between Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners.⁵⁷

A broad group of educational, feminist and critical race theorists have sought to examine the relationship between affective practices, feeling rules, power and identity formation, whereby emotional repertoires produce the person and their relationship to the other.⁵⁸ This body of 'critical affect theory' draws on Marxist theory to investigate complex, multi-layered 'material and discursive' structures of 'modernity, coloniality, the nation-state, and capitalist

⁵⁰ Wetherell, 'Affect and discourse – What's the problem?' 350.

⁵¹ Massumi, 'The Autonomy of Affect'; Gregg and Seigworth *The Affect Theory Reader*; McCormack, *Refrains for Moving Bodies*; Lisa Blackman and Couze Venn, C., 'Affect'; Patricia T. Clough, 'The new empiricism: Affect and sociological method', *European Journal of Social Theory* 12, no. 1(2009): 22–62.

⁵² Wetherell, 'Affect and discourse – What's the problem?'

⁵³ Wetherell, 'Affect and discourse – What's the problem?' 355-358; McCormack, *Refrains for Moving Bodies*.

⁵⁴ Wetherell, 'Affect and discourse – What's the problem?';

⁵⁵ Von Poser et al., "Emotion Repertoires".

⁵⁶ Von Poser et al., "Emotion Repertoires," 243.

⁵⁷ Von Poser et al., "Emotion Repertoires," 246.

⁵⁸ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*; Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*; Anna Feigenbaum et al., 'Towards a Method for studying Affect in micro(Politics): The Campfire Chats Project and the Occupy Movement,' *Parallax* 19, no. 2 (2013): 21-37, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13534645.2013.778493>; Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Duke University Press, 2011); Smith, Wetherell, and Campbell, *Emotion, Affective Practice*; Laura Jane Smith, 'Man's inhumanity to man'; Zembylas, 'The emotional regimes,' 329; Zembylas, "'Structures of Feeling'".

modes of production.’⁵⁹ Ahmed’s work is notable in this area. In the latter part of this chapter, I draw on her discursive analysis and phenomenological examination of how emotions make the surfaces of bodies, constructing the identity of the self and other within Indigenous and non-Indigenous partnerships.⁶⁰

4.3 Affect Transformed

My interviews with non-Indigenous interpreters within *Mayflower 400* and the *Histories Curriculum* revealed that even long held and previously categorised feelings, defined by Massumi as emotion, could change.⁶¹ As I conducted semi-structured interviews with several English *Mayflower 400* participants over five years, I observed their affective relationships with the histories they interpreted transform. My interviews with Jo Loosemore, English Curator and Content Producer for *Mayflower 400*, most explicitly exemplified the potential for affect to be revisited, reinterpreted and changed. In our first interview in 2019, Jo rushed between planning meetings for the then-upcoming *Mayflower 400* exhibitions. She emphasised that her relationship with the Wampanoag Advisory Committee had transformed how she perceived the history of the Mayflower voyage:

“My first conversations with the Wampanoag Advisory Committee were quite difficult, and I think that was a lot to do with my complete ignorance, and I would say naivety really. I had been asked by my masters here to co-create this show, so I was put in touch with the Committee through *Mayflower 400* and that strategic partnership. I said to our Wampanoag partners, ‘I am trying to put on this exhibition, and I really want and need your help; objects are a key part of this.’ Straight away they said, ‘why are you asking us for objects? You have them. You stole them.’ And I, at the time, didn’t really know what to do with that comment. It wasn’t that I doubted it.”

Jo explained that she had come to her *Mayflower 400* role as an experienced curator, though with limited knowledge of English Colonial history and little knowledge of Wampanoag histories. She stressed that she did not have a sense of this history as either affective or

⁵⁹ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*; Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*; Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Duke University Press, 2011); Anna Feigenbaum et al., ‘Towards a Method for studying Affect’; Zembylas, ‘The emotional regimes,’ 329; Zembylas, “‘Structures of Feeling’”.

⁶⁰ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*; Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*.

⁶¹ Massumi, ‘The Autonomy of Affect.’

contemporary. In the following chapter, I analyse this absence of historical knowledge and detached affective relationship with British colonial and Indigenous histories, which I demonstrate was shared by many non-Indigenous participants. While Jo intended to interpret a more nuanced and less nationalistic Mayflower narrative, she did not expect this to require such a challenging affective transformation. Jo approached the partnership meeting knowing that the Wampanoag advisors would bring historical and lifeways expertise that she lacked. She assumed they had shared goals for the exhibition based on their common positionality as heritage workers. However, through the exchange, Jo came to recognise, for the first time, that she viewed this history profoundly differently to her Indigenous partners. For my definition of affect, it is meaningful that Jo's affective reaction seemed to still be in flux; she was responsive to the Wampanoag partners' affective relationship with these histories, but she was not yet sure what it would mean for the partnership and her interpretive practice.

In my interview with Jo, three years later in 2022, the exchange with the Wampanoag interpreters about objects had remained significant to her; however, in this later retelling, her focus, tone and emphasis changed:

Jo leans forward in her chair, engaging with me through Zoom. Her voice is hoarse; she had received the ominous double line of a positive COVID-19 test that morning. Regardless, she is energetic and immensely friendly. Since our first interview, over a year ago, she has spoken to me with the ease and openness of an old friend. She seems to delight in this opportunity to reflect on her work with *Mayflower 400*, which, due to the pandemic, had ended without a structured debrief. She begins describing her first collaborative in-person meeting with the Wampanoag Advisory Committee. She speaks firmly, but laughs, communicating her embarrassment before recounting the story.

“Yes, yeah, okay, no, I have got some thoughts, so we are talking about,” she looks up away from her notes in contemplation, really considering my question, “The emotional challenge of this work. I guess the first thing to say is that, of course, there is one,” Jo nods her head, “And it’s incredibly positive, and it is also incredibly negative. So the burden of the emotional baggage became very clear, very early on, because in my initial

engagement with the Wampanoag partners, very early on, I suggested the partnership annnddd,” she smiles awkwardly, “I outlined how I hoped that we could work together, how I hoped that we would be able to bring objects, stories, and understandings from their culture to the project, and that I viewed that as very shared. And they stopped me straight away when I was talking about objects and said, ‘Well, you have them, they are all in your country, and you stole them.’ And I have always been grateful for their directness, how straight-talking they have been from the start. So, there was an honesty, I think and just a lack of messing about. They were going to tell me what was what.”

Within both interviews, Jo emphasised the significance of this challenging exchange with the Wampanoag advisors. She went on to describe this as the moment that transformed her understanding of Mayflower history, from a distant and past event to one that is contested, affective, and has contemporary significance. However, the changes in how she recounted this story between the two interviews revealed that she had engaged in a process of learning beyond this encounter. The two interviews map a change in Jo’s perception of this history, which was driven by her growing relationship with the Wampanoag advisors. In this second telling, far from “not knowing what to do with that comment”, Jo perceived the Wampanoag partner’s response as inevitable. She described arriving with a preconceived notion of what constituted collaboration, a sharing of “objects, stories, and understandings” to tell a shared history, rather than two distinct historical perspectives. That she now recognised this approach was inappropriate was embodied by Jo in the second interview. Jo pulled faces to express her embarrassment, even before quoting the response of the Mashpee and Aquinnah Wampanoag partners. Jo’s repetition of “very early on” suggested she wanted to distance herself from her initial perspective on the Mayflower history, which had overlooked its complexity and the distinct positionalities of the historical interpreters in the room. Jo categorised affect, but it was by no means fixed, ranging from “extremely positive” to “incredibly negative”. She struggled for words, paused and considered how her affective relationship with these histories had changed. It was clear that the work of relating to and interpreting these histories remained affectively complex. In Jo, Amie and Andrew’s interviews, affect was consciously reconsidered, re-experienced, and embodied.

Indigenous historical interpreters revealed that a central motivation for their work was their belief that they could transform established affective relationships with colonial and Indigenous histories. In calling for the teacher to “be humble”, Amie made a rhetorical move to change the teachers’ affect from disengagement to motivated engagement in support of Indigenous communities. Amie suggested, and was proven correct, that if the teacher approached this history humbly, they would develop a more sensitive and nuanced historical understanding and therefore share a more accurate historical interpretation. Interestingly, non-Indigenous interpreters were less likely to describe the aims of their historical interpretive practice in terms of transforming the affect of visitors or students. However, non-Indigenous partners repeatedly characterised their own affective transformation as the most significant moments of their Indigenous and non-Indigenous partnership. My definition of affect must account for this transformation to understand what motivates historical interpreters and the personal significance of their work. Through a confrontation with these histories as affective, Jo came to understand the urgency and importance of challenging 400 years of misrepresentative Mayflower narratives that have erased Indigenous histories and sanitised British colonialism:

I ask Jo, “Did you feel motivated by a sense of culpability because their [the Wampanoag Nation’s] objects are here? Did you feel that in your role, you had to make up for 400 years of historical storytelling in the way that you interpreted the Mayflower history? You have said before that this history has got that weight.”

Jo considers, making notes as I speak and taking a moment before looking up, “I just have a thought; I think there is inevitably the need,” she pauses, “no, I think inevitably there is the danger, the aspiration that you think you can right the wrongs of 400 years and a very difficult past. I think that I realised that there was no way that I could do that. But could I do the right thing now? Absolutely, I could! But of course, that brings another emotional layer because you want so much to get it right, to say the right thing, and act in the right way, delivering properly, appropriately, authentically, usefully, meaningfully, and symbolically. And, of course, that is emotionally demanding. But it doesn’t detract from the fact that it’s the right thing to do, to have that intent and that aspiration.”

Jo's affective transformation was representative of the experience of many non-Indigenous interpreters, which I analyse further in the following chapter. Jo transitioned from "not knowing what to do" to a developed sense of empathy for the Indigenous partners' positionality, and finally to a feeling of inspired responsibility, which drove her through this difficult interpretive work. Jo's experience supported Andrew's claim that shock or "upset" can be a transitional phase to an engaged affect, at which point the historical interpreter can inspire their partner or visitor to act in support of Indigenous communities. Jo's engaged affect was an enormously challenging weight, as the Indigenous interpreters revealed to her the urgency and stakes of this work. However, Jo would reflect hugely positively on her historical interpretation work with *Mayflower 400*. She described it as the most significant project she had ever undertaken.

Affect studies in education, with their focus on longer-term module or course learning, have investigated the transformation of affect.⁶² Endacott argues for the importance of pedagogies of historical empathy, that cultivate affective thinking and engagement in students.⁶³ Endacott explains that the provision of further information in a historical individual's hand, as well as questions that prompt 'perspective taking', 'affective connection', and a consideration of 'context', altered students' historical understanding.⁶⁴ He shares,

Reading Truman's diary excerpt challenged the students' original sense of similarity with him. While they still identified with Truman's background and straightforward demeanour, they struggled with how the President of the United States might openly "look down upon" another race of people.⁶⁵

Endacott's study demonstrates how a change in students' affective relationship with history can change their historical interpretation. He also stresses that historical empathy supported students to develop more complex decision-making and moral judgement skills.⁶⁶ Endacott defines historical empathy as a 'cognitive-affective construct', challenging the historic division of affect and cognition. My analysis of historical interpreters' practice supports Endacott's claim that both affect and cognition are crucial to historical understanding.

⁶² Endacott, 'Negotiating the Process of Historical Empathy.'; Endacott, 'Reconsidering Affective Engagement.'; Innes and Sharp, "Historical Empathy and Museum Culture."

⁶³ Endacott, 'Negotiating the Process of Historical Empathy.'; Endacott, 'Reconsidering Affective Engagement.'; Innes and Sharp, "Historical Empathy and Museum Culture."

⁶⁴ Endacott, "Reconsidering Affective Engagement," 10.

⁶⁵ Endacott, "Negotiating the Process of Historical Empathy," 17.

⁶⁶ Endacott, 'Negotiating the Process of Historical Empathy,' 4-5.

Pedagogies of historical empathy rely on the belief that the teacher can change students' affective relationship with, and so understanding of, history.

4.4 Affect as Historical Knowledge

Mayflower 400 and the *Histories Curriculum*'s historical interpreters engaged in historical learning in two ways: by applying pedagogies that encouraged retention and critical engagement, and through research to improve their understanding of history. To understand the relationship between affect and historical learning, we can again draw on studies of historical empathy.⁶⁷ Aotearoa educator-historian Ricky Prebble observes that teaching historical empathy is essential not only to cultivate engagement in historical learning, but because affect is itself a form of historical knowledge.⁶⁸ By engaging affectively, Endacott's students develop an understanding of a historical figure's perspective, how affect influenced that person's actions, and how the historical context they operated in was different to contemporary society.⁶⁹ A member of the Wampanoag Advisory Committee for *Mayflower 400* emphasised that historical detail is only part of the history, "unless you have the backstory, and you have the emotion in there it's not the complete story."⁷⁰ As discussed in chapter two, developing a comprehensive and nuanced interpretation of British colonial and Indigenous histories required historical interpreters to confront stories of historical and contemporary harm, while affectively engaging with historical agents' motivations and experiences.

In driving affective engagement, historical empathy as an affective methodology carries a risk of a 'false sense of familiarity'.⁷¹ Prebble and Endacott warn of 'presentism' and 'ego-drift'.⁷² These describe the risk of too fervently labelling historical actions with contemporary moral judgements and failing to recognise that historical actors behave differently and are

⁶⁷ Savenije and Bruijn, 'Historical empathy in a museum.'; Endacott, 'Negotiating the Process of Historical Empathy'; Jason L. Endacott, 'Reconsidering Affective Engagement'; Melanie Innes and Heather Sharp, 'Historical Empathy and Museum Culture.'

⁶⁸ Endacott, 'Negotiating the Process of Historical Empathy.'; Endacott, 'Reconsidering Affective Engagement.'; Ricky Prebble, 'Historical empathy Page 1 – Introduction,' *Manatū Taonga — Ministry for Culture and Heritage*." March 19, 2025, accessed August 8, 2025, <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/te-akomanga/historical-concepts/empathy-historical>; Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre...And Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Basic Books), 4.

⁶⁹ Endacott, 'Negotiating the Process of Historical Empathy.'

⁷⁰ Mulcahey, 'Beginning of the End,' 109-110.

⁷¹ Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre*, 4.

⁷² Endacott, 'Reconsidering Affective Engagement,' 22; Prebble, 'Empathy: Historical empathy.'

living within dissimilar contexts.⁷³ Prebble and Endacott's warning appears particularly salient for historical interpreters. The slip to an uncritical identification with the past could occur in both their historical learning and teaching, and was made more likely as many of *Mayflower 400* and *Histories Curriculum*'s non-Indigenous interpreters were newly interpreting these histories.⁷⁴ Even participants with years of experience using pedagogies of historical empathy described having to be mindful not to impose a particular affect or contemporary moral lesson on learners. I interviewed two experienced Pākehā heritage workers at the National War Memorial in Wellington. They shared a warning from their interpretive experience:

“Don’t try to manipulate how the students feel. We pose questions like, ‘Why don’t we just demolish the memorial?’ To get the students to question the way we memorialise history. For the Centenary of Gallipoli, I was touring students and pushing their buttons, laying it on thick. I lost sight of the point of challenging them to think critically. It is easy to find yourself becoming a cheerleader, and then they won’t ask questions.”

The heritage workers presented an attempt to impose a particular affect as antithetical to cultivating critical engagement. Examinations of affective practice are increasingly common in critical heritage studies, recognising that heritage staff seek to change their audiences’ affect.⁷⁵ However, such museum studies can fall into the trap of suggesting that each exhibition conveys a single key affective narrative. Zembylas theorises that institutions have ‘emotional regimes’, communally reinforced ‘feeling rules’ for affective expression.⁷⁶ However, he emphasises that visitors will resist as well as comply with these ‘emotional regimes’.⁷⁷ I argue that museums also contain multiple ‘feeling rules’, shared by the numerous interpreters.⁷⁸ Both Amie and Andrew recognised that despite the intent of historical interpretation, the partners or visitors they address will experience affect in

⁷³ Endacott, ‘Reconsidering Affective Engagement,’ 22; Prebble, ‘Empathy: Historical empathy.’

⁷⁴ Endacott, ‘Reconsidering Affective Engagement,’ 22; Prebble, ‘Empathy: Historical empathy.’

⁷⁵ Innes and Sharp, ‘Historical Empathy and Museum Culture.’; Savenije and Bruijn, ‘Historical empathy in a museum.’; Laurajane Smith, and Gary Campbell, ‘The Elephant in the Room: Heritage, Affect and Emotion,’ in *A Companion to Heritage Studies*, ed., William Logan, M. Nic Craith and U. Kockel (Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 443-460.

⁷⁶ Zembylas, ‘The emotional regimes,’ 329; Zembylas, “‘Structures of Feeling’,” 187.

⁷⁷ Zembylas, ‘The emotional regimes,’ 329; Zembylas, “‘Structures of Feeling’.”

⁷⁸ Hochschild, ‘Emotion Work, Feeling Rules’.

complex and unpredictable ways.⁷⁹ Teaching historical empathy is therefore importantly distinct from the work of enforcing a particular ‘feeling rule’.⁸⁰

Historical interpreters’ use of pedagogies of historical empathy demonstrated that affect can be strategically mobilised. Historical interpreters were resistant to labelling the specific affective outcomes they intended; however, they were clear in their intent to induce their audience to move away from an affective stance of indifference, which I analyse further in the following chapter.⁸¹ Affect was sincerely felt and strategically managed and mobilised by historical interpreters to influence changes in their audiences’ or partners’ affect. As quoted above, Andrew asserted that sharing his affective relationship with these histories would engender affective engagement from his audience: “I am definitely emotional about it... But take that emotion and see that emotion that I have and that you have, and do something about it.” Andrew was addressing the remembered museum site visitors as well as myself. He conveyed his affect through his language and movement to stimulate an affective engagement in all his non-Indigenous audiences. Amie conveyed the significance and affective challenge of her work of learning and sharing her iwi’s histories, emphasising that she “cried” when she had finished the Cultural Narrative. I found this particularly moving and therefore included the discussion in the vignette. Thus, the affective relations that contributed to my understanding are not only those between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners, but also between the participant, their remembered experience, and me. I was influenced by historical interpreters who experienced and mobilised affect as a form of knowledge and rhetoric, intended to persuade.⁸² As my participants shared their distinct affective relationships with the histories they were interpreting, I was moved to critically re-engage with my understanding of these histories, as well as my theories of historical interpretation. For Jo and myself, our historical learning was transformed not by a specific command to feel a particular way, but by encountering, and re-encountering, the distinct affective relationships Indigenous interpreters had with these histories.

⁷⁹ Smith, Wetherell, and Campbell, *Emotion, Affective Practice*, 17.

⁸⁰ Zembylas, “Structures of Feeling.”

⁸¹ Smith, Wetherell, and Campbell, *Emotion, Affective Practices*, 265-281.

⁸² Carrithers, ‘Story Seeds and the inchoate,’ 47-48.

4.5 Affect is Shaped by History and Culture

The affective challenge of the historical interpreters' practice lies in the work of both leading and experiencing affective transformations. Their pedagogies and learning are both shaped by personal background. Unlike Massumi, Gregg and Seigworth's definitions, I argue that affect is not purely 'unconscious' but shaped by history, culture and personal experience.⁸³ The impact of personal background on interpreters' affect and broader experiences is underexamined in studies, even those by educators and museum professionals, that focus on the visitor or students' practice. Houliston, an Auckland history teacher, describes how her class of Pacific learners' engagement in historical learning was shaped by their 'individual histories' of marginalisation.⁸⁴ Unusually, she reflects on the affective challenge of her own interpretive practice as a Pākehā teacher. Houliston explains that she has reflected, 'at times uncomfortably, on my role in perpetuating a dominant Eurocentric approach to teaching and learning history.'⁸⁵ By considering how her own affect was different to that of the Pacific learners, Houliston reinforces her claim that personal background shapes affective engagement with history and historical understanding. This kind of consideration, however, is uncommon. Endacott did not share his own affective experiences of interpreting history in his studies of historical empathy.⁸⁶ As I discussed in chapter two, his work is typical of education and heritage studies which focuses on the affective experience of students and visitors over that of the historical interpreter.⁸⁷ We are left to speculate about the affective work Endacott does when applying his pedagogy of historical empathy. Has Endacott's affective relationship with this history changed during these classes? An examination of historical interpreters reveals that they are engaged in complex affective work in the learning and teaching of history.

Andrew and Amie emphasised that their Indigenous identities deeply impacted their affective engagement with British colonial and Indigenous histories. Recognising Indigenous standpoints on affect is central to understanding interpreters' affective experience.⁸⁸ Andrew

⁸³ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 7.

⁸⁴ Houliston, 'Pacific Learners in Aotearoa,' 141.

⁸⁵ Bronwyn Houliston, 'Pacific Learners in Aotearoa,' 150.

⁸⁶ Endacott, 'Negotiating the Process of Historical Empathy.'; Endacott, 'Reconsidering Affective Engagement.'

⁸⁷ Endacott, 'Negotiating the Process of Historical Empathy.'; Endacott, 'Reconsidering Affective Engagement.'

⁸⁸ Aileen Moreton-Robinson, 'Towards an Australian Women's Standpoint Theory A Methodological Tool,' *Australian Feminist Studies* 28, no. 78 (2013), <https://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.2013.876664>.

asserted that affect can be passed down intergenerationally, and through institutionalised structures of colonisation, “it is still emotional for us, and it still affects us to this day”. He described how affect was re-encountered through the legacies of colonisation which continue to harm Indigenous Nations. Amie emphasised that reclaiming Indigenous histories, place names, and dialects is the affective work of re-connecting with Māori identity. Advocating for Indigenous standpoint theory, novelist Ambelin Kwaymullina (Palyku) has called for non-Indigenous researchers to “identify and interrogate their own standpoint and interact with Indigenous standpoints as equal ways of knowing.”⁸⁹ By recognising Andrew and Amie’s standpoint, affect is shown to be shaped by ancestors’ positionality within these histories, by place, and by experiences of oppression that shaped Indigenous lives during British colonisation and that continue to the present day.

Reactions as immediate and overwhelming as fear are culturally produced, historical and shaped by personal identity. In the following chapters, I further analyse specific affective relationships with history; here, I consider the implications for our definition of affect. Using the typical psychological example of a child running from a bear, Ahmed made the argument that affect is learnt and culturally produced.⁹⁰ She powerfully challenges Functionalist studies, which argue that the child exhibits an instinctual and evolutionarily essential fear.⁹¹ Instead, Ahmed argues that the bear is not an intrinsic object of fear. Instead, the child runs because ‘We have an image of the bear as an animal *to be feared*’ captured in cultural stories and passed socially.⁹² I suggest we can more clearly challenge the notion that affect is intrinsic or pre-cognitive if we rewrite the example. We can replace the bear with a dog and add another child. We could then watch as one child jumps away, heart pounding, full of fear, while the other child runs towards the dog, overcome with excitement and plunges their hands into the dog’s fluffy coat. I argue, this example illustrates that while affect can overwhelm, and feel pre-cognitive, affect is always shaped by history and culture.

Affective relationships with colonial history are historically and culturally produced, not only in oral and written tradition but through structures that perpetuate colonial ways of being.

⁸⁹ Ambelin Kwaymullina, ‘Literature, Resistance, and First Nations Futures: storytelling from an Australian Indigenous women’s standpoint in the twenty-first century and beyond,’ *New Writing from Western Australia* 63, no. 2 (2018): 152.

⁹⁰ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 7.

⁹¹ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 7.

⁹² Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 7.

Aotearoa teacher, Harcourt suggests that a lack of affective engagement with colonial history is one such colonial legacy:

Indifference and boredom, however, may also be a settler-colonial strategy of avoiding an uncomfortable encounter with the histories of injustice and the contemporary privileges accrued to certain groups and not others from these injustices.⁹³

‘Indifference and boredom’ are as much culturally produced affective stances as Amie and Andrew’s experiences of this history as “still emotional”. Jo’s interviews revealed that a collision between the culturally produced affective stances of detachment and affective engagement results in uncomfortable but meaningful affective change which I examine in the next chapter. For our definition of affect, I argue that affect is the product of distinct histories and cultural backgrounds, which presents a final challenge to Massumi, Gregg and Seigworth’s definition of affect as immediate and ‘purely’ unconscious.⁹⁴

4.6 Relational Affect

Distinct affective relationships with colonial history not only reflected but to some extent constructed the distinct identities of the English and the Indigenous historical interpreters within these partnerships. I have analysed challenging exchanges, moments of ‘surprise’ that Ahmed argues ‘both establish and shift the boundaries of the familiar.’⁹⁵ For my Indigenous participants, these exchanges were articulated to exemplify the distinct affective relationships that non-Indigenous partners or visitors have with colonial history. They presented the non-Indigenous partners’ affective transformation from detachment to engagement, offence to historical understanding, as a motivating but affectively challenging element of their interpretive work. Non-Indigenous historical interpreters emphasised these exchanges as hugely significant moments of learning within their partnerships. In my first draft of this chapter, I described Jo’s exchange with the Wampanoag Advisory Committee as fraught. I sought to stress how distinct Jo and the Indigenous partners’ affective relationships with this history were by emphasising Jo’s feelings of discomfort. However, through my Collaborative Consent Process, Jo challenged this phrasing and explained that ‘fraught’ did not represent her experience of the partnership. She described her experience far more positively, as a

⁹³ Harcourt, ‘New Zealand’s difficult history,’ 199.

⁹⁴ Massumi, ‘The Autonomy of Affect,’ 85.

⁹⁵ Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, ii.

progression from a state of ignorance to shared learning and ultimately to trust. Ahmed defines affect as fundamentally involving such ‘(re)actions or relations of ‘towardness’ or ‘awayness’ in relation to such objects’.⁹⁶ Affect, Ahmed argues, is relational, and these immediate, bodily reactions, which are still cultural and historical, work to produce the self, community and other.⁹⁷

Certain relational theories of affect have argued that a specific affect can be passed between partners. Literature on vicarious trauma contributes to discussions of affect as relational and yet describes a strikingly different affective experience of partnership than that of *Mayflower 400* and the *Histories Curriculum*’s historical interpreters.⁹⁸ The term emerged from clinical psychology to describe an embodied and mental anguish experienced as a result of hearing someone else recount their traumatic experiences.⁹⁹ This theory thereby argues that affect is relational in terms of being passed to, and experienced by another person. Central to the affective experiences of Amie, Andrew and Jo was a collision with their partners’ contrasting affective relationships with British colonial and Indigenous histories, clear in their distinct affective expressions. However, rather than gaining their partners’ affect, it is through the collision of these distinct affective repertoires that they came to recognise their partners as ‘other’.¹⁰⁰ Their experiences support Ahmed’s conclusion that affect ‘serve[s] to embody the subject’, creating the self and the other, and the boundaries between them.¹⁰¹ Jo came to understand that “their [the Wampanoag Advisors’] journey to this has been far more difficult.” Not only did this involve a recognition of the partner as Indigenous, with a distinct relationship with British colonial history, but, particularly for my English participants, a new reckoning with themselves as non-Indigenous. Jo shared:

“I do think we became really good professional partners, I do think we genuinely worked well together, and I think that is a great testament to them, really, as their journey to this is much more difficult. They were

⁹⁶ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 8.

⁹⁷ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*.

⁹⁸ Lisa McCann and Laurie Anne Pearlman, ‘Vicarious traumatisation’; see Dana C. Branson, ‘Vicarious Trauma, Themes in Research, and Terminology: A Review of Literature’ *American Psychological Association* 25, no. 1(2019): 2-10; Stephen High, *Oral History at the Crossroads Sharing Life Stories of Survival and Displacement* (2014, UBCPress); Anna Sheftel and Stacey Zembrzycki, ‘Only Human: A Reflection on the Ethical and Methodological Challenges of Working with “Difficult” Stories.’ *Oral History Review* 37, no. 2 (2010): 191-214.

⁹⁹ Lisa McCann and Laurie Anne Pearlman, ‘Vicarious traumatisation’.

¹⁰⁰ Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*.

¹⁰¹ Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 38.

great, great partners and I think we have become friends actually. But clearly, I will always represent the colonial oppressor.

You know, I may be other things as well. I may be Jo, I may be a friend, I may be a mad woman on the other side of the Atlantic who sends endless emails and asks questions about ridiculous things and is constantly worrying about getting things right. I may be a transatlantic friend, but I am also a,” she pauses and considers, “I have the heritage of the coloniser.”

Through encountering her Indigenous partners’ distinct affective relationships with this history, and the more significant affective challenge of their interpretive practice, Jo comes to recognise herself as non-Indigenous. Jo’s experience exemplifies that of the English historical interpreters I interviewed, most of whom had been taught minimal or no English colonial history at school, no Indigenous history and had not previously spoken with an Indigenous person. Jo was, however, unusual in explicitly describing herself as “represent[ing] the colonial oppressor”. As I continue to investigate in the following chapter, many non-Indigenous historical interpreters expressed their discomfort at their own lack of knowledge of England’s histories of colonial violence. They shared their distress at confronting feelings that they might be complicit in the erasure of these histories and the ongoing misrepresentation of Indigenous peoples, which they confronted by encountering the greater affective challenge or emotional labour of the Indigenous partners’ interpretive practice.¹⁰² Jo’s use of “colonial oppressor” stressed the affective difficulty of this realisation of difference. She not only recognised that she had a distinct understanding of this history but confronted her continued power and privilege which was both the cause and result of this interpretation. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Pākehā historical interpreters in the settler-colonial state of Aotearoa had already developed a sense of themselves as non-Indigenous. Yet, as is illustrated in the teachers’ exclamation in the opening vignette, due to the suppression and sanitisation of colonial history in Aotearoa, Pākehā interpreters of the *Histories Curriculum* also experienced disorientating affective confrontations with iwi’s distinctly held histories. In this way, my Pākehā participants’ interpretive practice also involved a difficult grappling

¹⁰² Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*.

with their privilege and responsibility as non-Indigenous people. These experiences confirmed Ahmed's claim that affect works to produce the self and the other.¹⁰³

A surprising feature of affect within Indigenous and non-Indigenous partnerships was a positive correlation between recognising the partners' difference and improved interpersonal closeness. Ahmed describes relational affect as differentiating 'others' into 'the familiar (assimilable, touchable) and strange (unassimilable, untouchable).'¹⁰⁴ The examples she uses suggest that a recognition and enactment of 'strangeness' marks a severing of relationships.¹⁰⁵ Ahmed shares an extract from philosopher and intersectional feminist Audre Lorde's biography:

a woman in a fur hat staring at me...Her leather-gloved hand plucks at the line where my new blue snow pants and her sleek fur coat meet. She jerks her coat close to her. I look. I do not see whatever terrible thing she is seeing on the seat between us - probably a roach. But she has communicated her horror to me. It must be something very bad from the way she's looking, so I pull my snowsuit closer to me away from it, too. When I look up the woman is still staring at me, her nose holes and eyes huge. And suddenly I realise there is nothing crawling up the seat between us; it is me she doesn't want her coat to touch.¹⁰⁶

Affect appeared in the 'techniques of differentiation', the pausing and care with which to identify the self and other.¹⁰⁷ The woman on the subway separated Lorde's black, and her own white body, and in so doing, Ahmed argues, transformed the black body into something strange and 'untouchable' enacting a colonial history of the racialised other.¹⁰⁸ Indigenous partnerships made many non-Indigenous historical interpreters confront their positionality in a way that was unsettling and uncomfortable. However, these uncomfortable affective experiences did not motivate those non-Indigenous historical interpreters to pull away; rather, they experienced an affective transformation from detachment to affective engagement and often friendship. The challenging experiences my participants described are encounters with 'strangeness'.¹⁰⁹ However, they are not practices of abjection, and much of the

¹⁰³ Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*.

¹⁰⁴ Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 44.

¹⁰⁵ Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*.

¹⁰⁶ Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essay and Speeches* (Penguin Books, 1984), 147-148.

¹⁰⁷ Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 1.

¹⁰⁸ Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 44.

¹⁰⁹ Savenije and Bruijn, 'Historical empathy in a museum,' 842.

discomfort of the encounter lies in what the Indigenous interpreter's difference revealed to the non-Indigenous interpreter about their own uncritically held assumptions. I explore these discomforting realisations further in the following chapter. What is revealed here for my definition of affect is a surprising and significant correlation between participants' confrontation with distinct positionalities and their improved feelings of closeness. Prebble, in a resource for teachers of the new *Histories Curriculum*, describes 'encountering the past' as involving 'the tension between the familiar and the strange, between feeling connected to the past and feeling distant from it.'¹¹⁰ American cultural historian, Robert Darnton, warns that 'we constantly need to be shaken out of a false sense of familiarity with the past, to be administered doses of culture shock.'¹¹¹ In this practice, as with historical interpretive partnership work, a recognition of strangeness can create a deeper understanding and connection.

Mayflower 400 non-indigenous partners described the work as physically tiring, extending far beyond regular working hours, and both intellectually and affectively challenging. They expressed feeling the weight of this history and a profound sense of responsibility to fully commit to their interpretive practice:

I ask, "Because this is such personal work, and it is such demanding work, I wondered if you felt as if there was a boundary to your working day?"

Jo shook her head, smiling.

I smile, "Yeh, I wondered if you were able to put the work down?"

Jo responds quickly, "No, no, I think you, I think you live it and you have to live it, I think, because it really, really matters. And you, and you have to make a difference and ultimately, if you don't enable people to learn more at every opportunity, you are doing their [the Wampanoag Partners'] trust and their generosity a disservice." She pauses, screws up her face and continues carefully, "That's a bold statement but I think I mean it."

¹¹⁰ Prebble, 'Empathy: Historical empathy.'

¹¹¹ Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre*, 4.

Through her partnership and friendship with the Wampanoag historical interpreters, Jo confronted the urgency of interpreting this history and began to feel a heavy sense of responsibility. Sociologist, Christian Von Scheve argues that affect ‘denotes a strong conative or motivational momentum and is therefore critical to action’.¹¹² Jo’s affective engagement with this history drives her to commit to its interpretation fully. I have shown that the motivations of Indigenous historical interpreters and the experience of non-Indigenous interpreters within these partnerships reveal that affective relationships with colonial history can be transformed. However, this affective transformation and feelings of inter-personal closeness did not involve non-Indigenous interpreters coming to understand “the living part” of Indigenous experience, as Andrew described. Non-Indigenous interpreters repeatedly emphasised that their experience interpreting these histories was not nearly as affectively challenging as it was for Indigenous partners.

4.7 Who Experiences Affect?

In establishing that affect is relational and historically produced, we see affect is also ‘bound up in power relations and politics’.¹¹³ Ahmed and Von Scheve argue that affect is central to how historically produced cultural hierarchies are impressed on the present, that ‘emotions do not arise arbitrarily across individuals, but rather in more or less systematic ways, for example with regard to dominant power hierarchies or stratification.’¹¹⁴ Lorde describes affect as a method by which agents enact racism, producing the ‘other’.¹¹⁵ Zembylas argues for a recognition of race and racism as ‘*technologies of affect*’ constructed through ‘language, desire, power, bodies, social structures, subjectivity and materiality.’¹¹⁶ His ‘technologies’ emerge in the recoiling described by Lorde.¹¹⁷ To be labelled emotional or as having uncontrollable affect, is also an example of the ‘*technologies of affect*’ producing the racialised other.¹¹⁸ Which groups are presented as being emotional carries specific histories, cultural meanings and claims to power. Ahmed explains that ‘to be emotional is to have one’s judgement affected: it is to be reactive rather than active, dependent rather than

¹¹² Christian Von Scheve, ‘A social relational account of affect,’ *European Journal of Social Theory* 1, no. 2 (2018): 42, <https://doi.org/10.1177/13684310176900>.

¹¹³ Smith, Wetherell and Campbell, *Emotion, Affective Practices*, 2.

¹¹⁴ Christian Von Scheve, ‘A social relational account of affect,’ 40.

¹¹⁵ Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider*.

¹¹⁶ Michalinos Zembylas, ‘Rethinking race and racism,’ 3.

¹¹⁷ Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider*: 147-148; Michalinos Zembylas, ‘Rethinking race and racism as *technologies of affect*,’ 4.

¹¹⁸ Zembylas, ‘Rethinking race and racism,’ 4.

autonomous.’¹¹⁹ In Akala’s popular forgotten history, an auto-biographical account of his experience being Black and mixed-race in England, he argues that the dismissal of ‘young black boys in particular’ as being baselessly frustrated or angry enables a denial of the history of British colonialism and its ongoing legacy of racism and classism.¹²⁰

When writing this chapter, I grappled with how to convey emphasis from my non-Indigenous participants that their Indigenous partners’ interpretive work was more affectively challenging. My concern was that by detailing the superior affective challenge faced by Indigenous interpreters, including the greater emotional labour required by their interpretive practice, I would further misrepresentations of Indigenous people as overly emotional.¹²¹ As ethnohistorian Matthew Restall warns, ‘there are innumerable threads of historical consequence that link the people and places and events that we study with the world around us.’¹²² Historically, the Indigenous person has been explicitly constructed as ‘other’ in relation to the white, colonial person through a construction of them as lacking affective control. Sociologist, Tom Pessah argues that from the early seventeenth century, white colonists designated ‘white violence’ as ‘wars’, as opposed to the ‘massacres’ attributed to ‘savage’ Natives.¹²³ The association of Indigenous peoples with indiscriminate violence, despite systematic attacks on Indigenous settlements by white colonists, resulted in material awards for colonial attacks which propelled further attacks.¹²⁴ This perception of Indigenous ‘savagery’ and the silencing of colonists’ ‘acts of barbarity’ produced a ‘notion of racial difference’ that has persisted.¹²⁵ Darius described repeatedly navigating these perceptions from visitors when he interpreted Wampanoag histories at museums in Turtle Island:

“You hear the two terms, ‘Are your people warlike or peaceful?’ You know you can’t describe a culture or any culture around the world like that, that’s ridiculous. You know, everybody goes to war for one reason or another and you don’t just wake up in the morning - oh my God, that’s right, I am a warlike person, I must go kill somebody today. That’s ridiculous, and that’s how our people have been described over the years:

¹¹⁹ Sarah Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 3

¹²⁰ Akala, *Natives Race & Class*, 25.

¹²¹ Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*.

¹²² Restall, ‘2018 Presidential Address,’ 4.

¹²³ Tom Pessah, ‘Violent representations: hostile Indians and civilized wars in nineteenth-century USA,’ *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 37, no. 9 (March 4, 2013): 1630.

¹²⁴ Pessah, ‘Violent representations: hostile Indians.’

¹²⁵ Tom, ‘Violent representations: hostile Indians,’ 1630.

not being human, not having a culture, not having language, not knowing what we are doing, running wild around the woods acting crazy.”¹²⁶

The colonial rhetoric of the angry or docile Natives was also applied by British colonial governments in Aotearoa. The persistence of this racist narrative into the present day was similarly experienced by Māori interpreters, as Amie explained, “We are seen as angry Māori, because we do know this history”. In recognising the relationship between affect and power, we can explore interpreters’ attempts to resist specific expectations for their affective expression. Interpreters are experiencing intense affect as well as mobilising it strategically to challenge the persistence of colonial inequalities and misrepresentations. Zembylas, drawing on Michel Foucault, argues that the teacher, in this case the historical interpreter, came to understand their identity through acts of resistance and consent to emotional labour.¹²⁷ Zembylas describes the emotional labour of teachers as the communal expectations placed on workers to express their affect in particular ways.¹²⁸ The way that historical interpreters mobilised affect was shaped by their pedagogical aims, the expectations of their professional role, and the historical forces that influenced how they would be received.

4.8 Conclusion: (Re)defining Affect Through the Historical Interpreters’ Practice

In conclusion, I define affect as it appears in the work of historical interpreters, as an ‘intensity’ in response to an event or memory of an event shaped by culture and with its own history.¹²⁹ Affect has defined features:

- Affect is an embodied practice.
- Affect is mobilised, expressed and transformed within the practice of historical interpretation. Historical interpretation can therefore be considered an affective practice.
- Affect is relational, shaped by personal background, history, culture and power, and mapped onto particular bodies to create the boundaries of the self and other.

¹²⁶ Mulcahey, ‘Beginning of the End,’ 56.

¹²⁷ Isenbarger and Zembylas, ‘The emotional labour.’; Zembylas, ‘Interrogating “Teacher Identity.”: Emotion, Resistance, and Self-formation’, *Educational Theory* 53, no. 1 (2003): 107-127; Zembylas ‘Discursive Practices.’

¹²⁸ Isenbarger and Zembylas, ‘The emotional labour.’

¹²⁹ Massumi, ‘The Autonomy of Affect,’ 97.

- Finally, affect is a form of historical knowledge and shapes the level of engagement with historical learning.

Examining the hard, affective work of historical interpreters presented a meaningful critique to the arguments of Massumi, Gregg and Seigworth, that affect is pre-cognitive, unconscious and immediate, and that emotion marks its fixing.¹³⁰ I agree with Smith, Wetherell, and Campbell's conclusion that ethnographic research presents an insurmountable critique to the traditional distinction between emotion and affect.¹³¹ In particular, traditional definitions cannot explain the centrality of affective transformation and culturally specific affective experiences to historical interpreters' practice. I argue that the term affect, rather than emotion, better supports an examination of historical interpreters' practice. This is where Massumi's discussion of the 'aliveness' and 'intensity' of affect has enriched my work.¹³² By detailing language and bodily movement, and focusing on moments of tension, or 'intensity', I mark the presence of intense and dynamic feeling as a central challenge, motivation and practice of historical interpreters.¹³³ As I demonstrate in the following two chapters, by examining the affective practice of historical interpreters we can better understand how particular relationships with British colonial and Indigenous history are preserved and can be transformed.

¹³⁰ Massumi, 'The Autonomy of Affect'; Gregg, and Seigworth, *The Affect Theory Reader*.

¹³¹ Smith, Wetherell and, Campbell, *Emotion, Affective Practices*, 2.

¹³² Massumi, 'The Autonomy of Affect,' 97.

¹³³ Massumi, 'The Autonomy of Affect,' 97.

Chapter Five Vignette: Classroom, Ōtepoti (Dunedin), Aotearoa

Five Pākehā teachers and a heritage worker pull their chairs into a circle; we sit close together in the only free office in the High School. Two experienced high school history teachers, including my contact at the school, Paul, are hosting the meeting.¹ Three visitors introduce themselves: a young and friendly early childhood teacher; a representative of a local heritage organisation whose accent reveals she grew up in England; and a confident, organised primary school teacher.²

The primary school teacher leads the meeting, “I have been speaking with Anne from Southern Heritage Trust”. She gestures to the older woman on her left. “They have a festival coming up that seems to be a very interesting opportunity for us. I was thinking that the new *Histories Curriculum* opens space for us to do this heritage collaboration.”³

The heritage worker smiles and carefully describes the event. She tentatively suggests, “I was hoping we could engage more young people in our history events - perhaps they could present?”

Immediately, the high school history teachers begin enthusiastically discussing the historical topics their students could address: “Pre-European history needs to be part of these presentations, Kāi Tahu [the largest iwi in the South Island] and the Dunedin settlement before the gold rush.”⁴ The teachers bounce ideas off one another, confidently moving between historical topics. Paul muses, “Students could talk about Lebanese or

¹ High schools in Aotearoa teach students ages twelve to eighteen years old.

² Primary schools in Aotearoa teach students ages five to eleven. Early childhood education centres in Aotearoa teach students ages one month to five years old.

³ *Southern Heritage Trust* provides advocacy and education to protect Otago’s built and cultural heritage. For more information, see Southern Heritage Trust, ‘Southern Heritage Trust,’ accessed June 2, 2025, <https://www.southernheritage.org.nz>.

⁴ “Kāi” is a local dialect version of Ngāi, which, in iwi names, means “people of”. In this case, those who trace their whakapapa back to a legendary ancestor, Tahu. Therefore, depending on location, Kāi Tahu or Ngāi Tahu is used.

Chinese history, and the histories of pre-European contact. They could talk about the Kāi Tahu land confiscations.” His colleague continues his list, “The impact of refrigerated meat shipments...the 1951 industrial disputes.” Paul continues, “If they talk about the links between a global issue and a local event, it will work well for our year nine classes.”

The heritage worker beams and nods excitedly as she listens to the high school teachers’ enthusiastic exchange. The primary school and early childhood teachers absorb every word. After a few minutes, the primary school teacher interrupts the rapid discussion of historical topics, “Gosh, could we have a conversation about this history over drinks?” She laughs, but then states emphatically, “I have learnt more in this conversation than I ever have trying to look this up.”

The conversation transitions away from the Southern Heritage Trust event, and Paul’s colleague asks the primary school teacher, “Are your teachers scared about the new *Histories Curriculum*?” The primary school teacher responds with a markedly more anxious tone, “Yes! We feel we are just about treading water with the new curriculum”. She mimes an exhausted paddling motion and continues, “We’re the generation that does not know this [history]. I would love to have a conversation over drinks, though that gives you even more things to do!”

The high school teacher considers and responds, “Because we are subject specialists, we are more confident.” The early childhood teacher speaks up, seemingly emboldened by the primary school teacher’s candidly shared anxiety, “You know the dates, I cannot teach history, I cannot remember the dates.”

Chapter Five: An Absence of Knowledge and Affective Amnesia

In seeking to improve students’ understanding of British colonial and Indigenous histories, this vignette highlights that historical interpreters need to navigate their own and others’ lack

of foundational knowledge. The engaged and enthusiastic primary teacher's tone became anxious as she admitted that she had struggled to learn Aotearoa's histories. The early childhood teacher shared her anxiety that she lacked the historical skills and experience to interpret these histories. She was intimidated by the volume of new historical information, and her perception of history as the memorising of dates exacerbated her anxiety. It was striking that two eager educators, born and raised in Aotearoa, considered themselves part of a "generation" that does not know their Nation's histories. Similarly, it is significant that English heritage workers have not been taught the details of the British Empire, 'the biggest thing Britain ever did as a nation'.⁵ The early childhood and primary teachers spoke with affect; they struggled with the realisation that their absence of historical knowledge, or the sanitised narratives they had learnt, contradicted their values and commitments to accurate and inclusive histories. Paul also explained that Māori and British colonial histories were avoided and suppressed. Ahead of the meeting, Paul shared concerns that the well-established Southern Heritage Trust might overlook the histories of Kai Tahu in favour of positive, Pākehā-focused interpretations. While he appeared reassured during the meeting, his concern highlighted the multitude of ways a lack of knowledge about these histories is perpetuated.

Within this chapter, I investigate the experiences of non-Indigenous interpreters within *Mayflower 400* and the *Histories Curriculum*. I argue that a detached affective relationship with British colonial and Indigenous histories can explain how historical interpreters who have knowledge of the details of these historical events, are critical of British colonialism, or both, can still retain significant gaps in their historical understanding. I show that many non-Indigenous partners experienced a discomfiting confrontation with limitations in their historical knowledge, as well as an unwelcome realisation that they had accepted uncritical, reductive historical narratives. In analysing their changing affective experiences, I demonstrate that multiple forms of amnesia and nostalgia coexist. I describe and define affective amnesia as a detached affective relationship with British colonial and Indigenous histories. I argue that my theory of affective amnesia, which describes non-Indigenous interpreters' lack of a sense of these histories as sensitive, urgent and living, addresses a significant gap in studies of colonial amnesia and nostalgia. In the final section of this chapter, I focus particularly on the *Histories Curriculum* and reflect on the tension between

⁵ Sanghera, *Stolen History*, 5.

the urgency of interpreting these histories and the magnitude of the affective and cognitive learning required.

5.1 “We Learnt a Tremendous Amount”

The interpretive practice of *Mayflower 400* heritage workers and volunteers was characterised by a confrontation with their own lack of knowledge of the details and the contested nature of the Mayflower’s histories. Jo described the difficulty of early partnership meetings with Wampanoag interpreters as “a lot to do with my complete ignorance, and I would say naivety, really”. Jo emphasised, with discomfort, that she had not previously been confronted by, or chosen to actively engage with these histories. She suggested that this was illustrative of the level of knowledge locally in Plymouth, England. Jo explained, “To describe the work as a journey is an understatement; we learnt a tremendous amount and are indebted to the scholars of the Wampanoag Nations.” She used ‘we’ to also describe local audiences for whom exhibitions and volunteer guide training needed to include significant amounts of foundational historical information. English interpreters stressed that they “had no in-depth knowledge of the history” and that what they had learnt in school, or through local heritage sites, removed the Mayflower from its colonial context. Most had never encountered details of Wampanoag histories.

The conception of Indigenous partnership as eliciting a substantial learning journey for the non-Indigenous partner was echoed by Laura, Education and Outreach Officer of a small-town Museum in Nottinghamshire, a partner destination of *Mayflower 400*. Through a partnership with Wampanoag Advisory Committee member Paula, the Museum developed the Wampanoag Perspectives Project. Four members of the Mashpee and Herring Pond Wampanoag Nations visited the Museum to build a wetu (traditional Wampanoag home) and interpret Wampanoag histories for visitors. Several months later, I rang Laura, and we discussed how the project impacted her historical understanding of the Mayflower.

“The Mayflower is quite well known; most of the local schools touch on it. I went to school here, which was a long time ago and I think it was touched on a little.”

I seek to clarify, “Was there any information about Indigenous people included in that teaching?”

Laura considers, “That they met Squanto and that he helped the Separatists; that was all that was really known. That was the aim of the Wampanoag Perspectives Project: to improve knowledge in schools and the local area. When the bid went in, the focus was on telling the story equally and making it clear that the Wampanoag were already there. We redesigned our gallery in partnership with members of the Wampanoag Nations. The whole thing has been a learning journey for me. Although I am from here, I had no in-depth knowledge of the history. So, I was educating myself so that I could teach others, I only needed to know to the level of young children.”

Laura reflected on the town’s historical connections to the Mayflower’s Separatist passengers, which had produced a low level of historical knowledge in the area. Despite this, Laura explained that her education, like Jo’s and my own, had not addressed the context of British colonial history, and as such she did not have an “in-depth knowledge”. Although Laura was positive and animated in discussing the Project, she recognised that, like myself and many other *Mayflower 400* interpreters, she would need to engage in significant research to fill large gaps in the histories she had been taught at school. Laura’s clarification that “I only needed to know to the level of young children” did not minimise the challenge of this learning but suggested that the volume of unknown historical information required a focused engagement based on the requirements of delivery, in this case a class for schoolchildren on wampum.

As illustrated in the opening vignette, many interpreters of the *Histories Curriculum* had little or no experience interpreting Aotearoa’s histories in classrooms. In the vignette, the primary school teacher was actively engaged in implementing the *Histories Curriculum*, facilitating a meeting with the local history organisation. This enthusiastic engagement rendered her anxiety more meaningful; despite actively trying to learn these histories she stressed she did not have the foundational or contextual knowledge to make sense of them. Aotearoa historian, O’Malley, explained that Aotearoa’s teachers had, themselves, never been taught the Nation’s histories:

Given overwhelming evidence that most students leave school with little real exposure to New Zealand history and have done for decades, ending this intergenerational cycle of ignorance about our own country's past might in the longer term prove to be one of the most transformative decisions made by the present government.⁶

Before this transformational impact could be realised, teachers implicated in this 'intergenerational cycle of ignorance' needed to critically engage in Aotearoa's histories, often for the first time.⁷ Like O'Malley, the primary teacher identified the absence of knowledge of Aotearoa's histories as a common challenge, saying "We're the generation that does not know this". The early childhood teacher also shared her anxiety about learning large amounts of new historical information. A month before the meeting described in the vignette, I attended another, 800 miles north in Pukekohe, where a primary school principal shared remarkably similar anxieties. I accompanied a local primary school teacher and an advisor from the local iwi to meet the principal of a nearby rural primary school. The intent was for the primary school teacher and the iwi advisor to explore options for resource sharing with the school principal, to support their implementation of the *Histories Curriculum*. Despite the principal's seniority and teaching experience, he admitted, "I just don't know where to start." He shifted nervously in his chair and seemed anxious to make a good impression: "You don't know what you don't know."

To understand the absence of knowledge and anxiety among intellectually curious senior educators, teachers, and educational theorists we must consider how Aotearoa's educational ideology has perpetuated historical silences.⁸ In our interview, Ardern explained:

"That's the fascinating thing, in Aotearoa, you have got your social studies curriculum, and when I was at school, I opted to take history as a core subject. Across the curriculum you have teachers choosing to teach Tudor England or Aotearoa histories. Now thankfully, I had Gregor, but when I

⁶ Vincent O'Malley, 'Signs are encouraging for a historically aware Aotearoa,' *StuffNZ*, November 17, 2021, accessed August 11, 2025, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/pou-tiaki/300456857/signs-are-encouraging-for-a-historically-aware-aotearoa>.

⁷ O'Malley, 'Signs are encouraging.'

⁸ Bell and Russell, 'New National History Curriculum.'; Tom Brooking and Paul Enright, 'Taking the Anglo and Euro Out,'; Harcourt, 'New Zealand's difficult history.'; Rowena Taylor and Mark Sheehan, 'The Place of History in the New Zealand Curriculum,' *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 2, no. 8 (2011): 156-167, <https://doi.org/10.24135/teacherswork.v8i2.549>.

ask my peers, I find I am rare in learning Aotearoa histories, most learnt about Tudor England.”

Aotearoa has had a profoundly neoliberal educational system since 1989. This devolved power from the Capital to schools, and the Ministry of Education (MoE) gave teachers ‘high curriculum autonomy’ to choose topics and design programmes.⁹ In 2016, the MoE described this approach as ‘enabling’, and some participants, including Paul, and Ardern’s history teacher and participant Gregor, made use of this ‘flexibility’ to comprehensively teach local, contested histories.¹⁰ However, when Ardern announced the draft *Histories Curriculum* in 2022, she characterised Aotearoa as a Nation that ‘doesn’t teach its own history’.¹¹ The neoliberal approach had enabled many teachers to avoid teaching Aotearoa’s histories, and in particular Māori histories.¹² The surprising choice to teach ‘Tudor England’, a period that ended 240 years before the colonisation of Aotearoa, over the Nation’s varied Māori and British colonial histories, is described by Ardern as a “cultural cringe”. She suggested this reflected a New Zealander tendency to “underplay or undervalue our role in the world, the importance of our national identity”. I suggest this involves an affective disengagement with Aotearoa histories as significant, both internationally and nationally. Educational theorists Tom Brooking and Paul, experienced teacher and participant quoted in the vignette above this chapter, wrote that detailed accounts of Māori histories were historically ‘written off as inferior to those who wrote about the ‘real’ deeper history of Britain and Europe.’¹³ Paul reflected, as we walked between classrooms, “even those teachers interested in Aotearoa histories today might avoid them for fear that examiners would undervalue these topics.” Ardern explained that Aotearoa still feels this “ongoing tie” to England and gave the example of the backlash the previous government faced when reforming their court system, so that the highest court in Aotearoa was no longer the Privy Council in the UK.¹⁴ Ardern reflected that there was “this sense that we weren’t grown up enough to do these things ourselves”. The *Histories Curriculum*, in mandating the teaching of Aotearoa’s histories in partnership with

⁹ Harcourt, ‘New Zealand’s difficult history,’ 130-1.

¹⁰ Harcourt, ‘New Zealand’s difficult history,’ 131.

¹¹ Radio New Zealand, ‘Aotearoa New Zealand history curriculum launches.’ *RNZ News*, March 2022, accessed August 10, 2025, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/463479/aotearoa-new-zealand-history-curriculum-launches>.

¹² Brooking and Enright, ‘Taking the Anglo and Euro Out,’ 136; Harcourt, ‘New Zealand’s difficult history,’ 110-11; Joanna Kidman et al., *Fragments from a Contested Past*.

¹³ Brooking and Enright, ‘Taking the Anglo and Euro Out,’ 136.

¹⁴ In 2004, Aotearoa established a Supreme Court, detaching from the English Privy Council. See, ‘History and role,’ *Courts of New Zealand*, accessed August 8, 2025, <https://www.courtsofnz.govt.nz/the-courts/supreme-court/history>.

tangata whenua [the people of the land], was therefore an enormously ambitious national project marking a major shift in educational ideology and suggesting a significant change in national identity.

Within the Nottinghamshire Wampanoag Perspectives Project, the partnership with historical interpreters from the Wampanoag Nations inspired English interpreters to critically re-engage with and reconsider their accepted, and often half-remembered interpretations of the Mayflower voyage. Laura realised, with distress, that gaps in the historical interpretation she had learnt were not neutral: “My knowledge of the Wampanoag side was minimal - It never really occurred to me why Squanto could speak English. That he was enslaved. So, I had to educate myself so I could teach.” As I discussed in the introduction, the erasure of Tisquantum enslavement in the dominant Mayflower narrative exemplifies the erasure of the diverse Indigenous histories of Turtle Island, as well as the violent realities of British colonisation. It also demonstrates the violence of how these histories are memorialised. Laura stressed that she had only been taught that Tisquantum “helped the English”, a dominant narrative that suggests English colonial benevolence. Laura is illustrative of the English *Mayflower 400* interpreters; she is interested in history and deeply critical of England’s colonial history. Yet, she had not critically engaged with the Wampanoag’s diverse motivations. Realising this was a confronting moment for Laura:

I ask, “Now you have worked with the Wampanoag interpreters, did you find that you suddenly became more receptive to Native American misrepresentations?”

Laura responds emphatically, “Definitely. It really woke me up. I like to think I am politically woke and not racist, but you don’t have a clue until you meet people. It’s powerful, and it humanises something that is otherwise a distant story.”

Laura spoke with notable discomfort and stressed that her lack of knowledge was antithetical to her personal and political values. Through her use of ‘woke’, she identified herself as liberal in contrast to the right-wing parties of England. English Right-wing parties have been associated with celebratory and uncritical narratives of the British Empire by academic

studies and the popular press.¹⁵ After the Brexit campaign, studies of England's relationship with its colonial history became dominated by an association of the right wing with colonial amnesia and nostalgia.¹⁶ This view was particularly meaningful in the Nottinghamshire Museum's local area. The town was part of the 'red wall'; it had historically voted Labour but swung to the Conservatives due to the desire of the majority of locals to bring about Brexit. The political fallout was apparent during the 2023 Wampanoag Perspectives Project. Many of its English interpreters perceived the Project as a contested battleground. Museum volunteers presented the Project as an opportunity, more critical than ever, for asserting an inclusive town identity. However, Laura and Jo's uncomfortable confrontation with gaps in their knowledge of British colonial and Indigenous histories revealed that neither amnesia nor a nostalgia for Empire is the singular feature of any one political group. In this finding, I complicate numerous analyses of Brexit including that of geographer Danny Dorling and educational theorist Sally Tomlinson, who argue that "part of the reason the Brexit vote happened was that a small number of people in Britain have a dangerous, imperialist misconception of our standing in the world".¹⁷ The difficulty with which liberal, colonially-critical interpreters reckoned with their colonial amnesia and nostalgia, instead supports Modern British Historian, Robert Saunders's conclusions that 'legacies of empire' are a 'common cultural inheritance through which all sides of the European [Union] debate think and argue'.¹⁸ Modern British Historian, Hannah Rose Woods's book on British nostalgia reinforces this argument by demonstrating that nostalgic views of the past, involving strategic misrepresentations and actual absences of knowledge, have been a framework through which the British have thought about their history since at least 1530.¹⁹

Teachers' levels of anxiety about the new *Histories Curriculum* depended not only on their experience interpreting Aotearoa's histories, but whether they had received training in

¹⁵ Danny Dorling and Sally Tomlinson, *Rule Britannia Brexit and the End of the Empire* 2nd ed. (Biteback Publishing, 2020); Nadine El-Enany, 'Things Fall Apart: From Empire to Brexit Britain,' *IPR*, May 2, 2017, <https://blogs.bath.ac.uk/iprblog/2017/05/02/things-fall-apart-from-empire-to-brexit-britain>. For a discussion of press articles see, Robert Saunders, 'Brexit and Empire: 'Global Britain' and the Myth of Imperial Nostalgia,' *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 48, no. 6 (2020): 1140-1174, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2020.1848403>.

¹⁶ Danny Dorling and Sally Tomlinson, *Rule Britannia Brexit*; Peter Mitchell, *Imperial Nostalgia*.

¹⁷ Danny Dorling and Sally Tomlinson, *Rule Britannia Brexit*, 3.

¹⁸ Robert Saunders, 'Brexit and Empire,' 1140; See, Robert Booth, 'UK more nostalgic for empire than other ex-colonial powers,' *The Guardian*, March 11, 2020, accessed August 9, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/11/uk-more-nostalgic-for-empire-than-other-ex-colonial-powers#:~:text=Conservative%20voters%20were%20almost%20twice,30>.

¹⁹ Hannah Rose Woods, *Rule, Nostalgia*.

historical analysis. In the vignette, the high-school teachers' confidence as "subject-specialists", contrasted strikingly with the primary school and early childhood teachers' anxieties. In my interview with Graeme, Chair of NZHTA in 2021, he explained that this distinction reflected the experiences of teachers across Aotearoa:

"The intermediate and primary school teachers will be teaching 80% of the curriculum, that is where the greatest level of anxiety is.²⁰ High school history teachers, who teach the subject specifically, although they may not have taught Aotearoa histories before they will at least have a background in history. They will be able to, you know, I think, make the transition easily. That is probably where there is the least anxiety. But with the intermediate and primary teachers, it's just luck if they have had any New Zealand history, or any history training during their degree. There will be lots of fear there."

The Aotearoa education system has produced an absence of historical skills training by subsuming history into a multi-disciplinary social studies programme for students' years one to ten. Paul shared with frustration, "We are stuck with the experiment they set up in the 1940s – social studies. It's sort of an amalgam of history and geography and economics, with a bit of politics and anthropology thrown in as well." History was only taught as a specialist subject in the final three years of school (Years 11, 12 and 13), at which point students could choose to take it as an elective. These structural silences produced enormous contemporary anxieties, as teachers confronted the urgency of teaching Aotearoa's histories, with a fear that they lacked the necessary historical skills. Writing in 2011, Aotearoa educational theorists Rowena Taylor and Mark Sheehan express concerns about the lack of attention to 'argument, evidence, significance and context' within the teaching of social studies.²¹ They conclude that most Aotearoa students, and therefore ultimately teachers, were ill-prepared to bring a 'historical perspective to explaining contemporary issues.'²²

My research revealed that describing primary and intermediate teachers as not necessarily subject specialists would be an understatement. Melissa, Principal of a Ōtepoti high school and participant, stressed that many primary teachers lacked basic historical analysis skills:

²⁰ Intermediate schoolteachers teach students in Years 7 and 8, ages 10-12.

²¹ Taylor and Sheehan, 'The Place of History,' 156.

²² Taylor and Sheehan, 'The Place of History,' 156.

“I led some staff personal development sessions and said let’s just do history together. The teachers did not have experience with source analysis. So, we looked at the sources and considered them together - what can we identify? What questions do we have? We generated a timeline, and we discussed what we should teach. They came up with a list of topics, but they only mentioned the big ones, nuclear disarmament etc. So, I stressed that history also includes family histories, little stories, it doesn’t have to all be complex narratives that shaped the Nation.”

Brooking and Paul identified the need for substantial historical knowledge and skills training. In the neoliberal model, primary and intermediate teachers who had not received training in historical skills or Aotearoa’s histories could avoid addressing contested histories and minimise the amount of history they taught within social studies. Because history was elective in the final three years, Harcourt’s PhD research reveals that some secondary teachers would also avoid choosing Aotearoa’s histories in favour of less contested or more popular topics that would attract more students.²³ Melissa explained that academics sought to help with the high demands for teacher resourcing. Yet, they underestimated teachers’ lack of historical skills, and so provided training that exacerbated rather than assuaged their anxieties:

“When the curriculum came out, I attended a training session by local historians, but it came in at too high a level.” She lifts her hand high and holds it horizontally, “It needed to come in here,” she moves her hand lower. “We need to really dial it back to the question of what is history? We need to dispel the idea that history is all about learning dates, and that it is all about the past and not the present and the future. It is not helpful for historians to talk at that level when teachers feel so overwhelmed and scared.

The gaps produced by the existing educational structure and teachers’ related anxieties explain the MoE’s decision to delay the implementation of the *Histories Curriculum* by a year to 2023. Ardern shared that she was encouraged by the MoE to implement this delay, which gave more time to teachers to plan for the *Histories Curriculum* and to the MoE to develop supportive resources.

²³ Harcourt, ‘New Zealand’s difficult history,’ 110-111.

5.2 Colonial Amnesia and/or Nostalgia

The mechanisms by which an absence of colonial knowledge has been preserved are richly debated. Studies of historical memory have identified a colonial or imperial amnesia, colonial or imperial nostalgia, forgetting or disavowal.²⁴ Kidman observes that ‘historical forgetting is an important, but little understood phenomenon that plays a significant role in post-settler imaginaries of the nation’.²⁵ Due to the dominance of historical narratives that sanitise colonial histories and justify the colonial or settler-colonial state, theorists of colonial nostalgia conclude that a calculated, active suppression or disavowal of historical information is taking place.²⁶ Talking of Turtle Island, political theorist, Kevin Bruyneel labels ‘amnesia’ a ‘misdiagnosis’ and concludes that ‘the persistence of colonial and racial hierarchies’ is instead the result of collective ‘disavowal’.²⁷ He argues that studies of colonial amnesia overlook the fact that colonial representations persist through productions of memory that are reproduced in the interest of political identities and hierarchies.²⁸ In an analysis of how Aotearoa’s histories are remembered and memorialised, Kidman et al., exemplify this nationalistic mythologising:

From the early twentieth century, New Zealanders were encouraged to believe that the heroism and chivalry said to have been demonstrated on both sides during the New Zealand Wars eventually provided the basis for better, rather than worse, relations between Māori and Pākehā. As the journalist James Cowan wrote in his hugely influential 1922 history of the wars, these had ‘ended with a strong mutual respect, tinged with a real affection, which would never have existed but for this ordeal by battle’. And so, somewhat perversely, many Pākehā in the first half of the twentieth century saw the New Zealand Wars as a cause for celebration.²⁹

²⁴ Thrush, *Indigenous London*, 6; Kidman et al., *Fragments from a Contested Past*, 15; Bruyneel, ‘The trouble with amnesia.’; Koram, ‘Britain’s Colonial Amnesia.’; Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*; El-Enany, ‘Things Fall Apart.’; Patricia M. E. Lorcin, ‘The Nostalgias For Empire,’ *History and Theory* 57, no. 2 (June, 2018): 269-285; Peter Mitchell, *Imperial Nostalgia*; Renato Rosaldo, ‘Imperial Nostalgia,’ *Representations* no. 26 (Spring, 1989): 107-122, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2928525>; Epstein and Peck, ed., *Teaching and Learning*.

²⁵ Epstein and Peck, ed., *Teaching and Learning*, 96.

²⁶ Thrush, *Indigenous London*, 6; Kidman et al., *Fragments from a Contested Past*, 15; Bruyneel, ‘The trouble with amnesia.’; Lorcin, ‘The Nostalgias For Empire.’; Peter Mitchell, *Imperial Nostalgia*; Renato Rosaldo, ‘Imperial Nostalgia.’

²⁷ Bruyneel, ‘The trouble with amnesia,’ 22.

²⁸ Bruyneel, ‘The trouble with amnesia’.

²⁹ Kidman et al., *Fragments from a Contested Past*, 83.

As discussed in chapter two, during and following the New Zealand Wars, the Crown ‘confiscated over 1.2 million acres of land’, violently suppressed Māori sovereignty, and implemented culturally genocidal policies to enforce English language and legal systems over te reo Māori (Māori language) and tikanga (ritually correct behaviour).³⁰ To this day, Indigenous interpreters work to restore their language, protect their culture, and reclaim settlements for the breaches of Treaty through which the English colonists took their land.³¹

The mythologising of Aotearoa’s history has been so profound as to enable Aotearoa to claim it had “the best race relations in the world”.³² The *Histories Curriculum* was rejected by some because of such nostalgic views. They suggested that acknowledging histories of violence would disrupt the supposedly ideal relationships between Māori and Pākehā. Ardern acknowledged: “I am not going to sugar coat it, there is no question that there will be people in Aotearoa who will be unhappy this is being taught in schools.” Mashpee Wampanoag interpreter Darius stressed that in dominant historical interpretations the colonisation of Turtle Island has been similarly sanitised to preserve a narrative of benevolent colonialism:

“These terms have been stuck on the English, Dutch and French folks who came here, and there are these two terms - they are called fishermen and traders, right? They came and fished and traded and then they went back home. Now, I tell people if you are going to use the terms fisherman and traders then you have got to use the term enslavers too – all in one breath. You have got to say that fishermen, traders and enslavers were here. It is not something that we just like to make up - this was normal for them to do this and normal for them to write about it.”

Darius emphasised that historical information about colonists’ violence and racist ideologies is readily available in the primary sources but has been strategically erased from contemporary interpretations shared in many heritage sites and schools.

A pedagogy by which nostalgic historical interpretations can produce sincere absences of knowledge, is identified by Laura. Laura considered the level of knowledge of Mayflower histories in the local area:

³⁰ ‘Settlements,’ Waikato-Tainui, accessed June 18, 2025, <https://waikatotainui.com/about-us/settlements>.

³¹ ‘The Waitangi Tribunal Nau Mai, Haere Mai,’ *Waitangi Tribunal*, accessed June 27, 2025. <https://waitangitribunal.govt.nz/en>.

³² Kidman et al., *Fragments from a Contested Past*, 15.

“I question how well it is retained, though. Or if it is understood within a wider world context. I mean, let’s be honest, it’s not the most exciting story. It’s about a group of people who got rid of fun, so it is quite a hard sell to a six-year-old! Also, they’re hard to relate to, they’re too fancy, the Separatists. So, I don’t think it is very well retained.”

Laura proposed that the Mayflower history is not well retained locally because of a gulf between the attitudes and experiences of the children of Nottinghamshire and the Separatist Mayflower passengers: “they’re too fancy.” It is hard for contemporary audiences to relate to the Separatists, to their restrictive religious values, their colonial perceptions of the importance of the British Empire, and their racist views of the Wampanoag, whom their Governor William Bradford described as ‘savage barbarians’.³³ However, the Mayflower history is not a history of monarchs and landed gentry. The Mayflower passengers included craftsmen, indentured servants and sailors. I suggest that the notion of the Separatists as “too fancy” is a product of their later mythologisation as scholarly Pilgrims and Founding Fathers. Turtle Island historian James Loewen argues that American textbooks, which he demonstrates share dominant nation-affirming historical narratives, persistently erase the histories of the working class.³⁴ We can see a lack of social-class analysis in this dominant interpretation of the Mayflower passengers that Loewen stresses is, ‘one more way that education is rigged against the working class.’³⁵ Laura also stressed that the Mayflower voyage was not fully understood because it was not contextualised within “a wider world context”, or within English history in a manner that might allow the learner to develop a sense of its significance. Hartman, one of the visiting Mashpee Wampanoag partners, similarly asserted that, “Most who run into it have an appreciation when they see a real rich and complicated narrative against a simplified one, they make more sense.” However, Hartman suggested that these “simplified” narratives leave “questions unanswered”. In contrast, Laura emphasised that the simplified story of the “upper-class” Pilgrims is perceived as boring, repelling critical engagement and leading most students to forget all about the Mayflower.

Laura and Jo came to understand that the historical narratives they had learnt support a narrative of English benevolence. However, I suggest their experiences complicate

³³ William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647*. Ed., Francis Murphy (New Random House, 1981), 95.

³⁴ Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*.

³⁵ Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 213.

Bruyneel's claim and supports Koram's. Laura is not consciously 'disavowing' Tisquantum's experience but was enormously uncomfortable as she came to understand that she was sincerely unaware of it. So concerned that academic analysis is overlooking this absence of public knowledge of British colonial history in England, law lecturer Kojo Koram rejects the term colonial nostalgia in favour of colonial amnesia.³⁶ In a 2018 public lecture for Consented Youth, an educational initiative that runs classes in schools on race, class and colonialism, Koram stresses that the actual details of Empire 'are absent from Britain's national story'.³⁷ Koram explains that a theory of colonial amnesia can attend to the coexistence of a sincere absence of knowledge and the dominance of nostalgic narratives.³⁸ He argues that colonial amnesia was constructed in conjunction with the colonial project, in which the British operated as 'absentminded imperialists' in a narrative of benevolence and entrepreneurial capitalism.³⁹ Koram convincingly exemplifies how historical narratives were sanitised and returned to England.⁴⁰ As discussed in chapter two, in Aotearoa, this was practiced by the New Zealand Company to attract English labourers to the country. Between 1620-21 in Plymouth, Turtle Island, Mayflower passenger Edward Winslow sent his journal to London for publication. Winslow seeks to 'attract future investment and emigration to the struggling colony'.⁴¹ Winslow describes the fledgling colony as thriving, 'a land with abundant game and rich soil ready for agriculture'.⁴² At the same time, Mayflower passenger Bradford characterised the land as a 'hideous and desolate wilderness'.⁴³ These contradictory accounts were both calculated to attract and justify colonial expansion.

I suggest that by leaving the debate between nostalgia and amnesia unresolved, we can better understand the anxieties of interpreters of British colonial and Indigenous histories. Laura and Jo were themselves disturbed by the question of whether they had never known, forgotten or suppressed these histories. My research supports Koram's claim that English and, I argue, Pākehā relationships with colonial history, are profoundly shaped by vast and sincere absences of knowledge of the historical details. While I argue that Bruyneel too fervently discounts amnesia, my research supports his claim that gaps in knowledge of

³⁶ Koram, 'Britain's Colonial Amnesia.'

³⁷ Koram, 'Britain's Colonial Amnesia.'

³⁸ Koram, 'Britain's Colonial Amnesia.'

³⁹ Koram, 'Britain's Colonial Amnesia.'

⁴⁰ Koram, 'Britain's Colonial Amnesia.'

⁴¹ Winslow, *Mourt's Relation*.

⁴² Winslow, *Mourt's Relation*.

⁴³ Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647*, 95.

colonial history are not neutral but perpetuate colonial ideologies and power relations into the present. I propose that multiple forms of amnesia and nostalgia coexist as ‘related, yet distinct, characteristic[s]’ of colonial memory and shaped the practice of non-Indigenous historical interpreters.⁴⁴ I have shown that the tension between theories of colonial amnesia and nostalgia speaks to a meaningful experience in the historical interpreters’ practice, as they confronted the fact that their absences of knowledge preserved colonial ideologies. Bruyneel makes the case that ‘The radical political cure’ to the dominance of historical narratives that preserve social injustice, ‘is not more historical knowledge on its own, but rather a direct encounter with the commitments, interests, and hierarchies reproduced through the present productions of collective memory.’⁴⁵ Bruyneel describes the potential for transformation through a form of memory work that addresses, ‘the political problem’ which he defines as ‘not what they forget but how they remember’.⁴⁶ Below, I will instead argue that ‘the political problem’, namely the barrier to driving change in historical understanding, is how ‘white majority settler nations’ and those from the historic ‘heart of Empire’ affectively relate to this history.⁴⁷

5.3 Affective Amnesia

I propose the term affective amnesia to describe a detached affective relationship with colonial history, which non-Indigenous interpreters described as having restricted their understanding of British colonial and Indigenous histories. I use affective amnesia, not to describe an absence of affect, but a distant and detached affective stance. I propose that when historical interpreters fail to affectively engage with British colonial and Indigenous histories, they overlook the ongoing impacts of colonisation, and Indigenous interpreters’ contemporary experiences. Affective amnesia disrupts the non-Indigenous interpreters’ perception of the significance and harm of these histories. Throughout our interviews over five years, Jo drew my attention to a transformation in her affective relationship with the Mayflower histories, which revealed the presence of an affective amnesia. She emphasised that she had experienced an affective transformation from feelings of detachment from these histories that seemed distant, to newly feeling they were urgent and living:

⁴⁴ Fletcher, ‘The Art of Forgetting.’

⁴⁵ Bruyneel, ‘The trouble with amnesia,’ 6.

⁴⁶ Bruyneel, ‘The trouble with amnesia,’ 6.

⁴⁷ Bruyneel, ‘The trouble with amnesia,’ 6.

“I think that we, or certainly I”, Jo gestures to herself and then slows down, carefully considering before continuing, “approached it as history initially.” She nods, her tone suggesting that her perspective has changed significantly since then.

“I suppose I came to realise that it was, that it was not just living, but live and kicking! Ultimately, that was the learning I think for me. It was huge, and I think I would be the first to say that it was about my ignorance, and it was about, well, our Wampanoag partners said that it was irresponsible.” She nods in agreement but with a knowing smile that acknowledges the awkwardness of that exchange.

Jo takes a deep breath in, “I think that they [the Wampanoag partners] meant that in terms of ethnocentricity. In terms of our ethnocentricity and our colonial viewpoint, but I would also acknowledge my personal,” she pauses considering, “lack of awareness, I suppose, lack of understanding.”

Jo emphasised that “the learning” of her *Mayflower 400* interpretive practice was to confront and transform her “lack of awareness” of the Mayflower histories as “living...live and kicking”. As investigated in the previous chapter, Jo joined the Wampanoag partnership meetings engaged, polite and enthusiastic to learn historical details and incorporate multiple perspectives into the *Mayflower 400* exhibitions and online historical resources. However, in their first meeting and throughout Jo’s *Mayflower 400* work, the Wampanoag interpreters challenged her with this history as not just contemporary, but also harmful. Throughout my interviews, English *Mayflower 400* interpreters emphasised that through an unexpected encounter with Indigenous partners’ distinct affective relationship with this history, they came to transform their historical understanding. Jo came to understand that these distinct affective relationships were shaped by her and the Wampanoag partners’ differing ancestral positions within these histories. With significant discomfort, she confronted her detached affective relationship with the Mayflower histories as not neutral but perpetuating a “colonial viewpoint”, which omitted the violence of colonisation and the experiences of the Wampanoag. Jo transitioned from discussing “our ethnocentricity and our colonial

viewpoint” to her personal “lack of awareness” and so emphasised that this limiting historical perspective is reflective of the level of knowledge within England.

Affective amnesia can explain how interpreters who are generally critical of British colonial history can hold misrepresentative or nostalgic narratives. I argue that Jo’s perspective is indicative of a wider affective stance among non-Indigenous historical interpreters who are similarly supportive of inclusive and nuanced historical storytelling. In the first section, I detailed Laura’s discomfort at encountering her lack of knowledge of the Mayflower and broader British colonial histories. She suggested that these gaps in historical understanding, particularly about Tisquantum’s enslavement, were harmful and could support a narrative of colonial benevolence which was antithetical to her personal and political values.

I ask Laura, “I wondered if you worried about this history being politicised nationally? And if any steps were taken during the project to recognise or mitigate this?

Laura responds quickly, “We were very wary as we really did not want to upset or offend anyone. I didn’t realise how current this all was to them, I had heard about the pipeline and some stories about land, but I hadn’t fully registered how current it was to them, so I was surprised by how strongly they [the Wampanoag Interpreters] felt.”⁴⁸

Laura explained that her understanding of Indigenous histories more broadly was fragmented, without the contextual historical knowledge to make sense of how histories of colonialism were shaping their contemporary lives. Following my question, I thought that Laura might have discussed her fears that their work with the Wampanoag interpreters would become a target of the Culture Wars, which were being fiercely debated in the British media. Instead, she focused on her and her team’s efforts to sensitively and supportively work with the Wampanoag interpreters. She suggested that this required the English partners to confront their detached affective relationships with this history rapidly. English interpreters’ anxieties around delivering *Mayflower 400* focused on personal learning. Studies of the British Culture Wars have brought together incidents spanning ten years and multiple geographical sites to assert that the interpretation of colonial history is a battlefield within which Britain’s

⁴⁸ Laura is referencing the Dakota Access Pipeline which the Standing Rock Sioux and many other Indigenous Nations protested in 2016. See, ‘Treaties Still Matter The Dakota Access Pipeline,’ *Native Knowledge 360°*, accessed August 10, 2025, <https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/plains-treaties/dapl>.

contemporary identity is contested.⁴⁹ Yet, interestingly, *Mayflower 400* interpreters rarely mentioned the Culture Wars and instead anxiously highlighted their lack of understanding as a risk to these projects and partnership efforts. It was Laura's lack of a sense of how "current" this history was to the Wampanoag that she worried could offend and threaten the partnership. Affective amnesia is disruptive, and Laura worries that it carries the potential to obstruct partnership building. She stressed that she was confronted by the contemporary harm of these histories through "how strongly they [the Wampanoag Interpreters] felt". As with Jo, it was this encounter with the Wampanoag interpreters' affect that drove a transformation in Laura's engagement with Mayflower and Wampanoag histories; the Indigenous partnership "humanises something that is otherwise a distant story". There was a sense that this distance had crept in unconsciously, describing not only a geographical but also an affective remoteness.

I was confronted with my affective amnesia on a call with Darius, whom I have worked with many times before at Plimoth Patuxet Museum:

"What did you learn in school about Squanto?" Darius asks so he can determine what historical context to provide next.

I respond quickly, "Oh, I didn't learn anything about British colonialism at school, let alone anything about any Indigenous Nations." I speak with frustration about the English education system, but with resignation that that was just the way things were. "I wouldn't have learnt anything about an individual's experience."

There is silence, then Darius speaks with audible sadness, "You don't even learn about Indigenous slaves?" He states more firmly, "They were in Britain, Squanto was enslaved in Britain!"

In that moment, I was surprised that Darius was audibly upset. Although I had organised the Zoom call to analyse Darius's close affective relationship with this history, I had not accounted for it. Like Jo and Laura, I am enormously critical of the lack of British colonial and Indigenous histories teaching in England; however, I had unconsciously accepted that this

⁴⁹ Danny Dorling and Sally Tomlinson, *Rule Britannia Brexit*; Mitchell, *Imperial Nostalgia*.

justified my lack of knowledge. I did not take the care to consider that the enslavement of Tisquantum continues to be distressing to members of the Wampanoag Nations. Nor had I thought to soften the news that the Nation that colonised Darius's homeland does not teach its own violent histories. Like Jo and Laura, I now acknowledge that while my lack of knowledge is illustrative of a wider problem, I must take responsibility for my own affective amnesia.

Knowledge of the details of Indigenous and British colonial histories is not enough to eliminate colonial amnesia. Tharoor argues that detailed and accessible historical evidence will 'temper British Imperial nostalgia'.⁵⁰ However, my interviews revealed that elements of affective amnesia can persist even when historical details are well known. Graeme, Chair of the New Zealand History Teachers Association (NZHTA), and a key figure in the writing, development and implementation of the *Histories Curriculum*, was inspired by speakers from Waikato-Tainui, during a conference in Waikato, to reposition the NZHTA to advocate and campaign for the teaching of *Aotearoa Histories*.

It is the height of the COVID-19 lockdown in Aotearoa, and the *Histories Curriculum* is in the planning and drafting stage. I ask Graeme what inspired him to campaign for and become involved in the writing of the *Histories Curriculum*. He shares animatedly that it was an experience that transformed his affective relationship with Aotearoa's histories.

"In 2018, we [NZHTA] had our conference down in the Waikato region, which is where the major battles of the New Zealand Wars took place.⁵¹ Waikato-Tainui hosted us. And we went around the local battle sites and we heard from powerful speakers, and it kind of came out of nowhere. It was not on our bi-annual general meeting agenda or anything, but just because of what we experienced there. I was, and am still, Chair of the Association [NZHTA], I raised a motion as Chair that we become activists really, in promoting and advocating for the teaching of our [Aotearoa] history."

⁵⁰ Tharoor, *Inglorious Empire*.

⁵¹ Further historical information given in chapter two. See O'Malley, *The Great War for New Zealand*.

Graeme is an experienced Pākehā history teacher with a passion for Aotearoa's histories; he was unusually well-versed in the historical details of the early British colonisation of Aotearoa and local iwi histories. However, it was his experience hearing from Waikato-Tainui interpreters that inspired him to lead the NZHTA to advocate for the teaching of Aotearoa's histories. During our review of this quotation as part of my Collaborative Consent Process, Graeme emphasised that hearing from Māori speakers inspired him to fundamentally reconceive of the NZHTA's potential, to not just address practical challenges facing teaching, but "We *could* take an advocacy role on an issue that had wider societal implications - this was a whole new way of thinking!" Graeme described this as an experience of reconceiving the role of NZHTA, but I suggest hearing from the Indigenous interpreters drove Graeme to personally transform his perspective on his own role as a teacher and as Chair. The speeches from Māori interpreters, which called for teachers to "go beyond traditional narratives and represent Māori and iwi views" highlighted the urgency of teaching these histories and the inequalities their suppression preserved. I suggest that hearing these Indigenous interpreters transformed Graeme's sense of his own responsibility, and power, to drive forward this change.

Affective amnesia is not the absence of an affective relationship with these histories, but a specific affective stance. In Ahmed's analysis of affect within the rhetoric of the British National Front, a far-right, fascist political party, she characterises detachment as affect.⁵² She concludes that the Party's call for 'hardness', rather than 'Soft Touch Britain', is 'not the absence of emotion, but a different emotional orientation towards the others.'⁵³ As Koram argues, and Jo highlighted, affective amnesia has its own colonial history, which Koram describes as 'absentminded' imperialism.⁵⁴ As discussed in the previous chapter, affect is applied to the Indigenous body as emotion in order to dismiss their experience; Indigenous peoples are irrational and emotional while a detached imperial body is presented as neutral. That detachment is a form of affect can be overlooked in academic studies that equate detachment to objectivity. This is exemplified in Nigel Fielding's study of the same far-right political group. He insightfully analyses the Front's ideologies, yet he claims that his own distinct ideology allows him to practice 'anthropological distance' and 'dispassionate

⁵² Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 3.

⁵³ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 3.

⁵⁴ Kojo Koram, 'Britain's Colonial Amnesia.'

analysis.’⁵⁵ In doing so he overlooks that his detachment is an affective and ideological stance rooted in specific Western claims of academic neutrality.

Affective amnesia sustains itself by discouraging engagement in the ongoing harm experienced by colonised communities, while attending to the discomfort of non-Indigenous communities. Harcourt surveys 298 Aotearoa history teachers, who identify ‘students’ feelings’ as the most significant barrier to teaching Aotearoa histories.⁵⁶ Harcourt’s analysis reveals that this did not include all students, but that teachers were privileging Pākehā students’ ‘feelings’:

teachers’ focus on Pākehā students’ emotional struggles – while an important and very real challenge – centring of white students’ emotions and the overriding concern to limit their feelings of discomfort, emotions which these young people likely need support from teachers to stay with, and make sense of. It is also significant that no teacher commented on the emotional challenges of learning the history of colonisation faced by Māori students.⁵⁷

Harcourt stresses that in the teaching of contested or difficult histories, it is essential that the students’ emotions are engaged with, and they are supported to navigate through difficult feelings. However, he powerfully demonstrates that the concern for Pākehā students’ discomfort at learning Aotearoa histories, contrasted strikingly with the lack of attention to the “rawness” or sensitive and painful nature of colonisation for local iwi: ‘Sixty seven percent of respondents did not think local sensitivities posed challenges to their teaching and 22% considered this only a ‘slightly significant’ challenge.’⁵⁸ I argue these findings provide evidence of affective amnesia, a detachment from the contemporary significance of teaching colonial and Indigenous histories.⁵⁹ When historical interpreters fail to affectively engage with the ongoing impacts of colonisation and Indigenous interpreters’ affective experiences, they can fail to reckon with the urgency of teaching these histories and challenging their contemporary legacies. Affective amnesia can also help explain why most surveyed teachers did not consider Aotearoa’s histories difficult to teach. As Harcourt’s research preceded the implementation of the *Histories Curriculum*, which was met by much teacher anxiety, it

⁵⁵ Nigel Fielding, *The National Front*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2019), 7.

⁵⁶ Harcourt, ‘New Zealand’s difficult history,’ 107.

⁵⁷ Harcourt, ‘New Zealand’s difficult history,’ 108.

⁵⁸ Harcourt, ‘New Zealand’s difficult history,’ 109.

⁵⁹ Harcourt, ‘New Zealand’s difficult history,’ 109.

seems likely that these teachers had not yet been required to engage meaningfully with Aotearoa histories. Teachers, who lacked a sense of the contemporary significance of colonial and Indigenous histories, and its ongoing harm for Māori, failed to feel the urgency of guiding Pākehā students through discomfort towards nuanced historical understanding.⁶⁰

Affective amnesia is not an exhaustive explanation for affective disengagement but coexists with other forms of amnesia. Historical interpreters and their audiences can experience anxiety and avoid historical topics because they understand they are significant and potentially transformative. Attempts in the early 1980s to popularise Aotearoa's histories were met with significant resistance among 'English early modernists' and teachers who 'preferred the less controversial nature of a curriculum set in deeper time and more distant places. Even as the new *Histories Curriculum* was distributed, Ardern acknowledged:

"I think there has always been, unfortunately, the discourse I remember from the 1990s," she pauses to really think through that argument, "Yes, these shameful things happened, but it wasn't us personally, and why should we carry the burden of that? We should all just move on". She emphasised, "It was received almost as if with teaching history came teaching blame."

Such fears that teaching Aotearoa's histories would involve accepting an affective "burden" of guilt and blame reveals that affective amnesia, a lack of a sense of this history as sensitive and affective, occurs alongside other affective forms of disengagement. Hartman reflected on this when I asked him about the kinds of engagement or resistance he received from non-Indigenous partners within Turtle Island museums:

"It is a spectrum, nice when you get to work with people that understand the impact of history on lives today, they tend to be the ones to learn." He stops, then tilts his head to the side, "actually, that is not always true either, but often. It is also true that some of the really hard resistance is from people who understand the value of history and that makes them hold onto that narrative and what they want history to say, and they understand the power in that."

⁶⁰ Harcourt, 'New Zealand's difficult history,' 191.

5.4 Disrupting Affective Amnesia

Non-Indigenous interpreters' experience of confronting and dismantling their affective amnesia was itself deeply affectively challenging. As with Zembylas's study of teachers' affective detachment, 'affective disruption' was essential to achieving 'transformative learning'.⁶¹ Jo described confronting the real and contemporary harm of the dominant Mayflower narrative's various omissions and mythologisations, as an affective call to commit entirely to her interpretive work. Jo stressed that once she understood that the Mayflower histories were "living", she had to manage her own affective reaction, a desire to "right the wrongs of 400 years" and instead concentrated on doing "the right thing now". Even so, she emphasised the affective challenge of her deeply felt personal responsibility to accurately interpret this history, to redress its misrepresentation, and honour the work of her Indigenous partners: "you want so much to get it right". Harcourt, echoing Jo's experience, reveals that Aotearoa's students' affective reaction to learning colonial histories should not discourage teachers but provide a powerful starting point for engagement and historical learning:

Teachers who actively respond to their students' feelings of discomfort open doors to engagement with difficult history, including the ability of young people to grapple with Indigenous and non-Indigenous systems of knowledge and ways of knowing.⁶²

Ardern described affectively charged dismissals being met with a new sense of engagement with Aotearoa's national identity, and the significance of the Nation's history: "so I think we are moving along that journey, and part of that is a willingness to cast backwards. I base that on nothing except my own observations." Ardern explained that her Aotearoa history education helped her understand the significance and complexity of the iwi-Crown treaty negotiations, which were publicly debated in the 1990s. Increasingly, Pākehā are understanding that their contemporary politics and social structure are shaped by the Nation's specific histories that need to be engaged with. She continued:

"Much more so I think it is viewed that you can't write the wrongs of the past unless you understand them. You can't be sure you don't repeat them unless you understand them. And we can't fix problems unless we understand our history - so it is just the ability to just cast it in a different

⁶¹ Zembylas, 'Teacher resistance to engage,' 200.

⁶² Harcourt, 'New Zealand's difficult history,' 132.

way. We are in the right time, right place where I think we are able to do that.”

Indigenous–non-Indigenous partnership has the potential to drive affective disruptions that challenge and radically dismantle affective amnesia, leading to feelings of responsibility and a commitment to further learning. Ardern’s statement highlights a feeling of moral urgency, that I argue is the product of feeling connected to these histories. Jo and Ardern present affective engagement as a form of historical knowledge, which supports an improvement in the accuracy and nuance of their historical interpretation and, Ardern emphasises, can aid them in addressing larger contemporary problems.

5.5 The Urgency and the Magnitude of the Task

There was significant tension between *Mayflower 400* and the *Histories Curriculum*’s demands for urgent historical interpretation, and the need to address colonial amnesia, colonial nostalgia, and affective amnesia. Even heritage organisations that preserve Aotearoa’s histories felt ill-prepared to support teachers with the demands of the *Histories Curriculum*. Through interviews with heritage workers at the Ministry of Heritage, the National Library, and the National War Memorial, I found that requests from teachers for support with the *Histories Curriculum* impacted a broad range of institutions. These heritage workers, at sites across Aotearoa, were struck by the anxieties of teachers who felt ill-equipped to teach these histories. However, they emphasised that they were also confronting gaps in their collections and interpretations, particularly pertaining to the histories of iwi and hapū. While in Ōtepoti (Dunedin), I conducted interviews with research librarians, Lynn and Judith at The Hocken Collections. The Hocken is an archive, library and gallery managed by the University of Otago, which, according to their website, seeks to ‘celebrate the histories, cultures and natural environments of Aotearoa New Zealand, the Pacific and Antarctica with special emphasis on southern New Zealand’.⁶³

I dive into the Hocken, escaping a spectacular storm with my coat and jumper soaked through. I am wrestling with a blown-apart umbrella when the two women I am meeting from the library team, Lynn and Judith, greet me, “Welcome to Dunedin!” they say, laughing. They guide me through the thankfully warm building to a room they have specially booked out.

⁶³ University of Otago, ‘Hocken Collections,’ *AskOtago Service Portal*, accessed June 2, 2025, <https://ask.otago.ac.nz/knowledgebase/article/KA-10004165/en-us>.

On the table, they have laid out a pen and notepad, a thoughtful gesture. They seem enthusiastic to discuss the *Histories Curriculum*.

Judith speaks confidently, “The intention of the curriculum is great, but it is crazy to go into schools that have no experience with teaching this history without putting support in place. It is a muddle and what is coming out of the Ministry of Education [as of March 2023] is a muddle – it’s hard for institutions like us to know what to do. It is going to take a while for quality and deep teaching. And we as an institution are not set up for younger children. We could support teachers, but they don’t have time to come in, so they just want us to provide classroom resources.”

Judith continues, “Perhaps the National Library [in Wellington] has the resources to decipher the curriculum. We need a longer commitment to decolonisation, to prioritising mātauranga Māori [knowledge systems] researchers and Māori staff and roles, appropriate collection building and responsive services for Māori. A problem in the past has been retention, which is a real issue generally in Dunedin. But if we don’t build capacity, the Māori staff we do have can feel isolated and unsupported.”

Lynn adds, “Teachers are coming for knowledge of pre-settlement times. It’s 2022, and we are only just confronting our own history. We are scrambling for relevant information at the appropriate level for these students.” Lynn considers my question on how the Hocken engages with tangata whenua [people of this land]. “There’s the possibility of a close, enduring, and meaningful relationship.” She asks how colonial history is taught in England, and I explain that it is very limited, that “I think you guys are much further along.” Judith considers and suggests, “We can overlay how much this history is being taught here”.

From the librarians’ willingness to discuss the *Histories Curriculum*, it was clear that they saw their role as supporting researchers. As the *Histories Curriculum* confronted teachers with their absence of knowledge, it challenged the Hocken staff to confront gaps in their

collections. It was clear this was not a new realisation, and both the Hocken and the University had made efforts to address these. However, Judith and Lynn emphasised that the research and learning needed to meaningfully address historical gaps in the collection took time, Judith went on to explain that significant research and partnership work was needed to “ensure collections fully reflect all experiences”. Furthermore, Judith and Lynn identified the institution’s lack of Māori staff, currently (as of 2023), and limited ability to engage meaningfully in “mātauranga Māori” as restricting their ability to deliver truly nuanced, bi-cultural histories in the ways they would like. Since 2003 the Hocken has had three dedicated full-time Māori roles, as well as a dedicated department and physical space; however, Judith and Lynn shared that the Hocken faced challenges attracting and retaining Māori staff. I proposed this was due to Dunedin’s remoteness, on the southernmost edge of Aotearoa; however, Judith clarified that the challenge was an issue of “supply and demand, scale and population density with ‘the majority of Aotearoa’s population (77%) and the vast majority of the Māori population (85%) living in the North Island.’” I further suggest that the challenges facing Māori staff in such heritage site roles, reflect a settler-colonial marginalisation and under-valuing of mātauranga Māori. Local experienced historical interpreter Megan (Kāi Tahu and Te Āti Awa descent), shared that, “Many people in Dunedin have never been to a marae (meeting grounds), they feel no connection, some maybe do, but working with iwi can be seen as an add-on here, you can just opt out of engaging with Māori.” A slow and challenging process of learning is required to meaningfully engage with Māori partners and mātauranga Māori and to deliver truly nuanced and bi-cultural histories.

Despite Aotearoa’s international reputation for critically engaging with its colonial history, heritage workers repeatedly shared they were ill-prepared to support teachers with *the Histories Curriculum*. The Hocken librarians, as they reflected on the anxieties of the teachers, emphasised the tension between the teachers’ urgent requests for resources, and the magnitude of the work required to support them. Judith and Lynn stressed the particular difficulties of meeting the goals of the *Histories Curriculum* for primary school students, as their Library was designed to support adult researchers. Aotearoa’s heritage sites had more work to do to address gaps in their collections, meaningfully engage with mātauranga Māori, and develop lasting relationships with tangata whenua. During our collaborative sign off, Judith echoed the concerns of many teachers, when she shared that, ‘For all the positive

intention of the *Curriculum* the initial schedule and scope assumed that the resources and skills to teach it existed and were readily available when they were not.’

Throughout my research in Aotearoa a clear tension emerged between teachers’ need for the rapid provision of classroom-ready resources and the slow, affective work of addressing significant gaps in historical knowledge. The pressures teachers faced from their institutions, the need to timetable and plan lessons in advance, as well as meet MoE expectations, resulted in high-pressure demands for classroom-ready resources. However, a descendant of Taranaki iwi and an experienced Māori cultural advisor, stressed that the *Histories Curriculum* should not just involve a “generic history programme that is prescriptive and easy for schools to follow”. Instead, he stressed that schools needed to “invest energy, to learn the stories”, including developing an understanding of te reo Māori, te ao Māori (Māori world) and tikanga (ritually correct behaviour). In the Te Whanganui-a-Tara (Wellington) area, teachers could attend a teacher training programme by Te Āti Awa iwi called Kura Ahurea.⁶⁴ The Te Āti Awa interpreters carefully shared a single pūrākau (traditional narrative) with the teachers each month. Representative teachers learnt these pūrākau within the context of tikanga, te ao Māori, and the specific experiences and histories of Te Āti Awa. I attended a session alongside a primary school teacher, who took extensive notes to report back to her school. We were taught the history of Kupe, the great Polynesian navigator who discovered Aotearoa. We began with mihi (introductory speeches), we were taught songs, learnt key te reo phrases and related te ao Māori concepts. Through Kura Ahurea, the iwi held greater control over the interpretation of pūrākau and mitigated what Brooking and Paul identify as the potential risk of teachers with “varying degrees of insight and exposure to Te Reo and tikanga” misinterpreting these histories.⁶⁵ At the Kura Ahurea hui (meeting), I observed teachers excited and engaged, sharing their methods for learning te reo, and openly asking questions. However, there was a tension, obvious even in the hui, that while teachers recognised they were developing a deep, culturally embedded understanding of iwi and Aotearoa histories, they wanted a faster process of resource building. Teachers felt enormous pressure to justify time spent out of the classroom and the cost of the programme to their schools. The Taranaki cultural advisor explained that through Kura Ahurea teachers were taught to be “Champions for each school, they will implement the plan so we must empower

⁶⁴ Te Kāhui Ako o Tarikākā, ‘Kura Ahurea,’ accessed August 10, 2025, <https://sites.google.com/view/kahui-ako-tarikaka/kete-whakapakari-resources/kura-ahurea>.

⁶⁵ Brooking and Enright, ‘Taking the Anglo and Euro Out,’ 151.

them to maintain the cultural integrity of the narrative.” The Taranaki cultural advisor and the Te Āti Awa interpreters emphasised that there was real risk of misrepresentation, and that if teachers interpreted the pūrākau without understanding its cultural and historical context, it would lose its meaning. The Taranaki cultural advisor stressed that schools must take time to build relationships with iwi and hear the unique perspective of tangata whenua (people of the land). He emphasised that this was the only way the “true diversity” of Māori history would be recognised and conveyed to students, “You cannot condense the story, you will miss out on learning opportunities.”

My Pākehā participants spoke positively about the value of teaching Aotearoa histories but suggested that under-resourced and inexperienced teaching could pose a risk to sensitive and nuanced historical interpretations. In a 2021 survey by NZHTA, teachers shared their anxieties; 52.2% of respondents stated that they did not feel confident about implementing the new *Histories Curriculum*.⁶⁶ In their long form answers, teachers pointed to a lack of prior experience teaching history and Aotearoa histories. They also shared their fear that the *Histories Curriculum* would add yet more work to their overburdened schedule. Several teachers voiced concern at the then-intended 2022 implementation date. One teacher echoed The Taranaki cultural advisor’s assertion that more time was needed to ensure these histories were taught accurately and sensitively:

We need time to truly understand it before we teach it. Most of our staff had very little NZ histories learning as part of their schooling. Although some have done TWOA modules [training in mātauranga Māori – Māori knowledge] there is a lot to learn and relearn. This work on potentially unconscious beliefs takes time.⁶⁷

As the Taranaki cultural advisor and the survey respondent emphasised, time is needed to affectively re-relate to these histories, fill gaps in knowledge, critically engage with dominant historical narratives, build Indigenous partnerships, and make significant changes to interpret different ways of knowing.

⁶⁶ NZEI Te Riu Roa, *Aotearoa–NZ Histories’ Curriculum*.

⁶⁷ NZEI Te Riu Roa, *Aotearoa–NZ Histories’ Curriculum needs (primary)* (NZHTA, 2022).

5.6 Conclusion

Mayflower 400 and the *Histories Curriculum*'s non-Indigenous interpreters experienced a discomfiting confrontation with their own limited and misrepresentative perceptions of British colonial and Indigenous histories. These international ethnographic examples demonstrate that colonial amnesia, nostalgia and affective amnesia perpetuate colonial misrepresentations and power dynamics into the present day. Affective amnesia, I argue, is a vital framework for understanding how disengagement can persist despite a desire to engage critically with colonial history and produce inclusive historical interpretations. Affective amnesia results in an absence of understanding of the contemporary legacies and ongoing harm of colonial violence. I therefore agree with historian Robert Fletcher that the provision of historical detail or, I add, values that are critical of colonial history, is not enough to change perceptions and behaviours in ways that meaningfully support dismantling the harmful legacies of colonisation. I argue that the discomfort of dismantling affective amnesia is essential to transforming historical understanding. It is through encountering Indigenous interpreters' distinct affective relationships with these histories as living, that non-Indigenous interpreters underwent this transformational learning.

Chapter Six Vignette: Building a Wetu (traditional Wampanoag home), Nottinghamshire, England

Content warning: brief discussion of residential schools on the following three pages and pages 187-188.



Figure 8. Interpreting Wampanoag Histories in front of the Wetu

Photograph by the author, September 2021.

The nearly finished wetu shows potential, though it creaks; English hickory poles struggle to flex as well as North American Cedar. The traditional Wampanoag home, shaped like an overturned mishoon [dugout canoe], will soon be wrapped in bark and filled with fire and conversation. Wampanoag interpreters are building the wetu on the modest grounds of a small-town museum in Nottinghamshire. This county was the historical home of several of the Mayflower's most famous passengers, including elder and spiritual leader William Brewster and Governor William Bradford. The building of the wetu in Nottinghamshire signifies the Mayflower passengers' seventeenth-century colonisation of Wampanoag

lands. It also represents a contemporary Indigenous and non-Indigenous partnership rarely attempted in England.

In this town, where everybody knows everybody, thirty schoolchildren, ages eight and nine, two teachers and two Museum guides sit cross-legged on scratchy hay bales. They are all captivated by the Indigenous interpreter standing before them. Hartman – a Mashpee Wampanoag activist and artist – interprets the histories of the Wampanoag Nations while standing in front of the wetu his cousins are building. Hartman answers questions from the excited children while he carves a beautiful bear from a soapstone pipe.

“What food do you eat?”

“What’s your favourite food?”

Another child asks, “Do you still speak your language?”

Hartman responds in Wôpanâak [Wampanoag language], saying that his name is Hartman and he is a member of the Mashpee Wampanoag Nation.¹ He shares that the Wampanoag Nations are recovering their language from near extinction. He engages the group with a question, “Does your school have a graveyard?” The children shake their heads, and one girl screws up her face. “Well, our schools had graveyards. That’s because our children were beaten and killed for speaking their language and sharing their culture.” Hartman pauses for a moment.

The Museum photographer walks over to where I stand, beside the group of students, as I have volunteered to relay their questions to Hartman. The photographer shares her surprise, “I didn’t know that about the

¹ Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project, ‘About.’

graveyards.” I explain, “Yes, there are bodies buried under most, if not all, residential schools. Many of the children’s remains have still not been identified, and the last school didn’t close till the 1960s.² Many of the children’s relatives will still be alive.” She looks horrified and says, “That’s horrible.” Clearly moved, she adds, “I will have to look into it when I get home.”

I listen again to the children’s questions. They are now pointing at the furs and asking, “Are those real animals?”

Their teacher asks Hartman, “What’s your favourite tradition?”

While standing in front of the wetu, Hartman demonstrated his breadth of knowledge about British colonial and Indigenous histories, as well as his expert artisan skills. He whittled a pipe and helped his cousins plan and construct the wetu, all while answering visitors’ questions. Hartman’s historical interpretation work was highly skilled and affectively challenging. He visibly managed his affective reaction as he interpreted the histories of the residential school system, where Indigenous children “were beaten and killed”. From 1869 to the 1960s, ‘children were forcibly removed from their homes...violently socialized into the norms of settler colonial culture and its official language: English.’³ This attempt ‘to accomplish the systematic destruction of Native cultures and communities’ led to the dormancy of the Wampanoag language for 150 years.⁴ The recent development of the ‘Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project’ has enabled Hartman to learn his Indigenous language, which he shares with the schoolchildren.⁵ To support the aims of the Nottinghamshire partner museum, to improve local understandings of the Mayflower voyage, English visitors and partners relied upon Hartman and his cousins’ extensive knowledge of not only Wampanoag history but also British colonial histories and the histories of other,

² ‘US Indian Boarding School History,’ *The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition*, accessed July 30, 2025, <https://boardingschoolhealing.org/us-indian-boarding-school-history>.

³ Kaitlin Smith, ‘The Power of Native Language Revitalization,’ *Facing Our History & Ourselves*, November 26, 2025, accessed August 10, 2025, <https://www.facinghistory.org/ideas-week/power-native-language-revitalization>.

⁴ ‘US Indian Boarding School History,’ *The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition*; Rucha Chitnis, ‘From Extinction to Existence: The Wôpanâak Language, Cultural Survival,’ January 1, 2016, accessed 10 August, 2025, <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/extinction-existence-wopanaak-language>.

⁵ Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project, ‘About.’

culturally distinct Indigenous Nations. In this opening vignette, Hartman navigated the surprise of an English audience whose own Nation enacted a system of residential schools across the British Empire.

Chapter Six: The Work of Indigenous Historical Interpreters and the Need for “Heavy Shoulders”

In this chapter, I analyse the affective experiences of Indigenous interpreters within *Mayflower 400* and the *Histories Curriculum*. They interpreted deeply personal histories that shaped their everyday lives while also meeting the substantial requirements of their non-Indigenous partners.⁶ While interpreting British colonial and Indigenous histories carried a weight for non-Indigenous interpreters, I demonstrate that their Indigenous partners held a heavier burden. I argue that participant Darius Coombs’s theory of “heavy shoulders” thoroughly describes the complex and multifaceted requirements of the Indigenous historical interpreter’s role, and its unequal affective challenge. Similar to Hochschild’s theory of emotional labour, “heavy shoulders” describe structural inequalities in affective practice, and the required ‘feeling rules’ of a particular professional role.⁷ However, “heavy shoulders” goes much further to describe the unique affective challenges faced by Indigenous people who engage with and teach British colonial and Indigenous histories. Beyond the affective expectations of a professional role, “heavy shoulders” describe the specific affective work of engaging with and teaching an unresolved history that is felt and lived in the present. In this chapter, I demonstrate, through the framework of “heavy shoulders”, that an affective examination of Indigenous interpreters’ practice reveals an unequal burden, as they carefully navigated the potential of historical interpretation to improve the contemporary treatment of Indigenous peoples or harm the Indigenous interpreter and their communities.

Within the first part of this chapter, I explore how the Indigenous historical interpreters’ work, and its affective complexity, can be overlooked in heritage and educational studies and by non-Indigenous partners. I also analyse Indigenous interpreters’ personal as well as

⁶ Jo Loosemore, ‘Revealing the partnerships changing perceptions of a ship, its passengers and an Atlantic journey made 400 years ago,’ *University of Plymouth*, June 4, 2020, accessed 10 August 2025, <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/about-us/mayflower-400/revealing-the-partnerships-changing-perceptions-of-a-ship>; Plymouth.gov.uk, ‘Plymouth stands in solidarity with Black Lives Matter.’; Te Poutāhū Curriculum Centre, ‘Productive partnerships with whanau, hapu, and iwi,’ accessed May 12, 2025, <https://aotearoahistories.education.govt.nz/custom-resource/leading-local-curriculum-guide-part-1#productive-partnerships-with-wh-nau-hap-and-iwi>.

⁷ Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*.

professional experiences within other heritage and educational projects, which they referred to often. These experiences deeply shaped their interpretive approach, and affective experience of *Mayflower 400* and the *Histories Curriculum*. In the second part of this chapter, I introduce Darius theory of “heavy shoulders”. Darius developed “heavy shoulders” in response to the challenges he experienced working at Plimoth Patuxet Museum, where all the Wampanoag advisors for *Mayflower 400* had worked. He described hiring staff with “heavy shoulders”, an innate strength, a skill, and an affective position, required for interpreters to teach deeply personal histories that continue to cause harm, and navigate partners and visitors’ surprise or firm rejection. I argue that “heavy shoulders” thoroughly describes the complex and multifaceted requirements of the Indigenous historical interpreter’s role. “Heavy shoulders” makes a significant theoretical contribution to this thesis, as it identifies Indigenous historical interpretation as an affective practice shaped by personal background and intergenerational experiences of colonisation.

6.1 Overlooking the Indigenous Interpreter

Within *Mayflower 400* and the *Histories Curriculum*, Indigenous interpreters were asked by multi-stakeholder groups to bring their historical and cultural knowledge to confront intergenerational historical silences and profound misrepresentations. Despite the importance of Indigenous interpreters’ work they are commonly overlooked in heritage and educational studies. Many studies, including those of Endecott, Houliston and Savenije and Bruijn, which I reviewed in chapter two, focus on how contested histories are received and experienced cognitively and affectively by students, rather than by the educators that teach them.⁸ Even within studies that critically engage in Indigenous misrepresentation, Indigenous interpreters and audiences are often overlooked. Tim Luke’s study of The National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma shows that the Museum presents an historical interpretation that strategically misremembers history to conjure a sense of positive national identity. He highlights that the Museum’s representation of Native Americans as ‘proud warriors’ and a ‘mostly aesthetic presence’ denies their cotemporality and does not ‘jibe with the underemployed almost invisible Native Americans living in trailers in dead-end neighbourhoods around Oklahoma City.’⁹ While Luke emphasises this significant tension, he

⁸ Savenije and Bruijn, ‘Historical empathy in a museum.’; Endacott, ‘Affective Engagement in Historical Empathy.’; Endacott, ‘Negotiating the Process of Historical Empathy.’; Houliston, ‘Pacific Learners in Aotearoa.’

⁹ Luke, ‘Actualized affinities,’ 63.

concludes that such misrepresentations do not necessarily cause a ‘crisis’.¹⁰ He argues that these misrepresentative pasts are mobilised by the Museum in a ‘reconstructed nationalistic idea of a better, bigger, and bolder America’.¹¹ Surely, we could expect that for Indigenous visitors and interpreters at least, this exhibition and perhaps Luke’s analysis, would exclude rather than include them within a national American Identity?¹² While Luke acknowledges that ‘different publics can selectively remember divergent pasts’, as he does not focus on the work of the historical interpreters at the Museum, we are left to speculate whether they are similarly aware of this juxtaposition.¹³

As I established in chapter two, the experiences of Indigenous historical interpreters are overlooked when the ‘difficulty’ of histories or heritage are determined by their ‘awkwardness’ in relation to ‘positive, self-affirming’ views of the nation.⁵⁷³ It is these sanitised and mythologised accounts that cause lasting and disruptive harm to the Indigenous interpreters who are actively seeking to dismantle them. In the 34th essay of her work, *Two Hundred and Fifty Ways to Start an Essay about Captain Cook*, poet and scholar Alice Te Punga Somerville (Te Āti Awa, Taranaki) states that, ‘one of the projects of Indigenous people is to push back against colonial narratives’.⁵⁷⁴ She likens the work of challenging positive historical narratives about Cook, which I describe as the work of historical interpretation, to cleaning the house of a hoarder:

There is a long period of time where the clean-up crew have to expend as much energy holding back the towers of trash from falling into the clean centre as they do actually cleaning ... Things are just really precarious for a really long time and people need to hold back the mess while other people clear out the accumulation of decades. No-one wants to watch this bit.¹⁴

The image Somerville conjures, one of arms and shoulders holding back heavy boxes, well describes the work of Indigenous historical interpreters, who challenge hoarded historical narratives and assert Indigenous presence in heritage sites and schools. Significantly, ‘the towers of trash’ Somerville describes are the sanitised myths told about Cook. While such

¹⁰ Luke, ‘Actualized affinities,’ 65.

¹¹ Luke, ‘Actualized affinities,’ 65.

¹² Luke, ‘Actualized affinities,’ 65.

¹³ Luke, ‘Actualized affinities.’

¹⁴ Alice Te Punga Somerville, *Two Hundred and Fifty Ways to Start an Essay about Captain Cook* (Bridget Williams Books, 2020), 20-21.

mythologised histories are characterised by Somerville as ‘comfortable’ and ‘happy’ for some Pākehā (non-Indigenous New Zealanders), they erase and misrepresent Māori histories. Although I have identified Somerville’s description as a powerful metaphor for the work of the Indigenous historical interpreter, Somerville’s essay depicts the work of Māori more generally. As Deborah Bird Rose explains, ‘to get in the way of settler colonization, all the native has to do is stay at home’.¹⁵ As Darius described, “we don’t work 9 to 5, this is real for us”. Sanitised, nation building histories are themselves difficult for Indigenous people, and continue to cause harm. Indigenous interpreters are subject to colonial misrepresentations and erasure in their everyday lives; Indigenous interpreters emphasised that historical interpretation work is an essential practice of cultural survivance, not a professional role they can put down when they go home.

6.2 The Unequal Expectation of Knowledge

Hartman was undertaking a challenging interpretive role teaching British colonial history to an English audience that had strikingly little foundational historical knowledge, as demonstrated by the Museum photographer’s surprise. Eight months after Hartman and his cousins finished building the wetu in England, I travelled between their homes in Massachusetts, Turtle Island. I interviewed Hartman at his flat in one of Boston’s lively, student neighbourhoods. I was struck again by the breadth of knowledge and skills he drew on in his historical interpretation work.

I arrive and see Hartman unpacking his car. He pulls out regalia, tools and wampum necklaces from the Wampanoag Powwow we attended the day before. I help him carry boxes to the flat and carefully put away the few pieces of wampum and copper jewellery he has made but not sold.

“You want tea, Milly?”

“Sure, thank you!” I make some space on the sofa in the lounge and sit down, getting my notepad ready. I am struck by the bookshelf beside me, filled with huge texts on critical race theory, white supremacy, American

¹⁵ Patrick Wolfe, “Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (December, 2006), 388, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520601056240>.

nationalism, and gender in American history. “What’s your job title, Hartman?” I ask, trying to make sure I describe his work correctly.

“Oh no, I don’t have a particular job title; each is its own particular thing: consultant, liaison, exhibitor, guest lecturer, educator.”

I speak up as he’s started making tea in the kitchen, “Do you know your role going in, or do you collaborate on that?”

“Sometimes I have a sense of what the project is about in general. Usually, I won’t know the specifics. Like this one in Sudbury [Turtle Island] they just want to do ‘something Indigenous’. They came to us to find out what that would look like. We reviewed the property and the budget and came up with a solution that worked. They liked the idea of the wetu we built in Nottinghamshire, England, but it was out of their budget. So, we thought we’d build a mishoon, as they do have water there. There’s a millpond and a little channel there to operate the mill. They liked the idea, and that is what we went with. Other times they [the heritage site or school partners] have a very clear idea of what they want, and sometimes we just give the stamp of approval, or you say”, Hartman pauses and puts on a diplomatic voice, “You know this might not be the best way to go about it! Each rodeo is different.”

Hartman’s bookshelf was a physical manifestation of both the knowledge required to accurately interpret British colonial and Indigenous histories, and the immense expectations placed on Indigenous interpreters. The shelves occupied the corner of his living room and consisted of heavy tomes on colonial and Indigenous histories, as well as marginally slimmer volumes on social theory. Like the rest of his apartment, he had dotted the shelves with his artwork, which demonstrated Hartman’s command of traditional Wampanoag lifeways. He had leant copper earrings, animal furs and wampum necklaces against the books. There was even a large wampum belt depicting the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous people

that he made and recently exhibited at Brown University.¹⁶ In an earlier interview, Darius, who like Hartman has been interpreting Indigenous history throughout his long career, stressed that improving his historical interpretations through ongoing research was essential to educating both visitors and non-Indigenous museum management. Both Hartman and Darius read extensively, were learning Wôpanâak, rigorously practice for public presentations, and consistently invested in improving their artisan skills.

When Hartman described the flexibility of his job title, the interpretive challenge of the non-Indigenous partners' lack of knowledge became clear. Hartman revealed the sheer breadth of requirements placed upon him as an Indigenous historical interpreter in non-Indigenous partnerships; he was a "consultant, liaison, exhibitor, guest lecturer, educator." The multiplicity of roles undertaken by Indigenous partners encouraged my choice of the broad term 'historical interpreter'. Implicit in Hartman's comments was the non-Indigenous partners' lack of knowledge of Indigenous histories. Hartman revealed that with every project, he must newly consider how to position himself to meet the expectations of the heritage partner and their stakeholders, while never compromising on interpreting accurate and nuanced histories. While a non-Indigenous partner may "just want to do 'something Indigenous'".

The non-Indigenous partners' and audiences' lack of prior knowledge of Indigenous histories also led to demands on Indigenous interpreters to provide insights into geographically distant and culturally distinct Indigenous Nations. Experienced historical interpreter Dylan, of Shinnecock descent, explained that *Mayflower 400*'s requirements for Indigenous interpreters were characteristic of the expectations placed on him during various interpretive roles in museums and schools in Turtle Island. Reflecting on his work at Plimoth Patuxet Museum, where Darius and Hartman had also worked, Dylan shared:

"We didn't just have to know about the history; we had to know toolmaking, we had to know the present day, we had to know about our culture, and we had to know other people's cultures, not just ours. We needed to know every single person's culture because people come from

¹⁶ 'In exhibition at Brown, Wampanoag artist draws on tradition to celebrate Indigenous rights,' *Brown University*, accessed May 12, 2025, <https://www.brown.edu/news/2021-10-07/wampum>.

across the country and ask, ‘Oh, do you know about this?’ So, we need to cover everything!”

Dylan decided not to engage with Mayflower commemorations in Turtle Island or England, in part because of his experience of the demands placed on Indigenous interpreters at Plimoth Patuxet Museum and other American museums. The depth and breadth of Hartman and his cousins’ expertise were essential to the success of *Mayflower 400*. Indigenous historical interpreters were relied upon by *Mayflower 400* to build wetu, create pots and wampum belts, educate and address questions from museum visitors, advise on exhibition texts, challenge inappropriate language, and provide foundational historical information to non-Indigenous partners. Given these requirements, it is not surprising that *Mayflower 400* partnered with an exclusive group of Wampanoag interpreters who had all worked at Plimoth Patuxet Museum.

Andrew, Megan and Aimee stressed that being an Indigenous person who is embedded in community, knowledgeable of their Nation’s culture, lifeways, and histories, is uncommon in a settler-colonial society but expected of Indigenous interpreters. Dylan suggested that Indigenous interpreters were an exclusive group of “people that do know”. He explained that he and his brother Andrew were unusual in having grown up learning Shinnecock histories and lifeways from their grandparents. Megan similarly explained that she had been privileged to grow up with access to cultural knowledge. She had not realised that many Māori people did not live on a marae (meeting grounds) until she went to university and met urbanised Māori. She gestured to her son who sat next to her as I interviewed her. She explained that she had made a conscious decision to marry a man from the same iwi, “so we would be buried in the same graveyard, it made life easy. In the same canoe towing to the same place.” Aimee, whose interview forms the opening vignette of chapter four, was the first in four generations of her family to speak te reo Māori, and she proudly speaks her southern dialect. Even with this embeddedness in community, Indigenous interpreters for *Mayflower 400* and the *Histories Curriculum* undertook significant research to support heritage and school partners.

Some Māori participants stressed that Pākehā partners’ lack of attention to colonial violence and the ongoing impact of culturally genocidal policies led them to believe their Māori partners could easily access Indigenous cultural and historical knowledge. The dark irony, obvious to Indigenous partners, was that the very heritage sites and schools demanding Indigenous people share their knowledge were historically complicit in its attempted

elimination. As we sat together in a coffee shop in Ōtepoti, Megan described the Cultural Narratives she produces for schools. Cultural Narratives are accessible research documents made by Māori interpreters for a specific school, containing ‘celestial’, geographical and historical information about the local area.¹⁷ Megan reflected that Pākehā partners could overlook the work Indigenous interpreters do to develop their historical knowledge:

“When I do these Cultural Narratives for schools, they seem to think I learn everything at the knee of an elder, that I am gathering spiritual knowledge from the bush – I just go to the Hocken Library and do the research like everyone else.”

Megan laughed but powerfully demonstrated that Pākehā partners have similar access to historical records and could improve their foundational historical knowledge to support their work with Māori interpreters. The belief that Indigenous people have easy access to cultural and historical information can further an unequal investment in learning. Megan highlighted, and teachers such as Paul in the previous chapter demonstrated, that non-Indigenous interpreters can do research to develop their own understanding alongside working with Indigenous partners.

6.3 Iwi Inundated with Requests

The pressures on iwi are enormous and ever-changing. Iwi are Māori tribes or Nations, they are enduring political and economic institutions, managing land and other assets to meet the diverse needs of their whanau (family or community). They are central to community life, providing essential spiritual, financial, housing, food and educational support. In our 2023 interview Jacinda Ardern described the *Histories Curriculum* as an intentional, vital and overdue change to Aotearoa’s educational landscape. She presented a core goal of the *Histories Curriculum* as rebalancing the unequal burden placed on Māori to understand and redress Aotearoa’s colonial and settler-colonial histories:

“We have to stop expecting Māori people to come to us and do the work to meet them halfway on the bridge. Māori have always been asked to come over to the Pākehā world, always! This idea that Pākehā were willing to walk over - and that means going into a space where you don’t know the protocols but ask!”

¹⁷ Aukaha Ltd, *Logan Park High School Cultural Narrative*, 3.

The Te Poutāhū (Curriculum Centre) website explains that the *Histories Curriculum* mandated ‘schools to build productive and enduring partnerships with their local whānau, hapū, and iwi.’¹⁸ Despite these aims, redressing this profound historical imbalance with the *Histories Curriculum* was not simple. The Māori interpreters I interviewed were hugely positive about schools taking the overdue step to engage with tangata whenua (the people of the land) and critically engage with Aotearoa’s histories. However, all the Pākehā teachers and Māori interpreters I interviewed voiced concerns that iwi and hapū would be overwhelmed by kaiako (educators) demanding resources to fill significant gaps in their historical and cultural knowledge. In response to the draft *Histories Curriculum*, released January 2021, Ngāi Tahu, the largest South Island iwi, raised concerns that ‘schools would make unsustainable demands’ on ‘hapū and marae’.¹⁹ They were concerned about the number of schools making requests, and the lack of cultural sensitivity with which teachers, with limited experience of Māori partnership, te reo Māori (Māori language) and tikanga (ritually correct behaviour) might ask for their histories.²⁰ Ngāi Tahu also highlighted the amount of research required to meet these expectations and the lack of appropriate remuneration.²¹ Schools began to request iwi produce class activities, in-person speakers, fieldtrip offerings, te reo language resources, appropriate language advice, and Cultural Narratives. Nevertheless Ngāi Tahu received the *Histories Curriculum* favourably:

Te Rūnganga o Ngāi Tahu [the representative authority for the people of Ngāi Tahu iwi] thanks the New Zealand Government and Ministry of Education for rethinking and reprioritising the New Zealand history curriculum, which is well overdue...Now, more than ever, all New Zealanders need a better understanding of this archipelago’s natural and cultural histories, in local, regional and national contexts, and their transnational connections. The centrality accorded to Māori history in the draft curriculum will help to deliver those kinds of insights.²²

However, Ngāi Tahu’s response emphasised that increased demands from teachers on the historical resources of iwi presented a significant challenge. The lack of existing knowledge

¹⁸ ‘Te Poutāhū Curriculum Centre school update,’ *Ministry of Education Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga*, accessed June 24, 2025, <https://www.education.govt.nz/bulletins/te-poutahu-curriculum-centre-school-update/26-09-24>.

¹⁹ Ngai Tahu, *e pā ana ki te Aotearoa New Zealand’s Histories in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ngai Tahu, May 2021).

²⁰ Ngai Tahu, *e pā ana ki*.

²¹ Ngai Tahu, *e pā ana ki*.

²² Ngai Tahu, ‘e pā ana ki,’ 3.

of Aotearoa histories and the absence of historical analysis skills among teachers, who are predominantly Pākehā, placed the expectation of knowledge and skills sharing on Indigenous interpreters. While Megan said positively that having too many schools requesting to know more from iwi was “ultimately, a good problem to have”, the *Histories Curriculum* presented a significant demand on the time and resources of iwi.

I suggest that anxieties about overwhelming resource requests from teachers and iwi emerged due to an absence of existing partnerships between schools and iwi. As discussed in the previous chapter, some teachers, particularly high school history teachers, had already been teaching Aotearoa histories. For years, Paul had interpreted bi-cultural histories in his history classes, drawing on the school’s Cultural Narrative as well as iwi histories created for the treaty settlement process. Treaty settlements address the Crown’s breaches of Aotearoa’s foundational document, Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi) and are conducted by the Waitangi Tribunal. The settlement process involves research into iwi pre-contact and colonial histories which Paul used to enrich his history classes.⁵⁸⁹ Paul had also worked directly with Māori educators. However, the existing landscape of partnerships between iwi, hapū and schools was irregular. Ardern, who was taught Aotearoa’s histories at school, had a more optimistic outlook on the relationships between schools and iwi than I heard from most teacher participants:

I ask, “I saw that the *Histories Curriculum* asks that schools form relationships with iwi and hapū - were there concerns about resourcing these partnerships?”

She considers and responds, “No, um - so there has been some discussion with iwi about that, and I think that will be an ongoing question. There are some existing resources, so through treaty settlement a lot of work has been done to establish oral history for different iwi, so there are resources through that. We have a programme called ‘Te Tai Treaty Settlement Stories’; it is funded through Manatū Taonga, the Ministry for Culture & Heritage.²³ So, there will be some cross over in terms of resources the Crown has already funded, and what now needs to be created. But I think

²³ ‘Te Tai Treaty Settlement Stories,’ *te tai*. Accessed August 3, 2025, <https://tetai.nz>.

that will be an ongoing question: how do we support iwi to participate as well? In terms of the schools, many schools already have relationships with their local iwi, many will have a pōwhiri, a formal Māori welcome, at the beginning of the school year or for members of the senior leadership team. Many will also have reps on the board of trustees. And those relationships already exist for many, for most.”

My conversations with teachers through the NZHTA network revealed that relationships between many schools and iwi were not well established, and in many schools entirely non-existent. A 2024 review of the *Histories Curriculum* by the *Te Ihuwaka Education Evaluation Centre* revealed that ‘Schools are expected to engage with local hapū and iwi to develop their ANZ Histories curriculum content, but this often isn’t happening.’²⁴ They found that ‘half of schools had limited or no engagement with local hapū or iwi on the curriculum,’ with many citing that neither teachers nor iwi have capacity.²⁵ High school history teacher Paul agreed with Arden’s assertion that resources were available to teach bi-cultural histories. However, as I explored in the previous chapter, a lack of confidence and historical research skills meant many teachers were not drawing upon these resources comfortably. Due to a lack of knowledge and competing land claims, several Pākehā teachers I spoke with in the North Island shared that “we are not even sure who [which iwi] to reach out to”.

Arden’s claim that “many schools already have relationships with their local iwi,” was perhaps a necessary political narrative to implement the *Histories Curriculum*. This may have been a politically savvy exaggeration that would mandate schools to develop these vital partnerships. I suggest the difference in her and the teachers’ perceptions of partnership was also the result of schools’ misrepresenting the closeness of their iwi relationships to the MoE. A Māori cultural advisor from Ngāti Tamaoho Trust explained with frustration that teachers used meetings as “tick box exercises” to say they had worked with iwi when nothing substantive had been discussed. The Māori interpreter therefore no longer took meetings at schools. One Pākehā teacher revealed that her personal relationships with Māori family and friends would be presented by her principal as examples of the school’s commitment to Māori partnership. In reality, the teacher was rarely given sufficient support to engage in

²⁴ Education Review Office, *Teaching Histories: Implementation of Aotearoa New Zealand’s Histories and the Refreshed Social Sciences Learning Area* (Wellington, April 4, 2024): 9.

²⁵ Education Review Office, *Teaching Histories*, 7.

formal partnership building. Even Pākehā teachers who had developed partnerships with iwi still reflected that they felt pressure from school management to make requests that would be pushy, insensitive or overwhelming.

While iwi representatives were passionate about the importance of teaching Māori and colonial histories, and often positive about the *Histories Curriculum*, they were concerned about how to respond to yet more requests on their limited time and resources. Demands for iwi partnership and knowledge were growing from all sectors. During my fieldwork, iwi representatives cancelled our planned interviews as they scrambled to support whānau impacted by the devastating Cyclone Gabrielle. Reflecting on an independent review of the government's response to the disaster, Professor Christine Kenney, Chair of Disaster Risk Reduction at Massey University, highlights the integral role of iwi in community management, and their deep knowledge of the 'region's waterways and lands'.²⁶ Ultimately, the report concluded that a formalised partnership between local government and iwi, hapū and whānau was essential for future disaster response.²⁷

Concerns about how iwi could meet the growing demands for educational resources were exacerbated by the financial model of the *Histories Curriculum*. The Aotearoa New Zealand Government funded schools to request resources from iwi, rather than funding iwi to establish teams to support schools. Megan explained that when producing Cultural Narratives for local schools, the price she charged barely covered her costs:

“Schools do not always get the amount of work that goes into these, and as the funding went from the MoE to the schools only, they can just demand our voluntary time. I research and write these, and representatives from tangata whenua then review them. I rewrite any of their edits, and then it is sent to a paid editor before being returned to me. We don't make a cent on it...although it might be annoying, it is a great problem to have, I am optimistic that people want to learn more. The problem is we didn't get given the resources to do the work, the teachers did”.

²⁶ 'Cyclone Gabrielle review recommends Hawke's Bay emergency response be more inclusive – Expert Reaction,' *Science Media Centre*, March 26, 2025, accessed June 25, 2025. <https://www.sciencemediacentre.co.nz/2024/03/26/cyclone-gabrielle-review-recommends-hawkes-bay-emergency-response-be-more-inclusive-expert-reaction>.

²⁷ Science Media Centre, 'Cyclone Gabrielle review recommends.'

Melissa, the Principal of a South Island school, drew on her current PhD research to explain that this financial challenge would likely be exacerbated further as schools with the least resources are often those most driven to engage with iwi. She suggested that schools with a higher proportion of Māori and Pasifika students are more likely to engage with Aotearoa's histories, yet these schools are often low or decile 1. Melissa referred to Aotearoa's educational decile system:

Decile 1 schools are the 10% of schools with the highest proportion of students from low socio-economic communities, whereas decile 10 schools are the 10% of schools with the lowest proportion of these students.²⁸

That these low decile schools have a higher proportion of Māori and Pasifika students reflects race-based inequality in Aotearoa.²⁹ The financial model of the *Histories Curriculum*, whereby schools rather than iwi were given funding, would likely result in wealthier schools making greater demands of iwi. As Amie emphasised in her exchange with the teacher in the vignette that precedes chapter four, this risked knowledge being shared with Pākehā before it was shared with whānau.

As I moved across Aotearoa and between rohe (territories), Indigenous interpreters reminded me of the vast differences in the resources different iwi could draw on. Participants repeatedly pointed to their iwi treaty settlement status as an indicator of their financial resources and the extent to which they had the capacity for educational outreach. The Waitangi Tribunal processes treaty settlements:

Where the Crown has acted in breach of the principles of the Treaty, and Māori have suffered prejudice as a result, we consider that the Crown has a clear duty to set matters right. This is the principle of redress, where the Crown is required to act so as to 'restore the honour and integrity of the Crown and the mana [prestige] and status of Māori.'³⁰

A settlement provides financial redress and can offer iwi stability for long-term strategic planning and development. Treaty settlement also involves the establishment of post-

²⁸ PPTA, *NZ Schools: The decile system NZPPTA background paper* (PPTA: 2013), 2-3. Please note the decile system was replaced by a distributing of funding according to the Equity index in 2023.

²⁹ Te Rau Ora, *The School Educational Pipeline For Māori Into Health & Social Care Careers Series 4* (Te Rau Ora, 2022).

³⁰ 'The Waitangi Tribunal Nau Mai, Haere Mai,' *Waitangi Tribunal*, accessed June 27, 2025. <https://waitangitribunal.govt.nz/en>.

settlement governance entities (PSGEs), which can manage assets to support projects such as educational work. Treaty settlement status is not the only factor determining iwi and hapū capacity for school outreach and historical research; some iwi receive smaller settlements, and others, without settlements, still invest heavily in education. However, the continuation of the settlement process and its importance to iwi resources, demonstrates that Māori historical interpreters' capacity to engage with the *Histories Curriculum* is still profoundly limited by colonisation.

The reliance of *Mayflower 400* and the *Histories Curriculum* on Indigenous historical interpreters' extensive knowledge can partly be explained by the precarity of the heritage and education sectors and the reliance on overwork.³¹ In the UK, despite increasing visitor numbers, two-thirds of UK museums are (in 2024) concerned about funding, needing a '10-20% increase...just to stabilise'.³² The sector's financial insecurity pre-dated the pandemic with austerity and inflation resulting in a £2.3 billion cut (in real terms) in local government funding.³³ These changes particularly impacted the employment of historical interpreters as 'the areas bearing the brunt of reductions include opening hours and public access (37%), education and community programmes (37%)'.³⁴ Within this landscape, Plymouth UK's decision to invest in *Mayflower 400* from 2014 to 2020, was remarkable. *Mayflower 400* Curator and Content Creator Jo reflected, "We were investing enormously in history at a time when, across the UK, most local governments were pulling funding on museums, heritage and arts." This investment made possible the astonishingly broad campaign of events and heritage activities, as well as the Wampanoag partnership. Even so, *Mayflower 400* operated in a climate of scarcity, and staff worked long hours and were contracted or seconded for a limited project cycle. The Nottinghamshire Museum secured competitive and short-term project-focused grant funding for the Wampanoag cultural exchange. The few paid full-time staff worked long hours and received little training to answer visitors' questions on British colonial and Indigenous histories. Both the Nottinghamshire and Plymouth *Mayflower 400*

³¹ Jack Davey, *Native Americans in British Museums* (Cambridge University Press, 2021).

³² 'Insights from our Museum Directors Research 2024,' *Art Fund*, June 6, 2024, accessed June 25, 2025, <https://www.artfund.org/professional/news-and-insights/insights-from-our-museum-directors-research-2024>.

³³ Geraldine Adams, 'Local government funding for culture and leisure down £2.3bn since 2010,' Museum Association, August 5, 2024, <https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/2024/08/local-government-funding-for-culture-and-leisure-down-2-3bn-since-2010>.

³⁴ Mary Stone, 'Majority of heritage organisations planning cuts,' *Arts Professional*, February 26, 2024, accessed 10 August, 2025, <https://www.artspromotional.co.uk/news/majority-heritage-organisations-planning-cuts>.

projects relied on volunteers, following a clear trend in the UK heritage sector towards utilising unpaid work.³⁵ For *Mayflower 400*, this not only reduced costs but also importantly met their goals of engaging diverse local communities in local history and cultural heritage. In Plymouth, England, *Mayflower 400* built a team of 400 local volunteers. The volunteers received one day of historical training covering foundational information about the Mayflower passengers and the Wampanoag Nations. With limited resources for historical training, *Mayflower 400* volunteers and heritage workers would need to learn alongside their audiences. Many were hugely positive about this experience and inspired to carry out independent research to pre-empt visitor questions on British colonial and Indigenous histories. Some of the volunteers were National Trust guides, and they shared that this model of introductory training followed by independent research was also relied upon by the Trust. This nominal historical training for volunteers, as well as the lack of existing historical knowledge among heritage workers and teachers, placed the expectation of knowledge and lifeways expertise firmly on the shoulders of Indigenous partners.³⁶

The Aotearoa education sector was similarly facing resource shortages and was reliant on overwork. Melissa explained, “Aotearoa Primary and Early Childhood teachers have never even been taught how to teach history, and they have six curricula to contend with alongside the new *Histories Curriculum*.” During my fieldwork, I observed that lesson planning and marking consumed teachers’ nights and weekends. My hosts left for union meetings and voted to strike in 2023, citing poor pay and conditions.³⁷ A 2024 report by the trade union for secondary school teachers, the PPTA, highlights the impact of staffing shortages:

27% of advertised [teaching] positions could not be filled at all... 56% of principals had to employ untrained or unqualified teachers because they could not find trained and qualified staff.³⁸

The 125 surveyed school principals identify te reo language classes, and “Māori medium” schools, where classes are taught in te reo Māori more than half the time, as particularly hard to staff.³⁹ This lack of expertise has significant implications for the *Histories Curriculum*

³⁵ Art Fund, ‘Museum Directors Research 2024.’; Geraldine Adams, ‘Local government funding.’; Museum Association, *Cuts Survey 2015* (Museum Association: December 2015), <https://archive-media.museumassociation.org/13012016-museums-association-cuts-survey.pdf>.

³⁶ O’Malley, ‘Signs are encouraging.’

³⁷ Tom Kitchen, ‘What it’s like to be a high school teacher in New Zealand,’ *newsroom*, June 19, 2023, accessed August 10, 2025, <https://newsroom.co.nz/2023/06/19/what-its-like-to-be-a-high-school-teacher-in-new-zealand>.

³⁸ PPTA Te Wehengarua, *Secondary School Staffing Survey report 2024* (PPTA, 2024), 3.

³⁹ PPTA Te Wehengarua, *Secondary School Staffing*, 5.

with non-subject specialists requiring greater support from Māori partners, but with perhaps less confidence in developing these partnerships. Non-indigenous interpreters with limited training would learn these histories alongside their students, while Indigenous interpreters were relied upon for their detailed knowledge and skills.

The US heritage sector, with its landscape of state and private support, offers a less bleak picture than the UK heritage and Aotearoa education sectors (as of 2022-24). However, Dylan stressed that Indigenous historical interpreters in the US are still commonly “exploited or overused”. The US heritage sector has experienced decreased visitor numbers following the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴⁰ However, a 2023 report by the American Alliance of Museums shared that, ‘On the whole, directors seem optimistic about continued [net operating performance] recovery: almost half (46 percent) project their bottom line will increase this year, while 38 per cent project no change compared to 2022.’⁴¹ Yet, Dylan stressed that his experience as a historical interpreter in US museums has involved intrusive and insensitive demands on his knowledge without recognition or remuneration for his expertise. He explained:

“I get hit up by people all the time asking me”, Dylan puts on a different voice, polite but pushy, “can you come to this class, can you do this, can you write this, can you give me examples of this, links or stuff. So, I mean for people that do know, for a lot of the people that are kind of known to be able to share and teach and know their stuff, there is a pretty heavy burden I’d say. A lot of thankless burdens too. Being exploited or overused or taken advantage of as well, which also makes it so a lot of people back out of that stuff that do know things. I know almost every person that is in the field that I work with has been taken advantage of in some way, shape, or form, you know, either being misused or overused.

I mean I just had an experience myself; I was working with a museum in the US and they don’t have much Native stuff going for them. And like

⁴⁰ ‘The hangover after the museum party: institutions in the US are facing a funding crisis,’ *The Art Newspaper*, January 19, 2024, accessed May 11, 2025, <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2024/01/19/us-museums-funding-crisis-new-generation>.

⁴¹ Elizabeth Merritt, ‘Say Cheese! A Candid Snapshot of the Museum Sector,’ *Center for the Future of Museum Blogs*, July 19, 2023, accessed May 15, 2025, <https://www.aam-us.org/2023/07/19/say-cheese-a-candid-snapshot-of-the-museum-sector>.

every week they wanted me to go out [to interpret on-site] and get drummers and this and that, because they don't have the resources or connections...and it just got to the point where they'd start walking me into things I had never agreed to or promoting me at things without asking. It got to a point where I was just like, I am going to step away because this is inappropriate, it's mistreatment.

I am not here as your one-stop-shop, and that is what a lot of Native people are forced to be, your one-stop-shop for everything Native. And that's not, that's not our job and not everyone can do that as well. I have good connections and things like that, but I am not working for your museum, you know, I come down and help you out from time to time, cool, but I am not your employee. My connections are not yours to exploit either. Those are connections I built over a lifetime of doing things, of moving to different places of being involved with this stuff, those are friends and people I consider family.

Implicit in Dylan's description was his committed belief in the value of museums' having historical interpretations by Indigenous people. For this, he put up with significant overuse. Dylan's experience of exploitation in the Turtle Island museum reveals how single Indigenous interpreters can be expected to fill institutions' vast and historical interpretive silences. For a museum that does not 'have much Native stuff going for them', Dylan is mobilised as that Indigenous offering, and they make claims to his personal life and relationships. Such experiences shaped Indigenous interpreters' expectations for projects such as *Mayflower 400*. Within their article *Indigenizing is Indigenous*, Indigenous students at the Memorial University of Newfoundland argue that exploitative expectations on Indigenous peoples are forms of colonialism:

Colonialism is a way to name the assumption that settlers and colonizers are entitled to Indigenous land, social networks, knowledge, students, language and culture for their own goals, even if those goals are benevolent or well-intentioned.⁴²

⁴² 'Indigenization is Indigenous,' *Memorial University Gazette*, February 12, 2019, accessed October 12, 2025, <https://gazette.mun.ca/campus-and-community/indigenization-is-indigenous>.

It is striking that these students emphasise that re-colonising practices can be enacted by those who are ‘well-intentioned’ such as my non-Indigenous participants.⁴³ The article and Dylan’s experiences in the US highlight that the current financial insecurities in the UK heritage and Aotearoa education sectors, and their reliance on overwork, may exacerbate but cannot fully account for the demands made of Indigenous interpreters which have deep colonial histories.

6.4 Requiring “Heavy Shoulders”

I have described the uneven weights placed on Indigenous interpreters. Within this section, I introduce “heavy shoulders”, Darius’s requirement for the Indigenous interpreters he hired to work onsite educating visitors at Plimoth Patuxet Museum. Darius presents “heavy shoulders” as the Indigenous interpreters’ practice of interpreting upsetting, personal histories that “still hurt” and engaging with personal or inconsiderate questions while not “lashing out” at visitors. I suggest “heavy shoulders” can be helpfully understood as an ‘affective regime’, described by Zembylas as ‘the discursive practices and power relations prescribing specific ‘emotional rules’, ideals, rituals and vocabularies’.⁴⁴ Darius’s expectation for affective practice is enforced as he only hires staff with “heavy shoulders.” Darius presents “heavy shoulders” as both an innate quality an individual may or may not possess, and something that can be practiced and reinforced. It is therefore an ‘affective regime’ in that it ‘encourages certain affective norms...while discouraging others’.⁴⁵ However, “heavy shoulders” is not only presented as a kind of affective resilience, but a pedagogy to ‘un-make the emotional regimes’ of ignorance and affective amnesia.⁴⁶ In this strategic mobilisation, heavy shoulders can helpfully be understood as a metaphor as defined by anthropologist James Fernandez: ‘a strategic predication upon an inchoate pronoun [in this case, Indigenous historical interpreters] which makes a movement and leads to a performance’.⁴⁷ In this case it is a dual movement, positioning the Indigenous interpreter as bearers of overlooked, heavy histories (to non-Indigenous audiences) and as responsible for managing the affective weight of this work (to themselves). This dual movement leads to ‘performances’ of affective management by Indigenous interpreters and to changed affective understanding from non-Indigenous

⁴³ Memorial University Gazette, ‘Indigenization is Indigenous.’

⁴⁴ Zembylas, ‘Wilful Ignorance,’ 501.

⁴⁵ Zembylas, ‘Theorizing the affective regime.’

⁴⁶ Zembylas, ‘Wilful Ignorance,’ 501.

⁴⁷ James Fernandez, ‘The Mission of Metaphor in Expressive Culture,’ *Current Anthropology* 15, no. 2 (June 1974): 119-145.

interpreters and audiences. As Carrithers argues, I show that metaphor works alongside a rhetorical narrative, as “heavy shoulders” situates Indigenous historical interpreters within an ongoing history of colonial violence.⁴⁸ This context transforms “heavy shoulders” from description into persuasive rhetoric that calls for changed behaviour. As I analyse below, the affective management involved in maintaining “heavy shoulders”, such as meeting audiences at their knowledge level, and “not lashing out at visitors” but responding to their intent, are effective strategies for educating partners and visitors who are implicated in intergenerational absences of knowledge and Indigenous misrepresentations.

In 2021, I contacted Darius to continue our conversation on “heavy shoulders”. He had recently secured a role as Cultural Outreach Coordinator for the Mashpee Wampanoag Education Department. He took our Zoom call in their headquarters:

I ask, “you mentioned heavy shoulders last time we spoke. I wanted to ask you about that and what you meant by it. You said you did a seminar on it. I wondered if part of heavy shoulders was an expectation that you had to turn up and know everything. The expectation that there would always be a Native person to share the history and be at the front of these projects.”

Darius explains, “before we did anything about the 2020 Mayflower commemorative year it had to be people who knew what they were talking about,” Darius pauses and starts again with emphasis “the proper history, the good and the bad, because you couldn’t just put anyone out there like that. If we were going to be out there, it had to be me and Linda to present it properly.”⁴⁹

So yes, when I say heavy shoulders, that was part of my presentation at a conference in Hawaii back in 2016 for the Native American Indigenous Studies Association. What heavy shoulders meant for us, being at that Wampanoag Homesite in the Wampanoag Indigenous programme [at Plimoth Patuxet Museum] serving 2,000 to 3,000 guests a day at times.

⁴⁸ Carrithers, ‘Story Seeds and the inchoate,’; Carrithers, *Culture, Rhetoric*.

⁴⁹ Both Darius and Linda are highly experienced historical interpreters. Alongside her work with Darius in Turtle Island, Linda was a key member of the *Mayflower 400* UK Wampanoag Advisory Board.

Talking to people from all around the world about heavy issues, issues of slavery, cultural genocide, servitude, scalping, all sorts of stuff. And we didn't just hire Wampanoag people when I was down there, we also hired non-Wampanoag Indigenous people.⁵⁰ But the ones that did that job still had a burden on their shoulders because how the guests are going to come into that Homesite and how they are educated was up to us. Because a lot of times they are not going to be able to go to another place and have an interaction with real Indigenous people and get to ask questions about their knowledge and such, that might be a once in a lifetime opportunity for that guest. So, to have that experience when they are leaving, that is how they are going to feel about Native people, in general, you know, across the Americas.”

That Darius only hired Indigenous interpreters with “heavy shoulders” suggested the importance and risks of this work. Darius’s statement that “you couldn’t just put anyone out there like that” affirmed the breadth of knowledge and lifeways expertise demanded of Indigenous interpreters and revealed the vulnerability of their position. While Darius shared that on-site interpretation offered a “once in a lifetime” opportunity for guests to engage with Indigenous people, the requirement for “heavy shoulders” reframed this as a vital but challenging moment for the Indigenous interpreter. A short exchange with the visitor is, perhaps, the only chance to change how they “feel about Native people” and, by implication, their behaviour towards Indigenous communities. He thereby showed that “heavy shoulders” also involved taking on the “burden” of being perceived as representative of all Indigenous peoples, which exacerbates the stakes of engagement, since “that is how they [the non-Indigenous visitors] are going to feel about Native people, in general, you know, across the Americas.”

For *Mayflower 400* and the *Histories Curriculum*, Indigenous interpreters advised non-Indigenous partners on how to interpret histories of enslavement, scalping, plagues and practices of cultural genocide such as the banning of Indigenous languages and residential school violence. Darius characterised these histories as “heavy issues”, describing the difficulty of interpreting these topics as a weight borne on “heavy shoulders”. These “heavy

⁵⁰ Darius is referring to Indigenous interpreters from other Native Nations such as the Narragansett or Shinnecock, who he hired to work on the Indigenous programme at Plimoth Patuxet Museum.

issues” equate to examples of ‘difficult heritage’ as defined by Macdonald.⁵¹ These are historical events which, if interpreted, challenge a ‘positive, self-affirming contemporary [national] identity’.⁵² Macdonald’s theory predicts resistance to and denial of colonial history by non-Indigenous audiences and partners, which I return to in the following section. However, Darius’s description made clear that these histories are “heavy”, not because they newly threaten Indigenous interpreters’ favourable view of the state, but because these violent histories shape Indigenous interpreters’ and their ancestors’ day-to-day lives. Across our interviews, Darius stressed that “it is real for our people.” In the opening vignette, Hartman shared how the American Government’s culturally genocidal policies resulted in his personal experience of learning his Indigenous language as an adult: “Our language is being recovered from near extinction... our children were beaten and killed for speaking their language and sharing their culture.” It is this lived experience that non-Indigenous partners seek in their advisors but which, as my Indigenous interpreter participants reflected, they can fail to respect, remunerate or sufficiently support.

Theories of ‘difficult heritage’ struggle to explain the Indigenous interpreters’ drive to improve public knowledge of these historical topics. For Indigenous communities, it is the suppression and mythologising of these narratives that is difficult, as it stands in stark contrast to their everyday experiences. The denial of their histories and the details and legacies of colonialism disrupt Indigenous interpreters’ work and personal lives. At a *Mayflower 400* town hall meeting in Nottinghamshire, Medicine Man for the Herring Pond Wampanoag Tribe, Troy, emotively described the impact of positive and nostalgic colonial narratives. Troy is enormously likeable, light-hearted and funny; he is often laughing and teasing; however, he spoke with emphasis and seriousness when asked what he wished American students were taught in school:

“The way we teach history everything is about white people. When you are left out of the story, you don’t feel you are part of the story you don’t feel you are part of the Nation, you don’t feel included. Women were left out, they discovered things, they didn’t get any credit... black people who made discoveries and innovations that save people around the world, you don’t hear about them. I hear about them” Troy brings his hand to his

⁵¹ Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage*.

⁵² Macdonald, ‘Is ‘Difficult Heritage’ Still,’ 6.

chest, “because my parents instilled that in me... Concentration camps, praying towns, they don’t want to talk about the awful things that took place – that’s a lot of history. You. Can’t. Leave. That. Part. Out. Because when you leave that part out you are disenfranchising other people who already have been left out. Who want to be included... If you are not going to go back in history and learn, you are not going to update your knowledge ... that’s just how I feel about it.”

Throughout his presentation, Troy kept gesturing with his hands outwards to the audience. He sought to redefine their perception of the Mayflower’s history, from a positive view of the Nottinghamshire town’s impact on a global stage, to a critical examination of how the dominant Mayflower narrative misrepresents and erases Indigenous peoples. Troy is Indigenous and Black, his answer and his experience were clearly shaped by being part of these two marginalised communities. Troy equated the erasure of marginalised communities from history with their erasure from the land and the American Nation. Historian Jean O’Brien (White Earth Band of Ojibwe) explains that the erasure of Indigenous peoples from historical narratives of Southern New England enabled Americans to convince themselves ‘that Indians there had become extinct even though they remained as Indian peoples – and do so to this day’.⁵³ If we seek to challenge the continued “disenfranchising” of groups who are left out of heritage narratives, both within exhibitions and within a given exhibition’s assumed audiences, it is vital we ask, who ‘difficult heritage’ is difficult for? ⁵⁴ I suggest, theories of ‘difficult heritage’ provided limited insight into the challenge of Indigenous interpreters’ practice.⁵⁵ They assume their audience to be ‘descendants of those engaged in colonial practises compared to victims of colonialism’.⁵⁶ These theories can therefore fail to recognise that sanitised, misrepresentative historical accounts are themselves ‘difficult heritage’ for those they disenfranchise.⁵⁷

I argue that “heavy shoulders” vitally addresses and articulates the experience of Indigenous interpreters, so that we can acknowledge and analyse the unequal affective burden they hold. Non-Indigenous participants observed and were affectively moved by what they emphasised was the far more significant affective challenge faced by Indigenous interpreters. As

⁵³ O’Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*, xii

⁵⁴ Macdonald, ‘Is ‘Difficult Heritage’ Still.’; Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage*.

⁵⁵ Macdonald, ‘Is ‘Difficult Heritage’ Still.’; Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage*.

⁵⁶ Zembylas, ‘Wilful Ignorance,’ 500.

⁵⁷ Macdonald, ‘Is ‘Difficult Heritage’ Still.’; Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage*.

discussed in chapters four and five, it is a confrontation with Indigenous interpreters' lived experiences of this history that transforms non-Indigenous partners' affective amnesia. Affect is relational, it produces the boundaries between the self and the other. The unequal affective weight of this work produced the boundaries between Jo, who had only recently confronted this history, and the Wampanoag partners, for whom this history shapes their everyday lives. Jo, at times, described the affective challenge she faced as having weight, but stressed it was, "nothing, nothing compared to the emotional challenge that Native Americans or other Indigenous peoples face when this kind of cultural collaboration is undertaken." Jo's emphasis on the distinct experiences of Indigenous interpreters was echoed by Pākehā activist Leah Bell who, as a high school student, had co-delivered a petition to the Aotearoa New Zealand Parliament in 2016, signed by 12,000 New Zealanders. Leah and her Pākehā and Māori classmates campaigned for the teaching of the New Zealand Wars and a National Day of Memorialisation. Many of the designers of the *Histories Curriculum*, including Graeme, described the students' activism as a key inspiration for the mandated *Histories Curriculum* and its focus on local histories. When I interviewed Leah in 2023, she spoke carefully as she reflected on the weight, or indeed subtly different weights, of this history and her work interpreting it publicly:

"I think the greatest resistance we encountered was racism, but there were also members of our community who were fearful for our safety: "It is too heavy for just you to bear." Shows just how heavy it has been for those who had to carry it every single day. It was hard to see the very heavy burden of the kaumātua [elders] carrying that history, you respect that when you are from here."

Leah presented herself as taking on just some of the "burden" of this history for a short time. Even then, those who regularly carried the weight were fearful for her safety. Throughout our call, Leah carefully navigated her positionality as Pākehā. Despite having grown up with an "everyday awareness" of these histories, Leah emphatically stressed that for Māori knowledge bearers, this history was a heavier burden. 'Heavy shoulders' emphasises the weight of these histories and the challenge of their interpretation in a way that can be experienced by non-Indigenous interpreters but is lived by Indigenous interpreters.

6.5 “The Proper History, the Good and the Bad”

Historical interpretation involves navigating the reactions of partners and audiences to histories that are difficult for them to hear. The former curator of Aotearoa’s National Museum, The Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Matariki Williams (Ngāi Tūhoe, Ngāti Whakaue, and Ngāti Hauiti) predicted that the new *Histories Curriculum* would face resistance. We spoke in 2023, and she drew on her experience interpreting Aotearoa’s colonial histories to highlight the enormous effort required to shift dominant interpretations even slightly:

I ring Matariki on Zoom from the café of the National Library of New Zealand Te Puna Mātauranga O Aotearoa in Wellington. This large, open space is buzzing with library staff catching up with colleagues and workers from the Parliament opposite who have come to grab coffee. I had been introduced to Matariki by Steve from the Ministry for Culture and Heritage Manatū Taonga, where Matariki recently secured the role of Senior Historian. I am struck again by how interconnected heritage sites, schools and political departments are in Aotearoa.

Matariki shares, “I think Steve mentioned to you that before this job, I worked at Te Papa as a Curator in the Mātauranga Māori [Māori knowledge] team.⁵⁸ We reinterpreted the interpretation around the cannon from the HMB Endeavour that is on permanent display.⁵⁹ The label had never been changed. The story is that it was tossed overboard. The interpretation was from the cannon’s perspective, ‘oh no I got thrown overboard’. It was found and gifted to various countries around the world in acknowledgement of the previous anniversary. Again, a sterile, innocent and childlike story.

We reinterpreted this - it is a weapon; it is not this cute thing. There are records of it being shot at Māori that were retreating.⁶⁰ Cook was sent out

⁵⁸ See Riley et al., *Te KoParaPara*, 32–33.

⁵⁹ For more information on the cannon please See ‘Cannon, from HMB Endeavour,’ *Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa*, accessed June 25, 2025, <https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/object/58886>.

⁶⁰ See ‘Cannon, from HMB Endeavour.’

on his scientific voyage with this underlying subversive aim to discover land for colonisation. To see if it was fit for colonisation. But he was always instructed not to use violence, but the cannon is a tangible example of going against that. We [in the new interpretation] very much position it as a weapon. Tony Ballantyne [Aotearoa historian] talks about this, 'Pākehā have somewhat domesticated Cook' and removed all the badness from him and presented him as a heroic figure, which is hard.⁶¹

It took 18 months for us to change the interpretation, just 400 words, because we laboured over everything, it started in a politically charged environment. We consulted with lots of people but too many perspectives in 400 words is difficult. We also put on the label a photograph of one of the monuments to Cook that got graffitied. We heard one of the front-of-house staff hated the interpretation. Thought we were politicising. The idea that neutrality is one possible, and two desirable. That we have taken and changed something innocent and naive."

Matariki described an obvious characteristic of the cannon - it is a weapon. Yet she emphasised that this simple reality was challenging to interpret. It is, as Macdonald's theory of 'difficult heritage' predicts, hard to interpret the cannon as a weapon because it is hugely disruptive to the dominant idea of Cook as a non-violent explorer.⁶² This 'domesticated' Cook is intimately connected to a mythologised, non-violent Aotearoa foundation story.⁶³

Matariki explained that a significant challenge for interpreting nuanced histories is the naturalisation of dominant, sanitised historical narratives as neutral. The front-of-house staff member accused Matariki of "politicising" history, asserting that she was being influenced by contemporary politics rather than interpreting an authentic historical narrative. However, Matariki was interpreting a history exactly as old as the cannon. One that has been silenced and repressed. Matariki suggested I read Somerville's essay that starts with Cook's cannon. Somerville writes of the sanitised, dominant Cook narrative 'If these are the facts you start with, you are already deep into your argument before you begin'.⁶⁴ As Matariki emphatically

⁶¹ StuffNZ, 'Tuia 250: Captain Cook.'

⁶² Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage*.

⁶³ StuffNZ, "Tuia 250: Captain Cook, hero or villain?"

⁶⁴ Somerville, *Two Hundred and Fifty Ways*, 15.

argued, a sanitised, edited account that denies the cannon is a weapon that was fired is not neutral.

Interpreters of colonial histories are tasked with teaching facts, cultivating affective engagement, and driving a change in partners' and audiences' affective relationships with historical narratives that have been deeply mythologised. Somerville writes, 'Salvaging weapons... It might seem a little awkward but it's probably more honest than compulsory happy stories of happy bicultural happiness'.⁶⁵ The difficulty of interpreting colonial history is exacerbated by the need to redefine what history is difficult. Part of the Indigenous interpreters' work is to teach that a sanitised history is difficult, dishonest and harmful. The 2019 graffiti on Cook's statue made visible these contradictory interpretations. Cook proudly stands atop and makes his claim on the globe, with the soon-to-be wiped off reminder that this was an act of theft, not exploration.



Figure 9a and b: Defaced Statue of Cook “This is our Land”, “Thief Pākehā”

The New Zealand Herald, 'Captain James Cook statue vandalised with the words 'Thief Pākehā' in Gisborne,' *NZ Herald*, June 11, 2019, accessed July 23, 2025, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/kahu/captain-james-cook-statue-vandalised-with-the-words-thief-pakeha-in-gisborne/65YBKRF6JJ6SUG4AB3D7DFQXWY>.

A historical interpreter is not only tasked with making an audience feel, or affectively engage with this history, but also with making them feel differently about it. For *Mayflower 400*, this described a well-understood and central challenge of the historical interpreters' practice. The

⁶⁵ Somerville, *Two Hundred and Fifty Ways*, 9.

Mayflower voyage is deeply associated with a positive narrative of America's founding, which is reinforced annually through the celebration of Thanksgiving. Dylan reflected on what Americans know about colonial history:

“They know more about colonial history, but they know this kind of fluffed up version, like you say, they see themselves as the good guys. So, a happy version and it is not the real version of colonial history, and they know absolutely nothing about Native history.”

As with Cook, interpreting the Mayflower's obvious connections to the aims of the British Empire, can be received as an unacceptable challenge to a mythologised narrative that reinforces the nation's benevolent foundation story. Theories of 'difficult heritage' and history describe a challenge faced by Indigenous interpreters as they seek to educate visitors or students who are affectively invested in misrepresentative histories.⁶⁶ These theories fail to recognise that sanitised and misrepresentative historical accounts are themselves difficult histories for Indigenous interpreters. Hartman lamented, Americans “have learnt that the history of America starts with Christopher Columbus – we have more than 12,000 years of history in the Americas”. He exclaimed with frustration, “I am so tired of our story starting with the arrival of the Europeans.”

The *Histories Curriculum* confronted Aotearoa educators and students with histories that have been suppressed and silenced, the histories of tangata whenua, the New Zealand Wars and local histories of segregation and discrimination. Matariki emphasised that this is part of “a larger shift...having a critical conversation isn't seen as a new thing anymore, rather than ignoring 800 years of Māori history to jump straight to English arrival.” However, she emphasised that this transformation was not complete:

“It is not perfect in any sense of the word, it still feels radical because it is such a shift from the original, and also it is still a relatively new thing just to be so overt about issues of colonisation like that.”

I asked Matariki whether she felt that many people shared the views of the front-of-house staff member who accused her of politicising Cook's history. She responded, “I don't know – I choose not to engage in that discourse anymore.” This statement has a powerful double and interrelated meaning: a refusal to affectively engage with the narratives of those who reject

⁶⁶ Macdonald, 'Is 'Difficult Heritage' Still.'; Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage*.

Māori history, and a refusal within her interpretive practice to further their colonial narratives. I suggest that “heavy shoulders” powerfully articulates the challenging work of interpreting against established national narratives, and of revealing the realities of colonial violences within positive national tales.

6.6 Not Lashing out at Guests

“Heavy issues” are not interpreted uniformly by Indigenous interpreters, who can have vastly different perspectives and personal experiences of this history. Megan explained that differences in historical interpretations can result in fraught exchanges between community members. She recounted that she had delivered a paper at a conference where she described the regional language as dead. In response, a Māori woman stood up and accused her of being offensive. Megan reflected, “You have to have a thick skin to do this work, a tough backbone”. Indigenous interpreters also differed over the correct affective approach to historical interpretation, in particular the extent to which personal affect should be shared with the visitor. Darius described interpreting “heavy issues” without “taking it out on the guests” as one of the most significant and challenging requirements of “heavy shoulders”:

A lot of my cousins come up to me in the country store and say, “Oh, hey Darius, can I work where you work [Plimoth Patuxet Museum]?” I look at them and I say, okay, I know you are good at making baskets, I know you are good at woodwork, BUT can you talk to hundreds, if not thousands, of guests from all around the world about slavery, about cultural genocide, about colonisation, without getting upset at the guest. And they will look at me like [opens his eyes wide] “urm, I don’t know if I can do that”, and the reason that they say that is because it is real for our people, it still hurts inside.⁶⁷

Interpreting personal histories requires significant affective work. By managing their affect, and not getting upset at the guest, Indigenous interpreters make a positive impression that challenges stereotypes. This affective management is vital precisely because the visitors perceive a single Indigenous interpreter as representative of all Indigenous peoples. Although the qualities of “heavy shoulders” appeared across Indigenous interpreters’ practice, affect was enacted differently, even by those Darius had hired. Andrew and Dylan described

⁶⁷ Coombs, ‘Challenging perceptions of Wampanoag culture.’

themselves as the ‘bad boys’ of Plimoth Patuxet Museum because they stressed the value of holding guests to account. As I quoted in the introductory chapter, Andrew emphasised, “I don’t care if you are upset. I don’t care if you are offended. It means you are finally feeling something”. What is considered appropriate affect in their practice differed not only between interpreters but was deeply impacted by the partners’ or visitors’ intent, knowledge and age. Darius’ own stance on this was not consistent, and he would at times call out visitor behaviour, avoid questions or reply sternly. In the opening vignette, Hartman spoke emphatically and with visible sadness about the loss of his Indigenous language. A question later, he was animatedly describing his favourite foods. While Hartman was confronting the school students with this history as difficult, he was careful to meet them where they are, matching their excited tone, knowledge level and mindful of their age. All of these affective approaches require “heavy shoulders”.

Affective management by the historical interpreter does not always involve a suppression of affect. Indigenous interpreters powerfully shared the continuing harm of colonialism and settler colonialism. During the Wampanoag Perspectives Project in Nottinghamshire, England, the Museum organised a town hall meeting where locals could ask questions of the Wampanoag interpreters. Mark, one of the four Mashpee Wampanoag interpreters, wept and shook as he shared the history of the residential school system:

Mark breaths to steady himself. “As Troy was saying, it is about our ancestors, the ones that came before us, the ones that stood up, the ones that suffered. We look at all the children today, and there was a point yesterday when the schoolchildren were asked by Hartman, ‘Do you have a graveyard next to your school?’” Mark pauses, tears forming in his eyes, “And the children couldn’t answer that.”

“When they took our children.”

“When they took them to those boarding schools,” his voice breaks. “We lost a lot of souls, there were a lot of children that were buried,” He struggles to speak, “At those schools, that never came back.” He leans back and cries out, “that were never able to grow up and to have a family.

That's why this is so emotional. The things, the atrocities that happened to our people over the centuries were just horrible, and today we celebrate the glory of false holidays!" Mark hands back the microphone, crying.

Mark's pain was clear throughout his act of historical interpretation. He was teaching a shocked English audience about a global colonial practice. In this town hall meeting with an adult audience, Mark was able to engage with this emotive topic more comprehensively than Hartman could with the school children. The organiser acknowledged his emotions, the power of his speech and thanked him for sharing. They then moved on, and Mark prepared to navigate the next question.

6.7 The Risk of Historical Interpretation

"Heavy shoulders" describes the effort of interpreting "heavy issues", navigating a lack of knowledge about Indigenous peoples, as well as engaging with partners who intentionally misrepresent Indigenous communities. Indigenous historical interpreters emphasised that there was a real risk that misrepresentations of Indigenous peoples and their histories could be reinforced if their interpretations were misunderstood or intentionally edited. Historical interpretation thereby carries not only transformative potential but significant risk. My interview with Darius about "heavy shoulders" began with him joining our Zoom call understandably furious. As the Zoom call connected, he immediately began explaining,

"Darius, Darius, they were saying, will you march in the parade, will you get your folks to march? I was saying, no. We are not going to march. We don't march in the Thanksgiving parade. It is not a celebration for us. We are not going to put ourselves out there like that. I went down there for a couple of years and did a tent; it was an educational pavilion that told the true history of Thanksgiving. That is the only reason I am going to be down there, to do something like that, which I did with a few other people. So, our rule of thumb as Wampanoag people is that we don't march in that parade. Period. Actually my wife and other people went up to Plymouth that day to do a silent protest for our people.

And this guy, this organiser, what he did, he hired Native people from up West and he put them in front of the parade as First Nations. It wasn't our

people at all. He bought himself some Indians basically. He bought himself Indians for the event.

I am sure he put them up in hotels and bought them nice dinners and paid them so much money to come out and embarrass,” he pauses breathing through the anger, “embarrass our culture. And our people are not too happy about that right now, we are fuming. And it is not going to be pretty. We have written them letters in all the papers saying you don’t do that.

We as Wampanoag people, this is our homeland. We have already told you why we are not going to do it. We didn’t just say no, we gave a reason why we are not going to march in that parade.

You’re still going to go around us and still hire Indians who are not from here. That is what people do a lot, if they don’t get an answer from one person they go to the next one, on to the next one, to the next one, till they get the answer they want.

We are not going to tolerate that! It is so embarrassing, seeing them smiling and laughing,” Darius breaths out, shaking his head, “they all did it for financial gain for themselves. For them it is just about being Indigenous people, not recognising us who are still here, that there are Wampanoag Indigenous people that are still living, doing things... So, we sent a really hostile... I wouldn’t say hostile, but a correct letter to the newspapers in Plymouth. To let them know that if this happens again, it is not going to be pretty.”

Following this interview, I spoke with a journalist who had covered this Thanksgiving parade. He shared, with anger, that the organiser had falsely informed him that the Indigenous participants were Wampanoag. The organisers’ lies sought to erase the Wampanoag Nation’s significant and historical commitment not to walk in the Thanksgiving parade. As discussed in chapter two, during the 350th (1970) anniversary of the Mayflower voyage in Plymouth,

Massachusetts, Wampanoag leader Wamsutta was rejected from the US celebrations. He planned to deliver a speech that challenged a Mayflower narrative of colonial benevolence, recounting the violent history of colonisation and the ongoing marginalisation of the Wampanoag. Protesting this censorship, Wamsutta decreed a National Day of Mourning, which Darius' family observed annually. Like the 350th organisers, the 2022 American organiser engaged in an act of shameful historical editing to present a false image of Wampanoag support and compliance.

The organiser's decision to pay Indigenous peoples to represent the Wampanoag echoes a colonial practice. Colonists would often pursue land treaties with individuals who did not have authority to sign over these resources. One of many examples was the 1835 Treaty of New Echota.⁶⁸ Protesting the encroachment of colonists into Cherokee lands, a 'delegation was appointed on October 23, 1835, by the General Council of the [Cherokee] nation.' They were given authority to negotiate on behalf of the Nation and ultimately went to Washington City.⁶⁹ While they were away, 'Rev. John F. Schermerhorn, and certain individual Cherokee' drew up an unauthorised treaty.⁷⁰ Against the Cherokee Nation's majority wishes this treaty was ratified. Ultimately, the false treaty led 'to the forced removal of Cherokees from their southeastern homelands to Indian Territory west of the Mississippi River.'⁷¹ In 1836 Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, John Ross, writes to the Senate and House of Representatives in protest:

We are denationalized; we are disfranchised. We are deprived of membership in the human family! We have neither land nor home, nor resting place that can be called our own... The instrument in question is not the act of our Nation; we are not parties to its covenants; it has not received the sanction of our people.⁷²

When Darius points to a pattern of asking "the next one, on to the next one, to the next one," he is highlighting a settler-colonial practice that is hundreds of years old.

⁶⁸ 'The Treaty of New Echota and the Trail of Tears,' *NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources*, December 29, 2016, accessed April 10th, 2025, <https://www.dncr.nc.gov/blog/2016/12/29/treaty-new-echota-and-trail-tears>.

⁶⁹ NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, 'The Treaty of New Echota.'

⁷⁰ NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, 'The Treaty of New Echota.'

⁷¹ NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, 'The Treaty of New Echota.'

⁷² 'Chief John Ross Protests the Treaty of New Echota,' *National Park Service*, accessed June 25, 2025, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/protest-treaty-of-new-echota.htm>.

I witnessed Indigenous interpreters consider, and reconsider, whether a partner sharing a misrepresentation was an opportunity to educate. Alongside a huge number of positive exchanges, Indigenous interpreters also confronted explicitly racist comments and questions from individuals who would refuse to learn. In Nottinghamshire, after a long day interpreting the wetu to the public, the Wampanoag interpreters and their English colleagues were enjoying drinks in a local pub. A Conservative Councillor approached Troy:

“I heard we have some American visitors”, exclaims the Conservative Councillor.

Troy explains smilingly, “Oh no, I am Native American. I am the Medicine man of the Herring Pond community”

The Councillor looks at him, “Ah, yeah, don’t you guys scalp people?”

The Councillor’s statement was one of three racist incidents involving serving Conservative Party members during the Wampanoag interpreters’ week-long stay in the town. In the previous chapter, I concluded that a lack of knowledge and an absence of a felt connection to colonial history shape how English people of all political parties engage with the history of the Mayflower voyage. These incidents show that a culture that normalises, and perhaps even encourages the expression of racist views can develop in certain political parties. As the Museum is run by the local government, the Wampanoag were officially the guests of the Conservative-led Council. However, the Councillor’s behaviour was rejected by the Museum staff who were appalled and stressed that it went against their educational mission to dismantle misrepresentations about Indigenous people. The Councillor’s statement explicitly evoked a colonial narrative of ‘Indian savagery’, echoing a false ‘notion of racial difference’ through an erasure of English colonial violence.⁷³ Who introduced scalping to the Americas is much debated, even so, primary accounts show the practice was furthered and applied by English, French and Dutch colonists.⁷⁴ As serving members of local governments, representing the Conservative Party in power at the time, this colonial narrative, which dismisses Indigenous peoples as violent, could be understood as the official narrative of the area. However, an analysis only of these moments, common in studies of the culture wars, would overlook the significant tension between the politician’s behaviour and the English heritage workers’ genuine interest in, and openness to, the Wampanoag interpreters.⁷⁵ The

⁷³ Pessah, ‘Violent representations: hostile Indians,’ 1630.

⁷⁴ William S. Kiser, *The Business of Killing Indians Scalp Warfare and the Violent Conquest of North America* (Yale University Books, 2025).

⁷⁵ Mitchell, *Imperial Nostalgia*.

Museum saw its highest numbers of visitors ever, with locals, including families, schools and religious groups coming to learn from the Wampanoag interpreters. Lasting friendships formed between the Museum staff, locals and the Wampanoag interpreters, and there have since been many trips across the Atlantic.

The response of the four Wampanoag interpreters to the Councillor's comments demonstrated that they were practiced at responding to such racism. The next day, I watched as they recorded and shared a message on the Bassetlaw District Council Facebook page with a local photographer. They stood around a sign that had been on the heritage site all week, challenging stereotypes and informing visitors of appropriate language. The sign was suggested by the Wampanoag, and pre-empted visitors sharing common misrepresentations that would be hurtful and create barriers to effective teaching. The four men stood, and Troy spoke, only occasionally looking down at his notes:

“We were invited here as guests to bring forth our education and knowledge and build this wetu here. We came to put stereotypes to rest. So, on this sign here, there are different things, no whooping, and preferential language that we go by. Last night at the pub, one of your Councilman approached me and he used some offensive language. But that is why we are here. To educate the public and tell the people what happened when the Mayflower left here and went to America, and ‘discovered’ America.” Troy moves his hands in air quotes and scrunches his face at the incorrect word.

“But we were already here. We should add scalping to this sign, that is offensive language, that is something we did not introduce, that came later when people came to our land. We are asking for the public to come out and learn about us as a people, our culture, our customs and we would like to turn this into an educational moment and turn a negative into a positive opportunity.”

Such racist incidents shape the everyday lives of Indigenous historical interpreters and exacerbate the affective challenge of their work. Troy's statement reminded the audience of the stakes of historical interpretation for Indigenous people. He articulated the goal of the Wampanoag Perspectives Project in Nottinghamshire Museum, England, as challenging

harmful misrepresentations of Indigenous people that shape their everyday lives. Within this statement, Troy identified multiple risks associated with historical interpretation. Firstly, the sign they stood around revealed that they and the Museum predicted that visitors could use misrepresentative and harmful language. Secondly, Troy's repetition of "our culture, our customs" positions the Wampanoag interpreters as representatives of their Nations. He therefore explained that by coming to meet them, local people would develop a broader understanding of Wampanoag culture. However, the Conservative Councillor's ignorant comment highlighted how others could mobilise their status as representatives, to apply a misrepresentation to all Indigenous peoples: "don't you guys...". Thirdly, the Wampanoag interpreters carefully managed their affect so as not to alienate other locals from visiting and learning. Troy's transition from "he used some offensive language" to "But that is why we are here" shows his experience with affective management. Troy explained that it is because those comments are so distressing that he and his cousins had travelled far to interpret their histories. Yet, to "turn this into an educational moment", he affectively reframed the incident from a "negative into a positive". Troy differentiates between the Councillor's behaviour and the views of locals and the English partners; his friendly tone and open body language encouraged locals to visit the Museum and critically engage with these histories.

When the Wampanoag interpreters arrived, they did so into a political space where historical narratives had not only been passed down from the colonial era but had also been newly interpreted within contemporary political debate. The visiting Wampanoag interpreters understood this through a framework of American politics, and on several occasions, they described the Conservatives as the Republicans. Navigating the English political climate is another affective challenge of the Wampanoag historical interpreters' work; this was most apparent in their discussion immediately after the above statement was filmed. The Wampanoag interpreters spoke with the Museum photographer, who was organising the recording and sharing of their response to the Councillor's comment on the Council's Facebook page. They discussed whether they wanted to re-shoot or edit their response to no longer identify that it was a councillor who had made the comment:

Mark responds, with his arms crossed, "It happened to Troy it is up to him." Stephen, Mark's son-in-law and a key organiser of the Wampanoag Perspectives Project continues, "It's not political, I think you should call a bigot a bigot."

The English photographer listens and nods, but empathetically explains, “I just think you will be starting a lot of political infighting.”

I interject, “To be fair though, why is that a problem for them? They leave in two days. It’s not like they are affiliated with a political party here; they are not British. Also, this is not the first incident they have had with the Conservative Party since arriving.”

Stephen considers my comment and responds, “I think it does matter who says it. I understand that if these parties are like our political parties at home, they absolutely look down on us and who we are. They are supported with these views by the party as a whole, so for them it is funny. So, I’d say leave the Councilman’s title in the video.”

The photographer listens attentively and looks around at the group, clarifying his point, though careful not to impose it. “Of course, I just worry your message will get lost in the infighting; it’s very fraught here.”

Hartman, who had been quietly listening, speaks up. Hartman is an activist and has far greater experience working with and against political figures than his cousins. “I think there is value to what he is saying.” He gestures to the photographer in a supportive manner. “The message will get lost in the infighting. That is what will happen. We want more people to be educated. If that is the outcome we want, is it worthwhile? Maybe the political fray is worth it. We are not putting words in this Councillor’s mouth – he said it. I think there is value in listening to what he [the photographer] has to say.”

Hartman pauses and states more firmly, “However, the Councillor speaks with the voice of the community. Local people should know that your

town officials are insulting your invited guests. That should be the message. Do not insult your invited guests! You represent more than just yourself. You represent the citizens of the town. If you have this opinion, you can keep it to yourself, this is an elected representative. I think if you leave it in the video as Councillor, which is perfectly fine, you should invite them to come up to see us.

Troy, who looks exhausted, “Yes, I did that. I am happy to keep it as is.”

The photographer puts away the camera, “Okay brilliant. We will post on the Council’s Facebook first.”

This exchange revealed the differences in the four Wampanoag interpreters’ approaches. As they debate the best response, we see the hard, creative work of historical interpretation. There is a significant contrast between the Conservative Councillor making a racist comment in a matter of seconds and the enormous amount of work the Wampanoag interpreters then did to respond. They created a statement, debating best practices for conveying their educational message and navigating their place in the English political landscape. They then shared it as a video. In the exchange, I suggested that because they are neither English nor affiliated with a government-run institution, the Wampanoag partners should speak freely. However, Hartman reminded us that their statement must align with their goals of educating and challenging stereotypes. Indigenous interpreters bore the weight of critically engaging with how their message would be received in the context of the contemporary local and national political debates.

The Conservative Councillor’s comment continues a long colonial history of labelling Indigenous peoples as violent and unthinking.⁷⁶ However, the current political climate further complicated the Indigenous interpreter’s response. The photographer helping them film the statement accurately described the local political situation as “very fraught”. Following local support for the Brexit vote, the town had transformed from historically Labour-voting to a Conservative majority. Hartman spoke from his experience of American politics, when he warned that in making a statement, they risked their educational message being lost in

⁷⁶ Pessah, ‘Violent representations: hostile Indians.’

political infighting. All the Indigenous interpreters differentiated the views of the public from those of the Councillor. Most explicitly, Hartman framed the need for the statement to inform the public that their officials were not representing their values. The town responded with support and deep concern, and the Museum received the highest number of visitors they had ever had. The engagement with *Mayflower 400* in Nottinghamshire and Plymouth demonstrated significant interest from heritage partners and local audiences in learning about British colonial and Indigenous histories, as well as building Indigenous partnerships, even in the context of fraught political climates and despite those in local government sharing misrepresentative histories.

6.8 Carrying the Concerns of the Community

Indigenous interpreters who chose to engage with *Mayflower 400* described carrying the heavy burden of their friends' and community's concerns. Their previous experiences of being misrepresented to further a positive national narrative made Indigenous historical interpreters apprehensive about participating in Mayflower commemorations. Dylan and Andrew, descendants of the Shinnecock Nation, who were at the time working as interpreters at Plimoth Patuxet Museum, refused to participate in any commemorative activities in Turtle Island. They shared their reasoning during my Master's research in 2019:

Dylan explained that they have been asked repeatedly to take part in the [Turtle Island] Mayflower commemorations. Andrew, as though rephrasing his brother's statement, said, "they want us to sing, dance and be happy". Dylan continued the thought, "they don't want us to talk about infectious diseases," he paused for greater impact, "it doesn't play well." Andrew laughed frustratedly and poked the fire, sending a wave of smoke through the nush wetu [three fire traditional home].⁷⁷

Andrew and Dylan expected that Mayflower commemorative event organisers would censor their historical interpretations to further the misrepresentative Thanksgiving narrative, as organisers had done to Wamsutta 50-years previously. As such they chose not to engage.

Paula, an experienced Mashpee Wampanoag historical interpreter and key advisor to *Mayflower 400*, explained that joining the partnership carried potentially "huge risk" but "I

⁷⁷ Mulcahey, 'The Beginning of the End,' 107.

had a sense I could make some kind of difference”. She emphasised that she needed to work hard to present an “accurate” and “balanced” history and demonstrate to her community that *Mayflower 400* would be a worthwhile platform.

I interview Paula in her kitchen as she makes pancakes, the pan sizzles with bacon, and she pulls out an industrial-sized pot of maple syrup. Two corgis are chasing the hungry kids as they throw on swimsuits and grab plates.

“Who voiced concerns about engaging with *Mayflower 400*?” I ask.

“Other people, educators and historians in my community, Wampanoag community”, Paula explains as she passes out plates.

“Because they knew what it could become?” I ask.

“The biggest fear was that I would make a commitment and work with these people, and they would censure the history. That they would take what I gave them, and it would be convoluted somehow to reflect a better outcome of colonialism and marginalise what happened to us. One person in particular who really, really, she actually made me cry at one point, because she rejected it so strongly.” Paula pauses and then speaks more firmly, “I got to the point, after I had been to the UK and I had been working with these people enough, of having a pretty good sense that they wanted to represent the history fairly. So, there was that. Fast forward five years, and she [the community member who rejected the work] acknowledges she was wrong and shared her congratulations.” Paula nods, “I had to prove myself.”

I respond with surprise, “That is a huge pressure, the responsibility to the history and your community.”

Paula explains carefully, “The goal was to do it successfully, not for me, but also for my community. To see the story told accurately and in balance. I, as a young person, was a historian, an interpreter at Plimoth Patuxet Museum, and I dealt with so much ignorance from the public.” She emphasises the words, and I feel her frustration.

Paula continues, “Earlier, when I was seven or eight years old, I was in a second-grade classroom, and the teacher was teaching the story of Thanksgiving. One of the students asked, ‘What happened to the Indians?’ The teacher just responded dismissively ‘They are all dead’.

I raised my hand,

I said, no! They are not dead.

I am Wampanoag, I am here.

It is almost as if I have gone through my whole life waving my hand and saying I am here.

Paula balanced the value of asserting Wampanoag presence through *Mayflower 400* and her community’s concerns. Ultimately, she found that *Mayflower 400* “wanted to represent the history fairly”. Her experiences of erasure deeply informed the English exhibitions, and Wampanoag presence became a key message within the historical interpretations shared by *Mayflower 400*’s English interpreters. ‘We are still here’ was the first statement 1000s of visitors saw as they entered the touring ‘Wampum: Stories from the Shells of Native America’ exhibition beginning in Plymouth, England. The Thanksgiving narrative, which seeks to present a benign and positive story of British and American colonisation, erases the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island so profoundly that a small child is required to contradict a teacher just for her and her family to be recognised.

Historical interpretation is a powerful method to assert Wampanoag presence, but Paula acknowledged and worked hard to mitigate its risks. She described the ongoing pain of dealing “with so much ignorance” in her past heritage site roles. Her experience echoed Darius’s description of interpreters as exposed, almost in a sacrificial position to the public, “facing millions of people”. Darius stated that ultimately the cancellation of many of the US commemorative events due to Covid “didn’t bother him” and he felt “relieved” that his people hadn’t been “forced into all those programmes that they didn’t want to be in [in the US].” Despite having the potential to challenge flawed historical narratives, *Mayflower 400* and the *Histories Curriculum* are not uncomplicated platforms and carry the risk of re-entrenching colonial historical interpretations.

6.9 Conclusion

A profound absence of knowledge of colonial history, and deep infiltration of misrepresentations of Indigenous people, leaves the burden of cultivating and sharing historical knowledge predominantly on Indigenous partners. My research reveals that within *Mayflower 400* and the *Histories Curriculum*, Indigenous interpreters were relied upon to have far greater expertise and broader creative skillsets than their non-Indigenous partners. Darius’s theory of “heavy shoulders” makes a significant contribution to our understanding of this interpretive work as an affective practice, and to the unique challenges faced by Indigenous historical interpreters. The structures of colonialism and settler colonialism render the role of the Indigenous historical interpreter, with its incredible expectation of knowledge, inaccessible to many Indigenous people and deeply challenging to those who do practice it. Through “heavy shoulders”, historical interpretation is shown to carry both the power to improve the contemporary treatment of Indigenous peoples and risks to the interpreter and their communities. Ultimately, “heavy shoulders” highlights the urgency of this work, and the vital potential to evoke meaningful change by transforming partners’ and visitors’ affective relationships with British colonial and Indigenous histories.

Part 3| Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusion

In this conclusion, I reflect on my key findings, highlight opportunities for further research, and consider the English and Aotearoa Culture Wars that simmered alongside and after my fieldwork. After this conclusion, I have attached a guide for non-Indigenous heritage workers and teachers, based on my observations, that can be read independently of this thesis. Within the guide, I present five actionable steps to sensitively develop Indigenous – non-Indigenous partnerships for the accurate and nuanced interpretation of British colonial and Indigenous histories.

This study contributes to debates on affect by demonstrating that historical interpretation in both heritage and educational settings constitutes a distinct and neglected affective practice. In examining interpretation, and so historical learning and teaching, as affective practice, I reveal a mechanism of the disavowal and forgetting of colonial histories, an affective amnesia or affective disengagement. I reveal how this is experienced, recognised and transformed through the collision of distinct affective repertoires within Indigenous and non-Indigenous partnerships. I argue that the affective challenge of historical interpretation cannot be understood without appreciating the unequal burden taken on by Indigenous interpreters. I propose that “heavy shoulders” offers a theorisation that goes beyond emotional labour and affective regimes, capturing the specific demands of interpreting a history that remains unresolved and continues to cause harm. My research provides insight into the role of affect within collaborative and participatory work. I call on both researchers and non-Indigenous interpreters to critically engage with, and actively support, the greater affective demands placed on their Indigenous partners.

Examining the work of historical interpretation supports a deep analysis of colonial memory. My research demonstrates that profound gaps in colonial knowledge and misrepresentations of history shape the understanding of non-Indigenous interpreters within heritage sites and schools. I show that colonial amnesia and nostalgia coexist. Through an affective analysis of the interpreters’ practice I identify a third form of amnesia, an affective detachment from British colonial and Indigenous histories which I term affective amnesia. Affective amnesia

explains why educated interpreters, who were critical of England's colonial histories and valued their teaching, still failed to perceive Mayflower and Aotearoa histories as contested, difficult or living. So, affective amnesia precipitates another affective reaction, the non-Indigenous interpreters' feeling of distress when their Indigenous partners drew their attention to the violent realities and lasting legacies of these histories that they had overlooked. The non-Indigenous interpreters' distress was often not the result of this accurate history posing a challenge to their national narratives. Instead, their discomfort stemmed from discovering their complicity in the suppression of these histories, which was antithetical to their personal and political values. Indigenous–non-Indigenous partnerships drove changes in historical understanding not only through the provision of historical information but by transforming non-Indigenous interpreters' affective relationship with history. By encountering Indigenous partners' sense of this history as living, contemporary and harmful, non-Indigenous partners came to engage with their own affective detachment critically. What my research shows is that the challenge of interpretive practice, and its potential to transform historical understandings lies in its identity as an affective practice.

An analysis of the affect of historical interpreters' practice also reveals the unique and unequal affective work undertaken by Indigenous partners. Profound historical silences, the dominance of nostalgic narratives and affective amnesia place the burden of educating predominantly on the shoulders of an exclusive group of knowledgeable Indigenous interpreters. While *Mayflower 400* and the *Histories Curriculum*, with their focus on Indigenous partnerships, were framed positively by many Indigenous interpreters, they were personally required to undertake considerable work to meet these expectations. Darius's theory of "heavy shoulders" drew particular attention to the affective challenge for those who interpret personal, violent histories with lasting, harmful legacies. Indigenous and non-Indigenous interpreters' affective relationship with and experience of interpreting British colonial and Indigenous histories were strikingly different. "Heavy shoulders" takes seriously the notion that colonial histories shape contemporary experiences, revealing that Indigenous interpreters navigate colonial misrepresentations in their everyday work and lives.

Through this thesis, I make three methodological contributions: a transdisciplinary methodology, multi-sited comparative fieldwork, and my Collaborative Consent Process. Firstly, I chose a transdisciplinary methodology to support an analysis of holistic Indigenous

cultures. I show that by specifying our methods and considering their disciplinary backgrounds, we can better identify and critically separate methods from their extractive colonial histories. Secondly, my comparison of two geographically distant sites reveals shared challenges. I suggest that certain ways of forgetting, suppressing and relating to history were embedded into British colonialism. I hope that my choice of field sites will encourage further comparative research and that the ‘heart[s] of empire’ will learn from the historical interpretation work of settler-colonial states.¹ Thirdly, I contribute my Collaborative Consent Process, inspired by the wampum belt, for future researchers to apply and critique. Through this consent process, I embedded relationality into the production of this thesis. In some cases, my commitment to receive feedback on participants’ quotations, which I shared in the context of my final argument, happened quickly within ongoing conversations. In other cases, the process of re-engaging for sign off took months. The limitations of the consent process was that it placed another demand on participants’ time as I sent multiple pages for their feedback. Even so, the process supported me to deliver to the research values of ‘respect, relevance, reciprocity and responsibility’, at every stage of my research.² My commitment to share the participants’ quotations for sign off before publication built trust during my interviews and participants spoke more openly and shared personal experiences. During the writing stage, knowing I would soon be accountable to my participants, I spent a great deal of time returning to interviews to ensure I captured their meaning. The feedback stage built further trust and in many cases I received further insights that enriched my analysis. This Collaborative Consent Process, as with building any relationship, was slow and meaningful.

Grouping diverse professional and volunteer roles by their shared practice of historical interpretation enables me to analyse and compare ambitious historical education projects that engaged a hugely varied group of professionals. This broad term – historical interpreter – supports the identification and investigation of the experiences of a group of non-Indigenous educators and heritage workers newly interpreting sensitive and contested British colonial and Indigenous histories. The term also allows me to investigate the work of Indigenous partners, who advised both schools and heritage sites and consistently adapted their job titles to meet the extensive demands of their non-Indigenous partners. Through follow-up interviews, I saw the richness of individual interpreters’ experiences, as the work shaped their

¹ Thrush, *Indigenous London*.

² Kirkness and Barnhardt, ‘First Nations and Higher Education.’

professional lives, and their sense of personal, national and political identity. I suggest there is enormous potential for a study of a single Indigenous and non-Indigenous interpreter from *Mayflower 400* or the *Histories Curriculum*. Anthropologist at Durham University, Thomas Yarrow's book on architects, in which he predominantly follows a single architect, would provide a perfect model for such research.³ Through this focused, almost biographical study, greater attention could be paid to the complex influences of changing local and national forces, and the on-the-ground experience of the Culture Wars.

I suggest that my theoretical findings could guide studies of other contested histories. As with colonial amnesia and nostalgia, affective amnesia could be applied to an analysis of historical interpreters', or their audiences', relationships with other histories of colonisation, enslavement, treaty violation and disease. I specifically define affect as it emerged in the practice of my participants, I suggest that affective amnesia could be adapted to other field sites in a similar way. Although Darius's theory of "heavy shoulders" explicitly focused on Indigenous experience, I suggest it could be meaningfully applied to an analysis of the affective experiences of other groups who interpret histories that are personal and continue to cause harm. While, through defining affect, I began to consider how affect constructed the boundaries of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous person, I am excited by the potential for this study to be furthered in conversation with a growth of research on 'racialized emotions.'⁴ I suggest that applying affective amnesia alongside such studies of the 'affective dimensions of whiteness' would help to question how distinct affective relationships with colonial history develop?⁵ I suggest that affective amnesia, as well as my conclusion that multiple forms of affective detachment coexist, offers a useful framework for analysing the role of fear and anxiety in affective detachment and a lack of engagement in contested histories.

My thesis has raised several questions that offer avenues for further research. My choice of 'historical interpreter' left open the question – how does professional role shape the experience of historical interpretation? Ethnographic studies and autoethnographic accounts of curators and schoolteachers show the rich potential for a further study of specific

³ Thomas Yarrow, *Architects: Portraits of a Practice* (Cornell University Press, 2019).

⁴ Jialei Jiang and Jason Tham, 'Race, affect, and marginalized communities: navigating racialized emotions in community-engaged pedagogy,' *Critical Studies in Education* 66, no. 1 (April, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2024.2343284>

⁵ Jiang and Tham, 'Race, affect, and marginalized communities,' 2.

professional roles.⁶ There is still a troubling lack of research on the work of volunteer heritage guides, despite their significant, front-line role in educating visitors. Echoing Rebecca Farley et al., I hope that my research inspires further attention to volunteer guides' training and practice.⁷ Within both *Mayflower 400* and the *Histories Curriculum*, Indigenous interpreters were predominantly located outside the institution, as freelance interpreters. Further research could usefully compare the experiences of Indigenous historical interpreters within and outside of institutions.

A Note on the Culture Wars

As I conducted research between 2021-2025, the Culture Wars were simmering in the background of this thesis and the *Mayflower 400* and *Histories Curriculum* projects. In Aotearoa, the Culture Wars, or more specifically the focus of political parties on transforming historical education, made maintaining up to date analysis very challenging. When the *Histories Curriculum* was announced in 2019, it was through the momentum of a well-supported Labour government led by Jacinda Ardern, who was unusually well educated in Aotearoa's histories. Ardern and the *Histories Curriculum* writers were enormously critical of nostalgic narratives of the British Empire, believing that learning bi-cultural histories, including histories of violence, would improve students' tolerance and critical thinking. However, by the time I had arrived, Ardern had stepped down. Soon after I left Aotearoa, the centre-right National Party won in coalition with the right-wing parties ACT and New Zealand First. My research takes place during the funded, preparatory stages of the *Histories Curriculum*, before the impact of this political change. Yet, as I conclude, I should acknowledge that the new Government is making efforts to repeal the *Histories Curriculum*. The Kāhui Ako (learning group) model that I observed supporting schools to pool resources and collectively approach iwi will be defunded as of January 2026.⁸ The current government is scaling back 'the ability of the courts to consider Te Tiriti o Waitangi, removing te reo Māori language from government documents, and now removing Māori words from

⁶ Frances Barkess-Kerr Gabrielle, 'Curating Expertise: An Anthropological Approach,' (PhD diss., Durham University, 2024). Harcourt, 'Teaching and learning New Zealand's.'; Houliston, "Pacific Learners in Aotearoa."

⁷ Rebecca Farley et al., 'Volunteer Voices: building volunteer agency in the field of contemporary art in heritage,' *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 20, no. 3 (November 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1080/1743873X.2024.2428285>.

⁸ 'Kāhui Ako | Communities of Learning,' *Ministry of Education*, accessed June 18, 2025, <https://www.education.govt.nz/education-professionals/schools-year-0-13/administration-and-management/kahui-ako-communities-learning>.

schoolbooks for young readers.⁹ These are acts of cultural suppression, attempts to fundamentally challenge a central claim of the *Histories Curriculum*, that Māori histories and cultures are foundational to Aotearoa's identity. This devastating shift is a powerful reminder of the fragility of these programmes, the weight on the *Histories Curriculum*'s interpreters and the importance of teaching nuanced and accurate colonial histories.

Studies of the English Culture Wars, such as Peter Mitchell's *Imperial Nostalgia*, have compiled incidents, from across England, of fierce backlash by politicians and the Press to attempts to critically interpret British colonial history.¹⁰ His work emphasises that the teaching of British colonial history has become a political battleground.¹¹ In my study of *Mayflower 400*, I was struck that the Culture Wars, despite the racist incident in Nottinghamshire, were not present in my English interpreters' everyday concerns about the project. The Wampanoag interpreters' reaction to the racist incident showed they were practiced at making sense of how certain histories are mobilised by political groups to make claims to power. However, within *Mayflower 400* and the *Histories Curriculum*, the challenges facing historical interpreters were acknowledged as having much longer colonial histories. Iwis' concerns about resourcing pointed to resource constraints due to treaty violations, and they emphasised that few schools had historically actively engaged with or valued te ao Māori (the Māori world). Any analysis of the historical interpreters' role within the Culture Wars in either England or Aotearoa must situate their work, and the Culture Wars itself, within this longer colonial history. Questions remain for further study: How has the affective challenge of the historical interpreters' practice transformed within an unfriendly political climate? What are the differences in affective relationships with British colonial and Indigenous histories between interpreters supporting different political parties?

A Note on Hope

The landscape of colonial and Indigenous histories education can seem bleak. I show how a detached affective relationship with colonial history can perpetuate a lack of knowing and disrupt Indigenous– non-Indigenous partnerships. I demonstrate that efforts to address vast

⁹ Eva Corlet, 'Why is the New Zealand government cutting Māori words from some school books?' *The Guardian*, August 20, 2025, accessed August 27, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/aug/20/maori-words-school-books-new-zealand>.

¹⁰ Mitchell, *Imperial Nostalgia*.

¹¹ Mitchell, *Imperial Nostalgia*.

and intergenerational absences of historical knowledge can overburden Indigenous communities. I also highlight that progress in Aotearoa's bi-cultural histories education is being repealed and that Indigenous cultures are still actively under attack. Put simply, I have investigated the profound challenges facing interpreters of British colonial and Indigenous histories. However, this thesis is, as Harcourt states in his examination of colonial history education in Aotearoa, 'not intended to make an already difficult situation appear hopeless'.¹² Instead, by examining the affective challenges of this work over several years, I reveal how Indigenous and non-Indigenous partnership can meaningfully transform affective engagement, improve historical understanding and drive support for Indigenous communities. Many participants highlighted that this work was some of the most rewarding of their careers. We cannot underestimate the difficulty of challenging narratives that have hundreds of years of weight and are deeply entwined with positive stories of national identity in settler colonial states and Imperial heartlands. However, this thesis shows that non-Indigenous interpreters at the heart of British and Aotearoa institutions are able to meaningfully learn, change their perspective and come to urgently engage in supporting Indigenous communities. In this transformation we must also identify and support the weights held on the "heavy shoulders" of Indigenous interpreters. Both *Mayflower 400* and the *Histories Curriculum* reveal that Indigenous interpretive partnerships hold the potential to radically dismantle the affective amnesia of non-Indigenous interpreters, motivating them to actively and critically engage in historical learning and feel a personal sense of responsibility for challenging nostalgic colonial narratives. As Andrew shared:

"But you have to understand it to know where we are now.
You have to understand it to help us change it now.
If you feel uncomfortable, good.
If you feel a little uneasy, good.
Why do you feel that way?
What are you going to do about it?"

¹² Harcourt, 'New Zealand's difficult history,' 216.

Key Recommendations

Building Indigenous Partnerships: Five Recommendations for Non-Indigenous Heritage Workers and Teachers Teaching British Colonial and Indigenous Histories

This guide seeks to support non-Indigenous heritage workers and school educators teaching British colonial and Indigenous histories. I draw my findings from four years of research into Indigenous and non-Indigenous partnerships within an ambitious UK heritage project, *Mayflower 400*, and the implementation of the new *Aotearoa New Zealand Histories Curriculum*.¹ I present five steps for building sensitive and effective partnerships with Indigenous educators. Through Indigenous and non-Indigenous partnerships, heritage sites and schools can develop sensitive, nuanced and more engaging multi-perspective historical narratives. While this guide focuses on supporting partnership building in history education, Indigenous Nations are complete cultures, and as such, the knowledge and insight of Indigenous advisors can enrich the teaching and interpretations of all disciplines.

Background

This report draws on my 2021-2025 PhD study, in which I, Amelia Mulcahey-Knight, examined the work of Indigenous and non-Indigenous heritage workers and teachers within two ambitious historical education projects: *Mayflower 400* (UK) and the *Aotearoa New Zealand Histories Curriculum* (NZ). Each project recruited a new group of non-Indigenous educators to interpret British colonial and Indigenous histories through Indigenous partnerships. The *Aotearoa New Zealand Histories Curriculum* mandates that schools teach bi-cultural histories in collaboration with tangata whenua (people of that land - local Māori Nations) for students ages five to fourteen. *Mayflower 400* was a commemorative events programme that shared a newly nuanced account of the 1620 Mayflower voyage from England to present-day Massachusetts, home of the Native American Wampanoag Nations. This commemoration was distinct from previous celebrations, a shift driven by the advice of partners from the Wampanoag Nations.

¹ Aotearoa is the Indigenous term for New Zealand.

Why is This Work Important?

We are all implicated in the silences surrounding colonial histories. I was never taught any colonial history at school in England. Our historical knowledge is also shaped by sanitised and nostalgic narratives passed down through generations. These limited historical narratives can leave us ill-prepared to understand the lasting legacies and contemporary inequalities experienced by Indigenous communities. Two stories that participants shared with me during my research capture the urgency of improving our and others' knowledge of British colonial and Indigenous histories:

A Primary teacher in New Zealand shared that she was considering how best to teach her students about the New Zealand Wars (1843-72) and the British Crown's confiscation of over 1.2 million acres of land from Māori iwi [tribes]. She stressed, "teaching this history matters. I had a Pākehā [non-Indigenous New Zealander] child in the class who said, 'Māori don't like owning farms.' I asked him what he meant by that, and he said, 'That's why they don't have land.'"

A second story was shared with me by Paula, an experienced historical educator from the Mashpee Wampanoag Nation. She shared:

"when I was seven or eight years old, I was in a second-grade classroom, and the teacher was teaching the story of Thanksgiving. One of the students asked, 'What happened to the Indians?' The teacher just responded dismissively 'They are all dead.'
I raised my hand,
I said, no! They are not dead.
I am Wampanoag, I am here.
It is almost as if I have gone through my whole life waving my hand and saying I am here."

Five Steps for Building Sensitive and Effective Partnerships

1. **Establish the team:** you should establish a leadership team and a project delivery team.

- a. The leadership team should include key stakeholders with the authority to allocate staff time for research and partnership building, and engage in budget conversations to ensure that Indigenous advisors are adequately remunerated.

A key challenge facing teachers of the Aotearoa New Zealand Histories Curriculum was finding time to engage with historical research and meet with Māori advisors. Teachers whose Principals gave them paid time away from classes were able to build closer relationships with Māori advisors and develop resources that they shared throughout the school.

- b. The project team should include everyone who will be interpreting these histories to your audiences, including professional and volunteer staff. This team may be large so you may need to develop a structured approach to engagement and inclusion. Volunteer guides are often the main point of interaction for visitors and for Indigenous partners working onsite. The language they use, and their enthusiasm, can profoundly shape the impact of this work.
- c. Identify your Indigenous partners. Indigenous Nations are hugely diverse even within one country. Identifying what Nations' expertise you need is an important task. If you are looking at the history of a particular geographical area, you can work towards identifying which Nation to contact via their websites or by reaching out to academic advisors.

2. Establish your current position – evaluate and build on existing relationships and resources.

- a. What existing relationships do you have with Indigenous communities? In the case of the *Aotearoa New Zealand Histories Curriculum* some schools had already established relationships with Māori parents who could provide advice on sensitive partnership building. Some Māori parents had already shared cultural and historical information that could be consulted first.
- b. What resources or current knowledge does the organisation have through similar projects? Do you have a relationship with another teacher or heritage

worker, perhaps from another institution, who could share what they learnt from their project?

- c. Establish a creative and open workshop to address gaps in your knowledge. How has your organisation traditionally told this history? If you have not built Indigenous partnerships before, why not? This exercise should include leadership and project teams. The meeting is not about assigning blame; it is a creative exercise to consider which gaps in understanding can be addressed by your teams before and through Indigenous partnership work. For heritage workers who have Indigenous artefacts in their collections, also consider what sensitivity issues have you not yet addressed? What support might you need to understand these objects within their cultural context?

3. Prepare to be sensitive partners

- a. Approaching your project team with openness about gaps in your understanding. Framing this as a learning journey for the whole team will support open communication. During colonisation and in the hundreds of years that followed, these histories have been suppressed, forgotten, and misremembered. If you feel lost due to a lack of historical knowledge, you are not alone.
- b. Histories of colonisation address deeply distressing topics such as genocide, cultural genocide, enslavement, and the loss of land. Before engaging in Indigenous partnership, it is essential to consider how these histories impact the lives of contemporary Indigenous people. Be sensitive to the weight of these histories that your Indigenous partners carry.

An English curator working in partnership with members of the Wampanoag Nation to deliver two exhibitions in the UK in 2020-2021 described her partnership work as some of the most rewarding of her career. She explained that she experienced a significant change in perspective, "I think that we, or certainly I, approached it as history

initially. I suppose I came to realise that it was not just living, but live and kicking! Ultimately, that was the learning I think for me.”

- c. To support sensitive partnership building, research appropriate language, such as ‘Indigenous’ or specific Indigenous Nation names, like ‘Wampanoag’. Misrepresentations, such as colonial ideas of Indigenous territories as a ‘new world’ or as a ‘wilderness’ were used to erase Indigenous histories, agency, and land use, and justify the taking of land by Europeans. It is essential to critically engage with these misrepresentations. Any insights should then be shared via email with the leadership and project team, or better yet, through a meeting.
- d. Prepare to support Indigenous partners in the case of racist incidents or misrepresentations. Unfortunately, Indigenous educators regularly experience visitors belittling them, making whooping sounds (a Hollywood invention), using racialised slurs or suggesting they should be grateful for colonisation. Organisations should be prepared to support their Indigenous partners.

During the Wampanoag Perspectives Project at a Nottinghamshire Museum, educators from the Wampanoag Native American Nation were building an Indigenous home, a wetu, on Museum grounds. Visitors could watch and ask questions. On the site, Museum staff added a sign that informed visitors of appropriate language to use, such as the Indigenous Nation’s name, Wampanoag, the term Indigenous rather than Indian, and explained why certain behaviours were offensive. One of the Wampanoag educators reflected: “These signs are always helpful. You can physically point them out if someone says something, which shows that the museum has thought about this in advance. However, visitors often walk past signs. What makes a greater difference is the willingness of the Museum staff to put the weight of the organisation behind that expectation of appropriate behaviour and any issues that arise. That is hugely important for me.”

4. Start building effective Indigenous partnerships

- a. Many non-Indigenous educators can be paralysed by a fear of saying the wrong thing, or of not knowing where to start. These anxieties are understandable; however, non-Indigenous heritage and education workers who started building Indigenous partnerships repeatedly described their work as hugely rewarding and perspective changing.

- b. Reach out to Indigenous partners early in the development process and be flexible. General questions such as “we’d like your Indigenous perspective” could provide insufficient direction for partners. Sharing internal project goals is a good way to start the conversation but begin by expressing an openness for these to significantly change as you receive your Indigenous partners’ expert advice. Indigenous partnership can enhance a project plan. In a Nottinghamshire, UK Museum this led to the building of a permanent traditional Wampanoag home on the Museum grounds, in a rural US museum it led to the creation of a traditional mishoon (dugout canoe).

Through conversations with the Wampanoag Advisory Committee, a new exhibition in Plymouth, England was produced, alongside the long-planned exhibition on the Mayflower’s history. ‘Wampum: Stories from the Shells of Native America’ showcased the technology of the beautiful shell wampum belts and toured throughout the UK. During the preparatory work, Indigenous educators emphasised that a major challenge they encounter is a perception that Indigenous people no longer exist. The exhibition, therefore, began with a panel featuring the simple message, written in white on purple, ‘We are still here’.

- c. Recognise and remunerate Indigenous partners’ expertise. Understand that you may be asking Indigenous partners or colleagues to share personal contacts and experiences, as well as deep historical understanding.
- d. Plan for long term, inter-personal relationship building: establish Indigenous advisory roles, schedule annual training or quarterly meetings; for in-person meetings include lunch and afterwork activities for teams and partners to socialise. Long-term partnerships support improved cross-cultural understanding and sensitivity.
- e. Enjoy open conversations that will enrich your historical learning.

5. Knowledge sharing and reflection

- a. Engage and share learning throughout the leadership and delivery teams, through formal guide or teacher training, or regular informal lunch-and-learns.

In New Zealand, the Kahui Ako or learning community model brought together representative teachers from local schools to pool resources.

When the Labour Government announced the new Aotearoa New Zealand Histories Curriculum, teachers utilised the Kahui Ako structures to share classroom resources and connect with Indigenous partners through teachers who had existing, trusted relationships. The model also reduced the number of repeated requests made to Iwi (Māori tribes) from schools.

- b. While you should strive to build lasting relationships, it is also essential to debrief after the planned project has concluded. What did we learn? How can we maintain our relationship with our Indigenous partners? If we were to do this again, how would we approach partnership differently? What lessons can we apply to how we teach these histories in the future? What advice could we share with other schools or heritage organisations?

In Aotearoa, Cultural Narratives are research documents produced by Māori advisors for schools, addressing local histories, pūrākau (traditional narratives), cosmological and geographical details. In a Dunedin school, a Cultural Narrative has been incorporated into several subjects over several years, effectively engaging students in exploring multiple perspectives and feeling a greater sense of connection to their local area.

- c. Unfortunately, heritage work and curriculum changes can be disrupted by larger forces such as funding or government changes. It is still valuable to organise a session to collate the information learnt so it can be built upon more easily in future work. Even undertaking just the first two steps will enrich your team's historical perspective. It is essential to consider, how can you use your new perspective to shape your future projects?

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