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Zane Ma Rhea

Land and Water Education and the Allodial Principle

Rethinking Ecological Education
in the Postcolonial Age



Springer

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I dedicate this book to Jeane Freer, my wife and life partner, who so presciently wrote:

One of the most meaningful relationships we can make is with nature. We can make our interactions with the earth an expression of our sameness and a shared channel of healing for the world (Freer 1983, 133).

I thank Jeane for sharing her profound knowledge and wisdom with me over these last 35 years and acknowledge the continued work she does to live in harmony with the “cosmic rhythms of life,” bringing the spiritual and the political into consciousness for the benefit of all sentient beings.

Preface

I hope that this monograph will provide teacher educators, teachers, academics who specialize in aspects of Indigenous, legal, and environmental education, and other interested readers with some new ideas to help them to break the colonial mindset that has shaped our relationship to land and water.

How we teach about land and water needs to change but given the profound epistemological shaping of both in human society, it is necessary to provide new pedagogical content knowledge for educators. This involves interrogating how legal systems help to codify our understanding of land and water in particular ways. The Australian legal framework, as for other previously colonized nations, was developed from English law and this approach to “Law” frames land and water as things, as property, that can be allocated for exclusive individual use and abuse. This right to use and abuse can be sold onto another through the transfer of said “property.” Such an “entitled” capacity to use and abuse without accountability to the wider community is now unsustainable.

There is an urgent need for reasons of both Indigenous rights and of environmental sustainability for people living on the lands and waterways of previously colonized Indigenous Peoples to rethink how we understand land and water in geolocations such as Australia and therefore how we teach about it. I think that this requires a paradigmatic shift in the pedagogical content knowledge and curricula vision of educators—in short—that we begin from a different place in conceptualizing what we teach about land and water.

I believe that such a conceptual shift might enable the children of the colonizers to begin to make their peace with the lands and waterways of their birth through respectful, humble, and thoughtful engagement with the Traditional Owners of those lands and waterways and with their languages and knowledge. Such a shift would also enable a deeper understanding of matters of environmental sustainability into the future.

Frankston South, Melbourne, Australia
2017

Zane Ma Rhea

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