

Acknowledge the Aboriginal wars with a memorial:

Article from: AAP

By Warwick Stanley March 03, 2009 07:00am

ACCLAIMED author Kate Grenville has joined the call for a memorial to commemorate the war between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians.

Ms Grenville, author of the award-winning historical novel *The Secret River* and its "sequel" *The Lieutenant*, says the memorial is needed to acknowledge the battles and skirmishes between Aborigines and the early settlers.

"You can't get to first base in the process of reconciliation if you're pretending they didn't happen," she said on Monday.

"It has to be acknowledged as part of what really happened, which was many generations of different kinds of resistance on the part of the indigenous people."

Following last year's apology to the stolen generation, the federal government's National Memorials Committee is considering a proposal to erect an official memorial in Canberra commemorating indigenous Australians killed by white settlers.

The Canberra Institute, a think-tank headed by ACT Labor Senate candidate and former Hawke government adviser Peter Conway, put forward the plan after Mr Conway was approached by Aboriginal groups in the lead-up to the 2007 federal election.

Mr Conway said on Monday he understood objections by the Returned Services League and authorities to establishing a memorial alongside existing statues and sculptures to Australia's war dead on Anzac Ave, leading to the Australian War memorial.

"My view is to put it... on the other side of Lake Burley Griffin, on the access between Parliament House and the War Memorial," he said.

"It could be erected where Reconciliation Place is now located."

Mr Conway said he also believed the war could be commemorated in an annex within the War Memorial, despite its policy of commemorating only post-federation conflicts.

He said there were already exceptions to the rule, including China's Boxer Rebellion and New Zealand's Maori Wars.

"We should examine the possibility if we're going to be fair dinkum with our history," he said.

Ms Grenville said she believed the War Memorial was reserved for wars fought overseas and was unsure whether it should house an exhibit commemorating the conflict.

"(But) the long, long guerilla war between indigenous and non-indigenous ought to be acknowledged and commemorated and honoured in a way that it never has even been acknowledged in our culture," she said.

``We've tried for 200 years to pretend that really didn't happen and some people still deny it happened.

``It seems to me that's just trying to hold back the tide of what really happened and hold back the tide of reconciliation.

``Let's open the cupboards, let's have a look at the skeletons inside there instead of pretending it's all hunky dory."

Ms Grenville was attending the Perth Writers Festival, where she joined David Hill, author of *1788*, in discussions on the growing interest in the history of Australia's early European settlement.