



The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

This article was originally published in printed form. The journal began in 1973 and was titled *The Aboriginal Child at School*. In 1996 the journal was transformed to an internationally peer-reviewed publication and renamed *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*.

In 2022 *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education* transitioned to fully Open Access and this article is available for use under the license conditions below.



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.

ABORIGINAL VIEWS

COMMENTS ON THE BILINGUAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

C. Manydjarri,
Milingimbi, N.T.

The following comments on the working out of the Bilingual Program were made by Manydjarri during discussion with the Headmaster. Questions were asked several times and in a variety of ways where necessary in order to elicit Manydjarri's own feelings.

1. WORKING WITH EUROPEANS

"I have been very happy working with Michael Christie*. I have been comfortable. He has given me a lot of help. We have been happy working together. The other Aboriginal teacher has been happy too. She wants some training though."

2. THE CHILDREN

Interest level? "Very interested in learning in Gupapuyngu but they are restless. But this is just their way of life".

How fast are they progressing? "Children are learning faster in the second term than in the first term. They are progressing in all areas of their work."

What about their English? "Not sure, ask Michael."

The age of the children - too young, too old? "They are very young, but they are learning. For most children, it is good to be on the program."

Any children not progressing? "No, only Birrian." (a retarded child)

.....

**Michael Christie is the non-Aboriginal member of the teaching team in the first year infant's program. He and Manydjarri work together.*

3. THE PARENTS

Community feeling this year? "A few people talk about the program. Most know what we are trying to do."

How can we involve the community in the Bilingual Program?

"Bring parents into school and let them see the children. Do this in small groups. On Friday I had a barbecue for the children. I invited the parents round and quite a few came. Three didn't come. The aim of this barbecue was to invite parents and after to talk about the bilingual teaching in the school with the kids. There wasn't any questions but everyone was happy. They were very happy - their faces told me - about learning in their own mother tongue. I feel this way, that parents will be interested more in this Bilingual Program. I was talking for quite a while about this program. This was to encourage the parents and to talk about it with them. I feel this way - more parents can come and talk to us and be interested in these programs. This is what I have done. I feel it is very important."

4. THE PROGRAM

Do you think the program is working and is a good thing for Aborigines? "Yes - definitely."

Are you worried that the children won't learn English as well as they used to? "I'm not worried because I feel Michael is putting in hard work on the Oral English."

Are you happy with the teaching method? "The method we are using is working. I feel this is a good way to teach the children."

5. ABORIGINAL TEACHERS

How do the Aboriginal Teachers who are not directly involved in the program feel? "They are quite happy. There are no problems. They all wished me luck before Betty Watts* came to see me."

.....

*Members of the Consultative Committee visited the school to see Manydjarri teach.

.....