



The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

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greens, cricket, basketball/volleyball, A.B.C. video television and a modern hotel/motel. In addition there is amply opportunity for boating and rewarding fishing. There is an active Lions Club and a wide variety of committees and organizations for the community minded person.

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THE PAPUNYA SCHOOL PROGRAM

Val Petering,
Papunya School, N.T.

I visited Papunya School in March and found the staff enthusiastic and excited. They are working out a school program so that they can utilize fully, for the children's benefit, the diverse skill and talents of the teachers.

An exciting program is in progress at the Papunya School. This year we had a big changeover in staff, and found, to our joy, that each teacher was trained in, or had developed in, a certain area or was willing to help support our program. So, to utilize all this talent and ability, each teacher teaches their own topic in the afternoons, so that by the end of the week, every class has rotated through the seven-fold system. The children also are keen on these topics, and look forward to them, whilst the teachers enjoy specializing in the area they know. It also gives the teachers an essential knowledge of every child in the school.

The subjects taught are art and craft, Special Training for Deaf children, sports, remedial reading, music, sewing and library.

The children enjoy their art and craft program, where different and new materials are being used in a creative way. This also provides a tremendous opportunity for oral language development.

Papunya has fifty children who are suffering from an impairment of hearing due to Otitis Media, a middle ear infection. The program is designed to improve their hearing activity by developing their residual hearing via a course of auditory training. A lip-reading segment is also given, and is proving valuable in gaining attention from a deaf child, and thus facilitating further learning. In conjunction with this, the course plans to affirm the child's knowledge of the Aboriginal signing system to aid communication in the camp. As the hearing loss only ranges from 30 to 50 decibels, especially in the consonant end of the frequency range, it is unnecessary to introduce a European signing system. Many brightly coloured cowboy boleros, with pockets, have been made by the teachers, as well as bright headbands. These garments are, in fact, learning aids which the boys and girls can wear. They increase their enthusiasm for these classes, as well as taking away the stigma of wearing an unattractive aid.

The sports group is subdivided into gymnastics, athletics, game skills, major sports, minor sports, swimming and dancing. The sports teacher is well aided by three supporting teachers and Aboriginal assistants. So this program is varied and well-balanced and under good control.

The teacher for the deaf children, and remedial reading, works only with a few individuals each period, and so achieves maximum results. These children also receive the benefits from the outer groups, as the program is worked out in such a way that they are not deprived of the other classes.

The music program is aimed at enjoyable experiences, creativity and improving music skills. Each group follows the same pattern with different materials. Nonsense songs are enjoyed now, and will lead to part-singing later. Creativity is encouraged with percussion instruments, individually and in groups. Free expression in creative dance is aimed at, but direction is included at the moment, for example, the use of story or animal themes. This produces self-confidence now, and will soon enable the introduction of cultural dance. Listening is begun with pop-tunes, leading to appreciation of Aboriginal chants and classical music. The children are being taught to play drums, ukeleles, recorders, guitars and the piano.

A good variety of sewing, crocheting and knitting is being taught to the girls, who love this.

A new library has been established in this school, and we want it to be a powerful arm of the literacy program in an illiterate community. The children (and adults from 3.30pm to 7.00pm) are responding enthusiastically to the use of this facility, and enjoy reading or looking at books, especially chosen for their literacy level, or pictorial content. To see their love for books increase, and their handling of them improve over the last two years, makes every effort so worthwhile.

All these topics make the school a much more enjoyable place, and appeal to many children who experience difficulties in the academic subjects.

This program means hard work in the morning to get through their core subjects, but this is working well, as the children know that time is precious, and generally enjoy being kept busy at a full capacity pace.

By this means, and others, which yet need much thought, patience and development, we hope to really extend 'education' to the parents and children at Papunya. We have an exciting and busy year to look forward to.

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