



The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

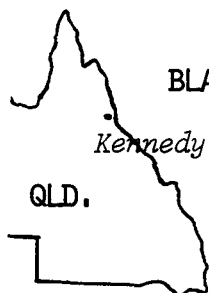
This article was originally published in printed form. The journal began in 1973 and was titled *The Aboriginal Child at School*. In 1996 the journal was transformed to an internationally peer-reviewed publication and renamed *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*.

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ACROSS AUSTRALIA
FROM TEACHER TO TEACHER



BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPHY IN A BLACK AND WHITE SCHOOL

F.H. Barker,
State School,
Kennedy, Q'ld.

Mr. Barker has built upon an element of the Van Leer approach to provide a stimulating and meaningful set of lesson experiences for his students of all ages. The program has had unexpected and delightful results both in and out of school.

As Principal of a two teacher State School of about fifty pupils, of whom approximately fifty percent are of Aboriginal or Islander origin, I have faced the task of providing for racially mixed classes a meaningful, relevant and attractive educational program. The Van Leer program has been of great value in making me aware of the need for language development, and providing principles to develop speaking, listening, reading and writing through an experimental approach making use of aspects of the environment which have relevance to the lives of the children.

One significant feature of the program has shown how photography, by means of Polaroid cameras, has enabled teachers to freeze a meaningful experience outside the classroom and bring back a photographic record. Back in the classroom workshop, the photograph serves as a basis of discussion, research through reading, and expressive interpretation. For many teachers, the camera has become the logical extension of audio visual equipment, and it is being increasingly used in class. Tape recorders, slide projectors and copying machines each have their place, and the camera in each of its forms complements the existing equipment. As finance is a determining factor in the selection of equipment, black and white photographs are an important possibility when considering this media.

The Polaroid system has the advantages of immediate processing and simplicity of operation. It has the disadvantages of small print size (if the costs are to be kept low), and the limitation of a single print because of lack of reusable negatives. For the inexperienced photographer it offers unique possibilities outside and within the classroom where flash bulbs are used to overcome lighting problems.

Other systems besides Polaroid photography are available and are employed by teachers to facilitate learning. I have used two other systems of black and white photography - the 35mm system and the popular Instamatic. Each of the three has its characteristic advantages and deficiencies.

Although 35mm cameras are generally more expensive, film is available in bulk lengths and, at special rates for educational purposes, is cheap at less than half a cent a frame or exposure. Instamatic cameras with their easy loading instamatic cartridge are less expensive to purchase than a 35mm camera but the film is dearer at about three cents per frame. The important consideration in selecting a particular system is the amount of photographic experience the teacher has had in operating photographic equipment. However, cameras are becoming easier to operate with the incorporating of automatic electric exposure systems which require little more than matching the needle and pressing the release button.

Once a teacher is convinced of the value of photography in the school as a visual recorder and a motivational force, the system selected will be determined by available finance for equipment, previous photographic experience, and processing facilities available.

I had owned a 35mm camera for many years with which I took colour slides of my family, and the usual tourist scenes. With this limited experience I attended a vacation school for the basic photography course where I learnt to process black and white negatives and slides. A second hand enlarger, developing tank, trays and chemicals were soon added to my camera equipment. The school medical room which contained a sink and running water was blacked out with curtains to make a temporary dark room to process prints up to 8" x 10".

The first photographic assignments consisted of recording the children engaged in school activities and playing during the lunch hour. These photos were taken by the teachers, and processed within a few hours, so that the impact of recording interesting events was not lost by a time lapse. The large 8" x 10" prints costing less than ten cents each were of considerable value in promoting oral and written language and providing written records at the reading level of the classes concerned. They became the basis of news sheets, and individual reading books. Photographs and accompanying written work have provided a link between school and home. Public relations between the school, home and community were improved when photographs were displayed on notice boards in local shop windows. The racially mixed classes have been photographed working side by side in the classroom and obviously enjoying it, reading in the library or playing together on the sporting field.

The next development was the involvement of the children in the upper classes in taking their own photographs and processing their negatives and prints. This has involved discussions about processes, investigating and researching how cameras work, and an interest in composition, lighting, and pictorial narration.

When the project club received a request from another school 1000 miles away for information about the school's forestry project, a small group of children photographed the school, school grounds and surrounding areas of the school, and the children, as well as the native and exotic forestry trees. After processing as black and white slides, the best were selected and arranged into a program. A tape recorded commentary was added before being forwarded to the school. The children eagerly await a reply.

Processing has been done within and out of school hours. The children have become most adept at reading centigrade thermometers and reducing temperatures to between 20° and 24° for optimum results. Metric units are used throughout to make up chemicals and dilutions as required. Mistakes are rare.

Photography using one or all three systems referred to has a definite place in the school. Teachers who already have some interest in photography cannot fail to gain the benefits it can bring about. The 35mm system offers the greatest possibility

at the least cost. We cannot ignore the gains to be achieved in increased interest, relevance, and achievement in all aspects of the school program.



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PROJECT EDUCATION AT DERBY JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
A COURSE FOR ABORIGINAL STUDENTS*

Most Australian states have expressed concern about effective ways in which they can meet the educational needs of Aboriginal adolescents who are not oriented to a formal academic high school program. Western Australia has for some years experimented with one particular approach and I am sure that teachers in other states will find much of interest in the following report.

Project education is a particular method of education designed to assist students who are unable to cope with the traditional classroom instruction. It is used mainly in the education of some Aboriginal children who, by the time they are old enough to attend secondary school, have not progressed beyond Grade 3 or 4 level. The fundamental aim of project education is to improve communication skills through practical activities and this is achieved by involving students in projects outside the classroom. These practical activities are designed to stimulate interest and so provide a motivation for the more formal classroom learning of communication skills.

Boys undertake projects such as vehicle maintenance and driving, rearing poultry, carpentry and farm handyman activities, and the girls take part in projects involving the home, shopping, parentcraft and suchlike.

Students spend part of their time outdoors or in special workshops and cottages doing practical projects and the remainder

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