



The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

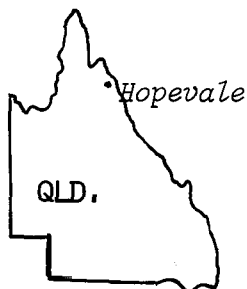
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THE EXPLORERS FROM HOPEVALE

Don Scheiwe,
Acting Principal,
Hopevale State School,
via Cooktown, Q'ld.

Increasing numbers of schools arrange excursions for their Aboriginal pupils. Excursions such as the one described by Mr. Scheiwe can be a delight to both pupils and teachers. The gains are varied.

Perhaps teachers who have tried other approaches would like to share their experiences with readers of the Journal.

The Explorers from Hopevale. This was the title chosen by my class of Grades five and six children for our educational tour to Cairns.

It was held during a week in September, 1973. The preparation for the tour was just as valuable as the trip and provided the theme of the curriculum for six weeks prior to the trip. Children were involved in planning the trip - costs involved in travel, clothing and needs and the general program.

The arranging of visits in Cairns was organized by Mr. O. Bell, then Principal of Cairns North School, in conjunction with myself. I prepared a booklet about our tour with the itinerary on the first page and, on the following pages, five or six questions about the places we were going to visit. This gave a greater purpose to the visit than mere sightseeing.

We stayed at the Young Australia League Hostel in Cairns which proved to be excellent for our purposes. We had one building to ourselves which meant that I had all the children in a group. This was convenient because we could quickly gather together in the library to do our school session or to organize a walk around the town. At the hostel, the children had to make their own beds and clean their own rooms each morning. Points were awarded for the neatest and cleanest room. The children were rostered on kitchen duty - one group setting the table, another group clearing the table, another group washing up. This meant that everybody had a turn at the kitchen chores everyday. The mid-day meal was prepared by four children. I had my teacher's aide, a male, and one of the mothers with me to help with the twenty-three children.

Every morning we visited two or three places. We were taken around Cairns by bus on all of our trips. Then we would return to the hostel and have lunch. The children were tired after their trips so we had an hour's rest every afternoon. After this we would have a school session in the library. We took pictures with the 'zip' camera which were then pasted on sheets of paper to make up a reading book. We also made lists of new words. Not a great deal was covered in the standard curricular areas while we were in Cairns, but what a wealth of material we had to work with when we returned to Hopevale.

ITINERARY

Tuesday: Fly from Cooktown to Cairns. Breakfast in the air (something totally new for the children).

Settle in at Young Australia League Hostel.

Visit Commonwealth Bank and wharves.

Wednesday: Visit to : Fire Brigade;

Ambulance Centre;

Sugar Bulkloading Terminal.

Thursday: Visit to Yarrabah School and settlement. The children saw how children work in other schools and were able to meet them and play with them as well.

Friday: Visit to : Queerah Meatworks;

Sugar Mill.

Saturday: Visit to Cairns Botanical Gardens;

Inspect airport - control tower, fire tender, heliport and helicopter.

Sunday: Church in the morning;

Train trip up through Barron Gorge to Kuranda.
Travelling in darkness through the tunnels was a new experience.

Monday: Visit to : David Jones Department Store, (after the formal part of the visit the children did their own shopping.);

Post Office.

Tuesday: Leave Cairns by boat to return to Cooktown.

The tour was a great success. From it the children gained concrete ideas of a town and how it operates - ideas which they can later build upon. The shy children came out of their shells and everyone experienced a deeper understanding of life and what it is all about.

The financing of such a trip needs some organization. The Queensland Department of Aboriginal and Island Affairs gave us one dollar for every three dollars we raised. A.C.E. would give a dollar for every dollar if needed, and did. The parents and the community raised \$450 of the total cost of about \$900. Therefore the whole community was involved. This is a story in itself.

The benefit which the children received from the tour is still apparent, as, even now, they often refer during school lessons to the things they saw and did in Cairns. And I learnt just as much about Cairns as did the children; but more important, I came to really know them and how they think about the outside world. They, too, learnt that I was a human being who enjoyed things as they do, and not 'just a teacher'. For all these reasons, I feel that tours of this nature must become part of the education of Aboriginal children.

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