



# The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

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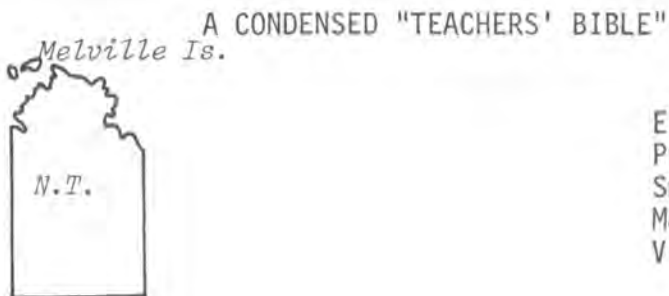


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discussion which continued intermittently for the rest of the trip, through Coober Pedy and back to Ceduna.

In my opinion the excursion was a most valuable exercise in that it increased the students' self-respect and respect for their own culture, and stimulated their interest in native languages. Further, they seem better motivated at school, possibly through seeing Aboriginal people who are succeeding in a white society.

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E. M. Fisher,  
Principal,  
Snake Bay School,  
Melville Island  
Via Darwin N.T.

I feel that there is an immediate need for teachers coming into contact with a new Aboriginal community to evaluate themselves not only professionally, but also socio-culturally.

The hazards and pitfalls of acculturation interchanges are too numerous and complicated to enumerate, and it is incumbent upon the new teacher to 'establish' himself (or herself) initially in the new environment. The community is only too cognizant of the behaviour and actions of a new member in its midst, and once the Aboriginals establish 'you' in their mental structure, then acceptance gradually comes. The reasons for culture conflict are manifold, and we, as teachers, must be careful not to use these as an excuse for indifference and neglect of our 'client' community.

Infusion of foreign ideas takes time and must necessarily come from intrinsic desires within the Aboriginals themselves. However, as an educating influence, we are in a position to present the alternatives in an impartial atmosphere, fostered by a genuine desire to mutually interpret and sympathetically understand the existing culture and its norms. Unless we do this, we are likely

to judge the Aborigines in a superficial manner and fail to see any attractiveness in them. Viewing them out of cultural context we could see them as "dirty", "lazy", "unintelligent", and horror of all horrors, "uneducable".

On this basis, I propose our Ten Commandments. The majority will apply in most situations, however, a broadened flexibility of mind will cater for any slight disparities which arise:

#### THE TEN COMMANDMENTS ....

For European Teachers of Aborigines.

- I     Thou shalt establish a liaison between thyself and the general community.
- II    Thou shalt study and try to understand the culture and the children who are born and reared in it.
- III   Thou shalt continue gradually in the initial stages of any developmental program.
- IV    Thou shalt endeavour to teach material that has relevance to the child's frame of reference.
- V     Thou shalt establish Community activities and rapport with the local Council (where applicable).
- VI    Thou shalt not covet thy children's kin relations.
- VII   Thou shalt respect the ethnic cultural values and maintain a continuous interchange between the school and the home.
- VIII   Thou shalt reinforce those ethnic values of generosity and reciprocity within the framework of the school program.
- IX    Thou shalt treat the children as rational human beings who require continual methodical guidance.
- X     Thou shalt seek the Community's support in the implementation of those cultural and traditional elements desired in the school, and at the same time give the Community a *SAY* in the school's affairs.

The above are not necessarily in order of importance, but each is worth contemplating for the children's sake, if not our own. Perhaps, with the above "Bible" in our thoughts, we, as responsible teachers, can make some significant claim to Aboriginal *progress*.