



The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

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NEW CURRICULUM FOR ABORIGINAL STUDIES*

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One of the main problems that the Aboriginal child faces in Australian schools is non-Aboriginal children.

A conflict situation does not usually develop till late primary or early secondary, but if a solution is to be found it will lie in the early or middle primary years. The way in which children in Canberra primary schools are learning about Aboriginals is a clear indication of the importance educators in the A.C.T. place on this subject.

School studies relating to Aboriginals are by no means new. Previous curriculum units aimed simply to inform, and made little or no attempt to teach children to know Aboriginals as anything more than curiosities. The emphasis in the new A.C.T. units is on understanding, rather than merely being informed.

The course is practical and realistic. For a short time the children act as part of a tribal group and receive a skin and dreaming symbol. They paint in ochres and try to understand a different and incredibly ancient Australia. They see some of its rich heritage and learn to dream a little with the people who first made it their home.

A most important element of the program is that the children not only learn about Aboriginals, but are taught by at least one Aboriginal. Ms Mai Katona is employed by the A.C.T. Schools Authority to assist teachers at these schools - to teach about her own people. She originally came from Darwin but now lives in Canberra and has children of her own at primary school.

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* *Reproduced with permission from "Aboriginal News", Vol 3 No 1 February, 1976. Department of Education, Canberra.*

Ms Katona realised she would require special training to carry out the task ahead of her. She was able to make use of an Aboriginal Study Grant to travel to Queensland and work with two Aboriginals - Jim Hamilton and Carol Archer - who visit schools in Queensland to teach children about Aboriginals.

She was very impressed with the professional way in which the two Queenslanders worked, and felt she had been schooled in a very exclusive institution. Certainly, there is nowhere else in the world where she could have received such training.

The A.C.T. is a leader in this area of education and all credit belongs to Peter Darcy of the Curriculum Section of the A.C.T. Schools Authority, and those teachers who worked very hard to prepare the unit. I had the good fortune to spend some time with them in the earlier sessions on weekends, and it was an inspiration to see these people quietly and professionally working towards creating a better Australia for all to live in.

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(The following brief article has been reproduced from the Bernard Van Leer Foundation Newsletter No.17, Autumn 1975.)

PRE-SCHOOL ANNEXES AND PARA-PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

Community Education Project, Coventry.

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This scheme has capitalised on the facilities of a large nursery centre in a disadvantaged area by the creation of 'annexes', that is 'satellite' centres without purpose-built facilities, in a variety of informal locations. These are staffed by local mothers trained by the professional staff of the Centre. The project should provide further evidence on the operational possibilities of training and working productively with non-professionally qualified people at pre-school level.

After the initial training course, mothers spend some time on the Centre's Playbus used as a mobile annexe, gaining practical experience under the supervision of a qualified leader. When suitable premises for a playgroup have been found in the locality, they set up their own annexe and the Playbus moves on. Four annexes are now operating and further ones are planned. *(continued page 31)*