



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*.

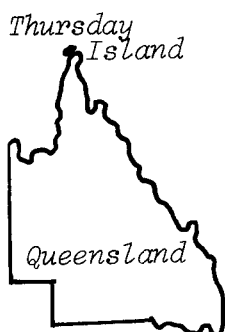
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with books, magazines and articles from newspapers being added to scrapbooks etc. This Centre also gives an opportunity to the Aboriginal community to give their ideas and their support, as it is for them as well as the European population. So I would greatly urge all the Aboriginal people to get involved. If they have any old photos that would be of help, or stories they would like taped and left in the Centre they would be welcome to ask for information at the school.

I also like working here because it gives me an opportunity to meet and work with people with totally different ideas to mine, but here both lots of ideas work reasonably good together which makes working here very enjoyable. Camps are also another aspect of my job I like very much, as I go out on them and cook. On these camps I usually get to know the children a lot better. With all this going on in the school (Resource Centre, camps etc.) it makes working here a pleasure.



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TEACHER AIDES - THURSDAY ISLAND

Mrs. L. Joseph,
Thursday Is. High School,
Thursday Island

I am of Torres Strait Island descent and I've lived in Torres Strait all my life. I did my schooling at Thursday Island up to Grade 10 standard and worked at the local hospital as an assistant nurse, and dental assistant at the Dental Clinic. I'm married, with four children and I'm working as a Teacher Aide specifically in the Home Economics section with two Home Economics teachers.

There are about 150 children of mixed descent in this school, these being Malaysians, Chinese, Japanese European, Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. Some of the children who come in to do their schooling here have very limited education. These children would be from the surrounding islands where often a very limited education is available.

There are four other aides working here. Their working areas are Science Laboratory, Library, Manual Arts and Audio Visual. There is a high turnover here for the staff, as most of them are European

teachers. This is largely due to isolation and that most teachers have their homes elsewhere in the state.

The biggest problem the Island children have here is their language; to most of them English is a second language. There is a breakdown in communication between children and teachers because teachers don't fully understand the situation which the children come from. Also, their language and their traditional ways make it more difficult for them.

The duties involved are preparing charts for the class, helping a group of slower girls with their work. Tuesday is Mothercraft day for some of the girls and I usually help the Maternal and Child Welfare Sister with the girls. I sometimes take the Island cooking class. Doing some elementary first-aid, for example, cuts and abrasions and helping children who have special problems are some of the other duties.

A NORMAL DAY

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|----------------|--|
| 8.00a.m. | - Preparation of teaching aids, for example, charts, stencils, materials. |
| 9.00a.m. | - Buying groceries for cooking lessons. |
| 9.40a.m. | - Helping the cooking class. |
| 10.20a.m. | - Preparing morning tea. |
| 11-11.20a.m. | - Recess |
| 12.00p.m. | - Cleaning up from morning session. Preparing hot dogs for school canteen. |
| 12.40-1.30p.m. | - Lunch |
| 1.30-2.30p.m. | - Helping with sewing class. |
| 2.30-3.10p.m. | - Washing and hanging out clean aprons and towels. |

The students, especially the girls, can speak to me openly about their problems and ask for advice. Sometimes I am useful in advising them about what their teachers expect of them. At times I've had to interpret to them the instruction given to them by the teacher. Because English is a second language to most of the students, they often can't understand the standard English used by the teachers. Students are most fluent in Island pidgin which needs a good deal of experience to master.

As new teachers come to work with me in the school, I would hope to help them by:- acting as a bridge for language between students and the teachers, working with children who have special problems, familiarising new teachers with the local situation.

It is clearly necessary for Island people to move in to teaching roles in the school; it is also important these people are sufficiently qualified for the job. I consider that teaching English in the school as the main language is worthwhile, despite our apparent lack of success at present. The main difficulty for students is that Standard English is not often spoken at home. A program of Adult Education in Standard English could be quite useful.

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A LETTER FROM BLACK TO WHITE *

James Galarrwuy Yunupingu
Field Officer,
Northern Land Council.
Darwin N.T.

A song of the joy which lies in the land. Read it and feel humble at the greatness of humanity as a part of the world. "The land is YOU", said Galarrwuy.

When I was a little boy I used to listen to my mother and father telling me stories around the camp-fire. These stories were simply children's bedtime stories.

One day I caught the biggest fish I ever caught in my boyhood. Only my grandmothers and aunties were allowed to eat that fish. After that when I caught more large fish, turtles or kangaroos all the other people in the family shared my catch. My mother and sisters would not eat anything that I'd caught until I had been circumcised.

Whenever there was a ceremony all the young boys would take part in the singing and dancing. The ones who didn't know how to dance would sit and watch the others sing and dance and maybe they

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