



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*.

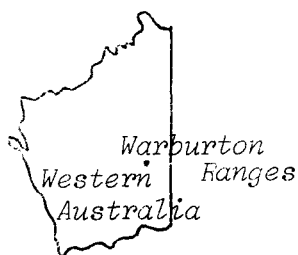
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ACROSS AUSTRALIA.....

FROM TEACHER TO TEACHER



A SUCCESSFUL LESSON

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All I had for the poor kids this afternoon was a cut-and-colour glue-me-round-your-finger set of paper puppets. I sat the children down on the mat after a hurried and rather unattended maths lesson, and wondered if I could keep them occupied and away from the 'toys' for this second part of the afternoon. I had cut and coloured and glued a set of puppets myself in an attempt to inspire the children. As the little ones huddled around me with the first signs of expectation and eagerness breaking on their faces, I gave my aide, Margaret, such a look of appeal, she couldn't have missed my thoughts at that moment. Here, I was thinking, was another of those dreadful lessons that, like so many others, would rapidly expire without having fixed and fired the imagination of anyone at all.

Well, Margaret took me up - she recognized my plea for help in the instant. She's marvellous like that. The first little puppet was on my finger now. It was no more to any of us than a piece of paper, rolled and coloured. It was dead. It felt stiff. I waggled my finger as I tried to bring it to life. It would not respire and move, or kick around like the cow it vaguely resembled.

"Shall we call this one Mister Cow?" I asked the kids as they closed in and stared in amusement and disbelief.

Margaret - God Bless Margaret! - "No, that's Joy *puluka*¹!" she smiled.

The kids screamed - a marvellous scream of delight and wonderment....

"Joy *puluka*!" they mimicked rapturously.

"And this one must be Doris *raapita*²!" she announced again,

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1. *puluka* = bullock

2. *raapita* = rabbit

"...and this one Errol...", and off she went re-creating, child by child, the eternal dreamtime that lives beyond the yellow and dusty school mat and the pine-topped desks. In no time at all, they too were caught up in the ecstasy of creation... and I dwindled away to a mere auxiliary - a tool - and flitted backwards and forwards lending a helping hand with the more mundane tasks of cutting and glueing.

Soon everychild was finished and running frantically around and in and out of the classroom - arms and fingers outstretched proudly in front of them as they exhibited to one another their created worlds. Impassioned, one raised his puppet for all to see -

"Lance *raapita!*" he shrieked, above the commotion.

Soon after, our little band went for a walk to complete the afternoon. Not far from the airstrip we followed a winding dirt track, and there I learned that lesson was never lost. It was as endless as the land they trod, imprinted in the earth itself.

"Look!" They bent low to the ground and urged me to come and see.

"Joy *puluka ngaawana pitjanytja*¹". The children were now almost hysterical with wonder.

"And here", cried one, "Joy *puluka kankararra ngarrira pirri-ranytjanku*²."

We laughed, and I shall never forget that clear refulgent laughter as it broke and rippled over us.

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1. *ngaawana pitjanytja* = came along this way

2. *kankararra ngarrirra pirriranytjanku* = was lying on her back scratching herself.