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EDUCATIONAL TOUR TO PAPUA NEW GUINEA



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As in previous years, the school at Morrington Island has considered that one of the major disadvantages of the educational program here has been the lack of opportunity for interaction with other children, and the experiencing of other aspects of life which are so readily available to children living on the mainland and particularly those nearer to large centres of population.

Over the past two years, with financial help from the Aboriginal Secondary Grants Scheme and Disadvantaged Schools, plus local help, children in the upper grades have had the opportunity to visit various centres of interest such as Cairns and hinterland, Mt. Isa and Brisbane.

The evaluation of such educational tours is a long term process and made even more difficult as many of the children leave school, but from what has been ascertained, it is felt that such tours to European centres, though of value in developing a variety of concepts, did not totally satisfy the needs of our school or meet with the major objectives of developing the need for a sense of responsibility within our younger people who will be required to be the leaders of the community in the future.

In previous tours our Aboriginal children observed Europeans at work and play, but rarely saw any of their own skin involved in outside life, and then only in labouring types of work. With this thinking in the background, and an enthusiastic report from Doomadgee about their trip to Papua New Guinea last year, we considered the possibility of visiting another country.

In May this year, discussions took place with Rev. Illa Amini* of Morrington Island, about the possibility of taking Grade 7 and 8 children to his country, the main aim being to see how another dark-skinned race tackles the problems of living and meeting the basic needs of life. It was felt that such a tour should really involve living with people rather than observing from a distance as tourists.

* A Missionary on loan from the United Church of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

Rev. Amini was very keen to support the idea and immediately wrote to his Bishop and others within the United Church outlining the idea and asking for support. Rev. Amini's brother, Mr Brian Amini, was also contacted, for he, as Director of Information, could be of great help. Very enthusiastic replies came back from all sections contacted, and thus we decided to proceed.

It was decided that all Grade 7 and 8 children would be involved and would be accompanied by their class teachers, Home Economics teacher, two classroom assistants and principal. Rev. Amini was also asked to accompany the trip as a special resource person and he was given the task of planning the actual tour, as he appreciated our aims, and had a first-hand knowledge of the country. He was very eager to help, and when he received an invitation to officiate at a wedding in Port Moresby in late August, suggested that he could go ahead a week earlier to finalize plans and check out all arrangements in Papua New Guinea. This proved to be an excellent move, and the greatest contributing factor to the success of the tour. The principal and staff of the school began to tackle the immediate problems that loom whenever an educational tour is proposed. (Lack of good communication always hampers planning here.)

The time chosen was the first two weeks of September, and it was decided that we would fly to Cairns and then to Port Moresby. Surprisingly this was not as expensive as expected. Rather than try to cover a large area, it was decided that we should visit Port Moresby and nearby country areas, all of which were well known to Rev. Amini and where he had particularly close contacts.

As teachers, we had to consider the objectives of the tour and other major factors. Did we have sufficient resource material to prepare the children (and staff)? Were there profitable follow-up activities? Would such a trip strengthen school and community relations? How much would really be involved in the actual organization of the trip, bearing in mind we were visiting another country and this necessitated passports, health requirements, etc.?

The actual machinery involved required very careful planning. Forty children plus seven adults constituted a large group. Obviously we had to divide - preferably into two groups. As 20 children received Aboriginal Secondary Grants, the division was easy. We would have to travel as two separate groups because of the physical limitations of aircraft, so the whole trip could be financed through two separate schemes. In Papua New Guinea, both groups could journey together, thanks to the wonderful organization of the United Church and the Department of Information.

As much had to be done immediately, the following steps were taken:

1. A large travel organization in Brisbane was contacted to attend to all travel and the handling of all documents on our behalf.
2. United Church was presented with a tentative itinerary prepared by Rev. Amini in consultation with staff concerned.
3. Applications for funding were sent to the Australian Department of Education and Disadvantaged Schools.
4. Regional Office and Inspector of Indigenous Schools were advised of our plans.
5. Discussions took place by radio with Doomadgee School, as they had already had one trip to Papua New Guinea and had another planned. The help given by principal and staff of Doomadgee was extremely valuable and we are grateful for their co-operation.
6. Classroom planning: to prepare children, help was sought from and given by Mr Chris Williams of Media Section, in providing suitable films.
7. Preparation of a suitable clothing list and other requirements, including the designing and printing of T-shirts to form part of a special travel uniform. Purchase by the school of 40 duffle bags to carry sleeping bags, clothes, etc. for each child.
8. Projects were planned and commenced to raise additional funds. These included selling Mornington Island T-shirts; selling vegetables from the school garden; special film evening; hot drink stall on film nights, etc.
9. Applications were lodged for birth certificates for all participants. Thanks to advice from Doomadgee, we requested Documents of Identity for all the children. These documents cost \$5.00, compared with \$20.00 for passports. Staff, naturally, had to have passports. The necessary photographs for passports and documents of identity were developed and printed at the school. Parental Consent forms were also processed, as well as applications for entry to Papua New Guinea.
10. A check was made on health requirements. This involved only the taking of anti-malaria tablets for two weeks prior to departure, while in Papua New Guinea, and for four weeks after returning. All children were continually checked by the Aboriginal Field Health Service.

11. It was decided that as an aid to evaluation and all follow-up work, a special project book should be printed. Actually, each group had its own book, as the program varied slightly and two books were printed for each child - one to use during the tour, the other to be used to recapitulate in the classroom on returning.
12. Recording of the tour in order to share as much as possible with the rest of the school and the community was an absolute necessity; thus it was decided to take films for slides; colour prints; black and white (for developing and printing at school, and hopefully for using in *Pics Paper*); and 8 mm movies. Tape recording of the whole trip was also planned.

Thanks to the wonderful co-operation of school and mission staff, the whole project began to take shape. Letters poured in from Papua New Guinea offering all the help necessary and, though complications continually presented themselves, we had no major difficulties.

Isolation teaches patience and that was very necessary in the planning of this project. Much of the planning was completed before we had the guarantee of funds. A deposit had to be paid well in advance, materials and goods ordered, and even when ordered by air freight, some were slow in arriving. The film ordered for the trip has still not arrived. At the last moment another supplier had to be contacted and fortunately the necessary film was supplied on time. Our tickets and passports arrived the day before we left.

Rev. Amini left Mornington Island a week earlier than the children, as planned, and he was able to co-ordinate all transport and accommodation. It is to his credit that the whole tour went so smoothly. In only one or two minor places was it necessary to diverge from the original itinerary.

Group A departed on Tuesday 31st August and Group B on Wednesday 1st September. The mini-tours around Cairns prior to each group's departure for Port Moresby were very successful. Many of the children had already been to either Cairns or Mt. Isa, but for quite a number, it was the first time off the island, so all staff were kept very alert in bringing as many things to the children's attention as it was possible for them to absorb.

Rather than give a diary report of the tour, the following section will deal with, firstly, highlights of the tour, and then major educational gains that we felt were made.

HIGHLIGHTS

An international flight, even though only to a neighbouring country, was a totally new experience. The children soon became aware that far more was involved than the checking of luggage, tickets and passports. Form-filling was continual - one to leave Australia, one to enter Papua New Guinea; a Customs Declaration. Because of the nature of these forms, it was necessary for staff to attend to much of the filling in, but the children all had to sign them and be made aware of the significance of each.

All children were impressed to see Papuan girls as hostesses. On arriving at Jackson Airport, indigenous people were observed attending to all formalities around the aircraft, and even in the terminal most of the officials were Papuans or New Guineans. This was the first thing we wanted our children to realize, that dark-skinned people can carry out a wide variety of responsibilities. The buses that transported us the several kilometres to our first village (Hanuabada) were driven by Papuans. At Hanuabada we were greeted by Bishop Riley Samson of the United Church, and from that moment on we could not help but be impressed with the wonderful hospitality of the people. Children were taken in small groups to stay in different villages and were brought back to a central point when we went as one party on our day tours.

We were given V.I.P. treatment in many places. Mr Brian Amini, Director of the Department of Information, provided us with a guide for our city tours and arranged a special film screening at his headquarters. One group had the opportunity to visit a sitting of the Papua New Guinea House of Representatives and were honoured to meet with members. Later the other group was given an even greater honour, to visit the Prime Minister's Office, and the Prime Minister himself kindly gave some of his valuable time to meet and speak with us. The new buildings where the Prime Minister's offices are really impressed the children, especially those who experienced their first ride in a lift.

A number of schools were visited and the children had an opportunity to see other children at work. They were also taken to the Headquarters of the United Church and met with the Moderator. Visits were made to modern European-styled shops where we were able to see indigenous people working. Handcraft shops were a great attraction, and comparisons in handcraft, and especially prices, could be made. One of the most fascinating sights to the children were the markets, especially Koke Market, which covers a large area where many people trade all day long, every day, selling a wide range of goods and food-stuffs.

We visited the Bomana Police College and the nearby Bomana War Cemetery, which was very impressive. The children saw the Rouna Falls and the hydro-schemes associated with them, then travelled through a rubber plantation, visited the Sirinomu Dam, which involved a trip up a very winding road into the hills at the back of Port Moresby - another experience quite foreign to children here, as Mornington Island is so flat that the concept of hills is hard to develop in their minds.

On Sundays the children worshipped with the local congregation with whom they were staying at the time. Children had the thrill of staying in villages built over the water and eating the local foods. Wherever we went we were always welcomed by enormous meals consisting of locally grown vegetables, yams, taro, sweet potatoes, sago, tapioca, locally caught fish, plus chicken, pig, bandicoot and wallaby. Many of the villagers performed traditional dancing and were fully dressed up for the occasion. On the journey to Hula, the furthest point visited, we would be greeted at small villages by the whole community. Freshly cut coconuts full of cool fresh milk were given to the children, and as the people on the whole spoke the local language, our children experienced for the first time, greetings being translated for them. Fortunately Rev. Amini spoke Motu and Hula language, so acted as our interpreter on all occasions.

At one village we were all taken for a trip down a jungle-clad river in fast outboard canoes which was most exhilarating. We had the opportunity of seeing men build these canoes. We visited several village schools and the staff had the chance to meet with one of the district inspectors, and have a professional chat. We were all very impressed with the standard of work observed in all community schools. At each school visited, we made a small presentation of a Mornington Island boomerang and a copy of Dick Roughsey's *Rainbow Serpent*, which won the Picture Book Award this year. Mr Dick Roughsey is a Mornington Islander.

In the evenings at each village we stayed at, the local people presented dances and traditional music, and our children, especially the boys, responded with Aboriginal dances. We carried a didgeridoo with us and that was a great attraction. Most afternoons we assembled the children and they spent a period of an hour or so writing a report of the day's activities in their project books. Teachers used this time to speak with the children and explain various aspects of the day. Wherever we went, people showered us with gifts of all kinds, including foods. Unfortunately, we had to explain that we could not take food out of the country, nor take it in to our own country. Some of our children obviously didn't understand this, as Customs kindly removed yams and coconuts from one or two ports in each group.

We set out to visit another country populated by dark-skinned people and to see their pattern of life. Thanks to the very wonderful generosity of the people of the areas we visited, we were able to *experience* another way of life. The children met with people from all fields of work. There were air hostesses, customs officials, ticket clerks, bus drivers, policemen, shop assistants, bank officers, school teachers, ministers of religion, mechanics, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, army officers - and so the list could go on.

The children noted continually how very clean and tidy villages were kept. They had experience of using another currency, the Kina, worth \$1.04 and the Toea. Few could really understand why we had to buy and sell money. They had the rather disconcerting experience of being stared at, for though they are dark-skinned, the Papua New Guinea people flocked to look at our children wherever we went. The cry "Aborigines!" could often be heard. Because our children frequently were billeted out with people they did not know, they had to rapidly stand on their own feet. They had to look after their clothes and money, and these are aspects of life which are not forced upon them in their own community as there is usually somebody around to do things for them.

Many of the children in Papua New Guinea wish to correspond with our children, and as English is the official language, we have already encouraged letter-writing and the development of pen friends.

Since returning, both groups have spent a considerable time going through the program with their class teachers and preparing a second project book, and this activity is reinforcing the various sections of the tour. A photo album made up of colour prints is now being prepared, as is a presentation of slides. Children are writing articles about the trip for the *Pics Paper*, and these, along with black and white photographs will form the centre section of the final edition of the paper for the year.

EVALUATION

We feel that our children gained much from the tour in a wide variety of areas. From the above outline of highlights, it is obvious that a wide range of new concepts was developed - the staff feel confident that basically we achieved what we set out to do. Our children are far more aware that there is an outside world which is very much alive. They could actually witness the everyday life of two different cultures, viz., European in and around Cairns, and Papuan and New Guinean in towns and villages. They saw how another dark-skinned race tackles the problems of living. They could make comparisons of

the way these people live and their own life style. They were surprised to see some familiarities, for example, hunting and eating wallaby; making handcraft as a means of earning money. They were particularly made aware of how lucky they are to have a very well-equipped school. Most of the schools visited in Papua New Guinea were very old buildings, often with no walls or windows, and little equipment other than a blackboard and a few books, but as already mentioned, the standard of work was very high. All areas of our curriculum were covered by the activities.

Language. Communication was very vital, and we were pleased to note our children overcoming shyness and asking questions. The children could see a real need for a knowledge of *Maths* as they travelled, especially in the areas of money and measure. The children were encouraged to keep a record of money spent, but this proved to be a task too demanding for them. In *Social Science* we could study a variety of areas. Transport was naturally dominant. All children travelled on four different aircraft, had a train trip from Cairns to Kuranda, and a bus trip. In Papua New Guinea they travelled in a wide variety of vehicles and outboard canoes. We were able to show the groups a wide range of land forms around Cairns and the Atherton Tableland, and then in Papua New Guinea itself. We were also able to note land usage - the large farming areas around Cairns and hinterland compared with the Papua New Guinea garden system.

The children were made aware of the different services society provides for itself through private and government enterprise. A significant point was the lack of any social security benefits for the people of Papua New Guinea, thus creating a situation where everyone had to work to live and support those unable to work. Children who left school either went to Port Moresby for work or had to stay in the villages to assist in providing food and shelter.

Our children were particularly impressed with the music and dancing of the people, and since returning, one frequently hears music of Papua New Guinea being played on cassette recorders. Though we did not see a big *Sing Sing*, we were given a mini-version in one village, and that gave us a good idea of the style of such an event. Our visit to the National Cultural Centre was of tremendous value, as were visits to handcraft shops and markets where craft was being made. The traditional welcomes afforded us gave us a real insight into the wonderful generosity that these people have always been noted for. Different foods coupled with a different manner of eating, especially serving, (male members of the village are served and waited upon first, then the women eat afterwards) were observed.

Our major evaluation of the tour has been the re-doing of the

Project Book. A variety of subject areas has been covered, including written and oral language, maths, social science and the arts, including music. Large black and white prints which have been processed in the school dark room have helped to stimulate and remind the children of experiences enjoyed. Over forty contributions to the final edition for 1976 of *Pics Paper* have been forwarded to the editors. A large number of letters have been received from children in Papua New Guinea and our children are replying with eagerness - this in itself is noteworthy. A social evening for the children who participated in the trip took place on one of the beaches, where songs were sung around the fire and New Guinea talk was the theme. An excellent display of artifacts, including gifts from the various villages we visited, has been arranged in the Grade 7 classroom, and is a constant reminder of the tour.

Because of delays in processing, the slide presentation is yet to come, and should be a major highlight for all, as it is by this means that the whole community will be able to share in what has easily been the most successful educational tour conducted so far at this school.

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THE 'DOGS' OF INALA

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In this article I attempt to point out the types of children I worked with, the problems they had, and some of the ways I attempted to overcome these problems.

The basic idea was for me to work from 2.30 p.m. to 8.30 p.m. helping under-achievers master some fundamental language skills. This appears very clear-cut. However, I think, as the article progresses, the Inala nightmare suddenly grows upon you. I write informally throughout this article - the work was much the same. Within a broad framework plan, the spontaneity and understanding needed in unexpected situations flourished best. Some incidents and sayings are dispersed throughout the work.