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REPORT

FIRST NATIONAL
ABORIGINAL TEACHER AIDE WORKSHOP
RECOMMENDATIONS

The first national Aboriginal Teacher Aide Workshop, organized by Alan Randell, Margaret Valadian and Art More and hosted by the Queensland Department of Education, was held in Brisbane, 19-22 June, 1978. It was attended by Aboriginal teacher aides from all states who, during the three day workshop, identified common areas of concern about the education of Aborigines and proposed acceptable strategies to achieve stated goals. We present below the recommendations from the report of the workshop.

AREA OF CONCERN:

ABORIGINAL INVOLVEMENT IN AND SUPPORT OF SCHOOL PROGRAMS

ABORIGINAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Recommendation 1: This workshop recommends that Aboriginal Advisory Committees be established in all schools with significant Aboriginal enrolments.

ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY AND TOWN COUNCILS

Recommendation 2: ...that Aboriginal community and town councils be encouraged by school principals to have greater participation in schools for their children.

SPECIAL MEETINGS, INFORMAL SOCIAL OCCASIONS AND SPORTS ACTIVITIES

Recommendation 3: ...that Aboriginal Teacher Aides explore a variety of ways to encourage effective communication between school and Aboriginal community and participation of Aboriginal parents in school programs.

ABORIGINAL SCHOOL VISITORS' PROGRAM

Recommendation 4: ...that Aboriginal School Visitor Programs be extended (especially to urban centres) and that Aboriginal people be regularly invited in from the local communities to talk with the school children about their culture - such visits to include Aboriginal and Islander identities talking about their work-achievements.

Recommendation 5: ...that each education system provide finance in order to pay Aboriginal resource people who have to take time off work to be able to make a contribution to a school program.

EXCURSIONS

Recommendation 6:...that Aboriginal parental involvement in excursions be increased significantly.

NEWSLETTER FOR ABORIGINAL TEACHER AIDES AND PARENTS

Recommendation 7: ...that (a) each State Aboriginal Consultative Group or Advisory Committee be responsible for preparing and distributing a regular newsletter specifically for Aboriginal Teacher Aides and Aboriginal parents and

(b) the National Aboriginal Education Committee be asked to co-ordinate as necessary.

PREPARATION OF SPECIAL CIRCULAR FOR DISTRIBUTION TO TEACHERS OF ABORIGINAL CHILDREN

Recommendation 8: ...that a circular be prepared by the appropriate officer in each State Education Department for distribution to schools with significant Aboriginal enrolments inviting teacher interest and commitment in working towards greater Aboriginal Teacher Aide and parent participation in school programs.

AREA OF CONCERN :

SOCIAL BACKGROUND

TEACHER EDUCATION - PRESERVICE

Recommendation 8 (a):...that each State Superintendent of Aboriginal Education work with administrators of teacher training institutions and other appropriate bodies to see that units that cover the social background of the Aboriginal child are included in the curriculum of the institution and to arrange for this recommendation to be placed on the agendas of school principals' conferences as early as possible for the benefit of Aboriginal children.

TEACHER EDUCATION - INSERVICE

Recommendation 9 : ...that State Superintendents arrange special in-service courses and seminars for principals and staff of schools having problems arising out of inadequate feeding, clothing, housing and home life for Aboriginal children attending these schools.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ABORIGINAL TEACHER AIDES

Recommendation 10: ...that State Superintendents ensure adequate training programs in the theories of techniques of home and school liaison and parent counselling be provided for Aboriginal Teacher Aides.

CO-ORDINATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

Recommendation 11: ...that State Superintendents promote more effective liaison with other government departments such as health departments, housing and employment authorities etc.

INCREASING STAFF AWARENESS OF RELEVANT INFORMATION

Recommendation 12: ...that State Superintendents provide for the regular publication of appropriate items through newsletters, etc. for staff.

Recommendation 13: ...that State Superintendents ensure that all principals of and teachers in schools serving Aboriginal children are aware of the availability of magazines about Aboriginal affairs.

INCREASING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LIAISON BETWEEN TEACHERS, COMMUNITY AND COMMUNITY AGENCIES

Recommendation 14: ...that principals, teachers and Aboriginal Teacher Aides carefully consider how they might increase the effectiveness of liaison and co-operation between teachers, community and community agencies (e.g. DAA officers, homemakers etc.)

EMPLOYMENT

Recommendation 15: ...that the Department of Aboriginal Affairs establish within towns, employment schemes for Aborigines who are unemployed.

HEALTH

Recommendation 16: ...that the Health Department send a representative from the State Health Departments or the Aboriginal Medical Services to visit communities every six to seven months and that such community services be directed to the Aboriginal parents and community, carefully explaining their services and helping the Aborigines to understand and overcome present social health problems.

HOSTEL ACCOMMODATION

Recommendation 17: ...that Aboriginal Hostels Ltd provide hostels in all areas where overcrowding and inadequate housing for families exists.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ABORIGINAL AND EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Recommendation 18: ...that Aboriginal and European Councils and other appropriate community organisations develop a better relationship between each other, working together for the one aim of upgrading the standards in the problem areas of health, housing and employment and developing one Australian community and not two.

AREA OF CONCERN:

ABORIGINAL TEACHER AIDES' ROLE, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

PERMANENCY OF EMPLOYMENT

Recommendation 19: ...that all Aboriginal Teacher Aides employed throughout Australia and the Islands be given permanent status.

Recommendation 20: ...that the State Superintendents liaise with their State Aboriginal Education Consultative Committees and Department of Aboriginal Affairs to include provisions in the Department of Aboriginal Affairs budget for additional funds to bring about the changes, from temporary status to permanent status for all Aboriginal Teacher Aides throughout Australia and the Islands.

Recommendation 21: ...that (a) the National Aboriginal Education Committee bring this matter to the attention of the Federal Minister for Education and the Public Service Board, requesting that appropriate action be taken to bring about the change of status of all Aboriginal Teacher Aides throughout Australia and the Islands

and (b) State Aboriginal Consultative Groups bring this matter to the attention of their Ministers and that State or Commonwealth Ministers for Education place this recommendation on the agenda for the next meeting of the Australian Education Council.

TRAINING FOR ABORIGINAL TEACHER AIDES

Recommendation 22: ...that training courses be established in every State to ensure that all Aboriginal Teacher Aides reach their full potential and increase their effectiveness in the schools and community.

Recommendation 23: ...that Superintendents see ways on how they can get training courses started for all their Aboriginal Teacher Aides.

EXCHANGE OF ABORIGINAL TEACHER AIDES

Recommendation 24:... that Superintendents investigate the feasibility of starting Aboriginal Teacher Aide Exchange programs.

THE TITLE "ABORIGINAL TEACHING ASSISTANT"

Recommendation 25:...that the term "Aboriginal Teaching Assistant" be used for all Aborigines employed as teacher aides in our schools.

AREA OF CONCERN:

SCHOOLS PROGRAM

SPEAKING ENGLISH

Recommendation 26: ...that in bilingual schools:

- a) both Aboriginal language and English (oral and written) be taught from pre-school to Grade 5
- b) only English be taught from Grade 5 to Post Primary and
- c) both English and Aboriginal language be taught again after Post Primary.

Recommendation 27:...that support be given for a survey to be undertaken by Aboriginal Teacher Aides, designed to gather information from the community councils and parents as regard to their views on how well the Aboriginal children speak English in primary grades.

THE "BRAIN DRAIN"

Recommendation 28:...that the Department consider setting up a house in Central Arnhem Land to train Aboriginal Teacher Aides so that for most of the trainees, they would be closer to their communities.

Recommendation 29:...that another Aboriginal Teacher Aide be able to be employed from the community, to take the place of the trainee who is away to avoid any gap in the school for the twelve months while the trainee is away or longer, if the trainee does not return.

PARENT TEAM TEACHING

Recommendation 30: ...that parents have opportunities for greater participation in school programs by:

- a) a day being set aside each week for people from the community to come into the school to teach the children bark painting, weapon making, tribal dancing, etc.,
- b) parents and interested teenagers coming into the school each day to help with reading,
- c) both the parents and the teacher taking the children from the schools on excursions into the bush (NB. these could be used as an extension to their Social Science) and
- d) teachers asking parents to be responsible for the discipline of problem children.

AREA OF CONCERN:

TEACHERS OF ABORIGINAL CHILDREN

ORIENTATION FOR NEW STAFF RUN BY ABORIGINAL TEACHER AIDES

Recommendation 31: ...that

- a) Superintendents ask principals to make sure that the Aboriginal Teacher Aides run an orientation course for all new teachers coming into the school,
- b) Superintendents provide assistance to Aboriginal Teacher Aides to help them prepare the necessary material during third term of each year,
- c) Superintendents recommend to principals that during this time of preparation they allow the Aboriginal Teacher Aides half a day or one day per week as a working day to get orientation items together in readiness for new staff, so that the new teachers coming to the school will get a better knowledge of the school and Aboriginal customs and
- d) Aboriginal Teacher Aides from the regions prepare manuals about their communities and the Aboriginal people (customs etc.) to give to the new staff.

ATTITUDES OF STAFF TO CHILDREN

Recommendation 32: ...that Principals explain to teachers the need to have an understanding attitude towards Aboriginal children.

Recommendation 33: ...that

- a) Superintendents explain to principals and teachers that Aboriginal Teacher Aides are employed on the staff as part of a team in the school to work as part of a team therefore Aboriginal Teacher Aides should be treated as members of the staff and
- b) Superintendents request principals to see that Aboriginal Teacher Aides are present when staff meetings are held.

LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF ABORIGINAL TEACHER AIDE ROLE BY STAFF

Recommendation 34: ... that

- a) Superintendents talk to the principals at the next school principals' conference about the special role of the Aboriginal Teacher Aide and
- b) Superintendents talk to Colleges of Advanced Education's training teachers and school staff about the special role of Aboriginal Teacher Aides.

Recommendation 35: ...that as soon as possible Superintendents advise school principals by letter of the desirability of releasing Aboriginal Teacher Aides for home visits during school hours.

Recommendation 36: ...that Superintendents explain to principals and teachers that Aboriginal Teacher Aides are there for a reason and that they be able to discipline children in the school the same as teachers.

SUPERINTENDENTS' SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH ABORIGINAL TEACHER AIDES

Recommendation 37: ...that when Superintendents visit schools, Aboriginal Teacher Aides should have confidential meetings with the Superintendents, without the Principal being present.

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