



The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

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People realise the unit is self-contained. It can move to an area and out again as necessary. It moves to the areas on request, stays to cover the group requirements and then moves on. Since the unit moves away, the tribal people can be sure of maintaining their own affairs. People have time to assess the involvement of the unit and work out what they want from the next visit. In this way requests have tended to become more specific and allied to a wider need.

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REPORT:

ABORIGINAL ORAL HISTORY CONFERENCE

An Aboriginal Oral History Conference was held at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies on June 16, 17 and 18.

Aborigines and non-Aborigines active in recording and documenting oral history discussed the importance of carrying out this work. In some cases there is special urgency to record the histories of older people while they are still alive. It was also noted that history and its study are ongoing processes and that the opinions and memories of young Aborigines today are important to Aboriginal history and identity. The conference also discussed the importance of Aboriginal history to general Australian social history.

The social relevance of oral history in Aboriginal land claims, for the cultural education of Aboriginal children and in rectifying the ethnocentric slant of Australian history was discussed.

Mr Michael Mace, the Chairman of the Aboriginal and Islander Advisory Committee to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies said :

Oral history is an important part of the continuing struggle for Aboriginal land rights, self-determination and cultural autonomy. Aboriginal history must be recorded and written by Aboriginal researchers, and Aboriginal people must remain the custodians and guardians of our culture. We urge that Aboriginal researchers be funded to carry out the work and that regional Aboriginal resource centres be established and funded. We will seek further support from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, from the government and from academics to work towards full recognition of the status of Aboriginal culture and history.

Recommendations will go from the conference to the Australian Law Reform Commission and other agencies, on the necessity to recognize Aboriginal oral evidence as admissible evidence in courts throughout Australia, as it is in land claim hearings in the Northern Territory. Also removal of the continuous occupation requirement in land claims, if it can be proved by Aboriginal history that a particular group of Aboriginal people were removed from their land by force or duress.

Mrs Mollie Dyer, one of the conference participants, awarded the A.M. in this year's Queen's Birthday Honours for services to Aboriginal family welfare, noted the relevance of oral history to the prevention of family and identity breakdown among adopted and fostered children. She recommended that Aboriginal oral history become part of school curricula at all levels.

The conference will also recommend that the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies recognise the importance of Aboriginal history in its committee structure and membership.

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