



The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

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ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER VIEWS

WHAT TRAINEE TEACHERS AND TEACHERS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ABORIGINAL CHILDREN .

N.S.W. Aboriginal Education Consultative Group.

The New South Wales Aboriginal Education Consultative Group feels that more emphasis needs to be placed on the training of teachers in regards to Aboriginal education.

Many first year teachers are sent to country areas with a relatively high percentage of Aboriginal students. In the main, these teachers have had little or no contact with Aboriginal children or parents.

The Consultative Group has drawn up a list of points which they feel should be included in teacher training programs:-

1. HEARING PROBLEMS

Many Aboriginal children have hearing defects, glue ear being the cause of the majority of hearing defects.

How does one detect glue ear?

- a) *Inattentiveness.* As fluid builds up in the middle ear, the child becomes restless and inattentive. Should parents be contacted because of the child's restlessness, they usually give reasons for the cycle of behaviour, for example, ate certain type of food, relatives visiting. At this point the child feels no pain.
- b) *Irritability.* The child doesn't like to run about. The build up of fluid interferes with balance. The child is irritable and tends to go off food. He can't tell that he has a sore ear.
- c) *Headaches.* The child starts to become conscious something is wrong with his ears, starts to rub his head and complains of headaches.

Often the pressure of the build up of fluid forces the eustachean tubes to open and allows drainage, and the child is all right again.

- d) *Soft Voice*. Teachers should be aware of the soft voiced child, as this can indicate hearing problems.
- e) *Time of Year*. The time of year can also be taken into account; glue ear can be more prevalent in hot weather owing to dust, dirty water, pollen, etc.

2. CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Reference should be made to the paper, *Understanding of Cultural Differences*¹, by John Harris (former Consultant for Aboriginal Education in New South Wales).

3. PREPAREDNESS FOR SCHOOL

Aboriginal children in the main are not prepared for school compared with European children. Lack of social experiences, books, pencils, crayons, scissors etc., in most homes.

4. LANGUAGE.

Language can be a problem as many Aboriginal families still use dialect in the home. Because of the restricted use of English, teachers tend to assume the child is backward and he/she is usually placed in O.A. or G.A. classes. Therefore there is a need for strong language programs.

5. PARENTS

Aboriginal parents are reluctant to visit schools, largely because of their own experiences at school. Reference should be made to *Aboriginal Education in N.S.W, the Past, Present and the Future*, by J. Harris.²

6. HOME ENVIRONMENT.

Teachers should attempt to become familiar with the background of the child and the problems that stem from that background - overcrowding in homes, lack of study facilities, health etc.

¹ Copies available from Mrs. Y. Bolton, Executive Officer, N.S.W. Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, Box 415, P.O. North Sydney, 2060.

² As above.

7. NOTES HOME.

It can be a pointless exercise sending notes home with an Aboriginal child. The bulk of parents are poor readers and often cannot understand the note if simple English is not used.

8. POSITIVE APPROACH

Trainee teachers should be encouraged to look for positive aspects of the child rather than negative.

9. ABORIGINAL AGENCIES

Trainee teachers should be made aware of Aboriginal agencies to help the children - teacher aides, Aboriginal health workers and Aboriginal home school co-ordinators; various services offered by Youth and Community Services.

10. EYE TO EYE CONTACT

If the child will not look at the teacher, it can indicate that the child feels it is lack of respect if he looks directly at an older person. In many cases the child may feel inferior.

11. WARMTH

Aboriginal children need to be shown warmth and affection - need to be touched by the teacher.

12. SHARING

Many Aboriginal children have very strong concepts of sharing. For example, a young teacher at an all-Aboriginal school had to make kindy children realize she was not going to share objects on her desk.

13. TREATMENT OF SWEARING

Teachers need to be given strategies and told what to do, if a child swears at the teacher.

14. PROMOTE SELF ESTEEM

- a) Include works by Aboriginal authors in the school curriculum :
Dick Roughsey, Kath Walker, Robert Merrett, Faith Bandler.
- b) Invite Aboriginal people to talk to children in schools about the work they do, for example, Aboriginal health workers; members of the Aboriginal communities.

The Consultative Group is planning on broadening these basic points for distribution to teachers and Colleges of Advanced Education. Comments would be welcome and should be sent to:

Mrs Yvonne Bolton, Executive Officer,
N.S.W. Aboriginal Education Consultative Group,
Box 415, P.O. North Sydney, 2060

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JUDY INGLIS MEMORIAL PRIZE

ESSAY COMPETITION OPEN TO TERTIARY LEVEL STUDENTS

The Judy Inglis Memorial Prize is awarded for essays of up to 5000 words in the field of Aboriginal Studies focusing on social change. Individual or community histories, development projects, education, traditional and contemporary life or similar topics are appropriate.

A prize of \$50 will be awarded for the essay judged to be the best, and publication of the essay is anticipated in a suitable professional journal.

CONDITIONS

Entrants should be registered students at a tertiary institution in Australia. Essays must have been written during 1979. Entries for 1979 close on 15 DECEMBER, 1979. Essays should be clearly typed on one side of the paper only, and two copies should be sent to:

The Convenor,
Judy Inglis Memorial Prize Committee,
Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies,
P.O.Box 553,
Canberra City, A.C.T. 2601