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ACROSS AUSTRALIA.....

FROM TEACHER TO TEACHER



CULTURAL STUDIES :
COMPARATIVE AT A.T.E.C.

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The following Cultural Studies program has been working at A.T.E.C., Batchelor, for two years. The initial fears (how are you going to teach Aborigines about their own culture? etc.) have been laid to rest and the course entered its second year in a very strong position with a lot of support coming from students.

The structural components of the course come from three areas: Paulo Friere's *Education for Critical Consciousness*, Beattie's *Other Cultures*, and documentation from the East West Centre, Hawaii, on *Cross Cultural Orientation Techniques*.

The course runs for four years and is based on a spiral concept with eight subjects discussed each year: law, politics, leadership, economics, kinship, family, language, religion.

An overriding perspective for each subject area is SELF, YOU (OTHER), US. This is the main driving theme behind the course because it allows us to perceive that:

- a) all men are the same
- b) all men are different.

During the first three years of the program, floating themes are also applied to each of these eight subject areas. These floating themes become more complex as the student goes through the program. Thus the 1st Year basic anthropological concepts are introduced, symbols of culture, relationship to environment, etc. This develops through 2nd Year, to a much deeper concept of Identity in 3rd Year concepts such as Knowledge, world identity, the Aboriginal position in world religion, law, politics, etc.

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STRUCTURE AND AIMS OF INTEGRATED ABORIGINAL STUDIES COURSE

Three Theme Techniques

1. Paulo Friere - from *Education for Critical Consciousness* (10 points and keywords).
2. Anthropological - they study aspects of European society.
3. East West Centre - on cross-cultural orientation techniques. Basic anthropological concepts.

The techniques represent:

1. SELF

Consciousness

Expansion

Aboriginal activities

AIMS

Assist students to maintain and extend identification with and pride in mother culture

(IDENTITY)

2. YOU

Field Study of
European activities

3. US

Shared experiences
Translatability

Assist students to understand the mechanisms that assist Europeans to maintain and extend their cultural links

(EUROPEAN IDENTITY)

Recognize differences in social structure, family organization. Patterns of authority etc.

(TRANSLATABILITY)

The degree to which their traditional life can be sustained in the face of increasing alien intrusion.

1st Year Model

<u>ABORIGINAL SOCIETY</u>		<u>EUROPEAN SOCIETY</u>		<u>TRANSLATABLITY</u>
<u>SELF</u>		<u>YOU</u>		<u>US</u>
<u>UNIT 1</u>	<u>Language</u>	<u>Kinship</u>	<u>Family</u>	<u>Floating Themes</u>
	12 hours	12 hours	12 hours	1. Basic anthropological concepts
	(6 hours x 8 fortnights)			2. Symbolism
				3. Nature
<u>UNIT 2</u>	<u>Law</u>	<u>Religion</u>	<u>Politics</u>	4. Land
	12 hours	12 hours	12 hours	5. Country
				6. Bureaucracy, Society
				a) structure
				b) function
				c) fieldwork

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2nd Year Model

<u>ABORIGINAL SOCIETY</u>		<u>EUROPEAN SOCIETY</u>		<u>TRANSLATABLITY</u>
<u>SELF</u>		<u>YOU</u>		<u>US</u>
<u>UNIT 3</u>	<u>Language</u>	<u>Kinship</u>	<u>Family</u>	<u>Tradition v. Change</u>
	12 hours	12 hours	12 hours	History
	(6 hours x 8 fortnights)			Written and Oral Traditions
<u>UNIT 4</u>	<u>Law</u>	<u>Religion</u>	<u>Politics</u>	Deviance
	12 hours	12 hours	12 hours	Magic
	(6 hours x 8 fortnights)			

3rd Year Model

ABORIGINAL SOCIETY EUROPEAN SOCIETY TRANSLATABLITY

SELF

YOU

US

UNIT 5

Language

Kinship

Family

Economics

Floating Themes

12 hours

12 hours

12 hours

12 hours

Knowledge

Personal identity

Family identity

Social cultural

National identity

World identity

UNIT 6

Law

Religion

Politics

Leadership

12 hours

12 hours

12 hours

12 hours

CONTENT

KINSHIP

FAMILY

Love; Bible (Leviticus); Family Law Bill; Divorce; Legitimacy; Adultery; Extra, Pre-marital Sex; Serial Polygamy; Marriage:Birth, Death; Avoidance; Terms; Rules; Polygamy

ECONOMICS

Unemployment; Wages/Taxation; Boss/Worker; Public/Private Enterprise; Unionism; Inflation; Capitalism-Socialism; Means of Production; Real Estate; Ownership; Work; Trade; Division of Labour; Production; A.B.T.A.

LAND

Urban/Rural Relationship; Relationship to Land; Attaining Food; Transport; Recreation; Aesthetics; Art/Craft; Mining; Cattle; Tourism; Land Rights; Traditional Relationship; Royalties; Land Councils.

RELIGION

Bible; Beer Can Regatta (Folk Religion); Football (Sport); Non-Christian Australians; God, J.C., V.M., Saints, etc.; Taboos; Stories; Sacred Sites; Ceremonies; Natural Regeneration; Increase Cycle.

LEADERSHIP AND LAW

Parliament; Election; Party Politics; Campaigning; Voting; 2 House System;
Pressure Groups; Ceremonial Bosses; Land Ownership; Elders

LANGUAGE

Poetry; Prose; Drama; Novels; Newspaper; Media; Communication; Poetry; Songs;
Stories; Myth; Dance; Painting; Smoke; Spiritual Messages.

POLITICS

Large Scale; Legislative Assembly; Multi-Nationals; Super Powers; Democracy -
Socialism; Individual Rights; N.A.C.; Intergroup Relationships; Land Rights;
Invasion; Individual Rights

The course is comparative - (SELF, YOU, US). Given below are some examples of how this is effected:

COMPARISON

Song of Songs

Arnhem Land Love Song Cycle, Goulburn Island

Easter Ceremony
(Christian)

Barnimbirr (Morning Star), Arnhem

Creation Dreamtime
Mehinaeu (S. America)

Dreamtime Stories, Aboriginal

Civil Law - Australian

Religious Law - Aboriginal

The teaching technique used is presentation of basic framework of discussion, division into discussion groups, discussions with lectures as facilitator, report back, posing of new discussion angle from materials prepared in previous discussion. The lecturer must have a good practical working relationship with an Aboriginal group (where he draws his experience) and must also know many of the cognitive styles of the group so he can draw parallels when the opportunity (discussion group) presents relevant facts.

The students are able to work at their own levels as the course develops and since students come from all areas of "the Aboriginal life style" all find satisfaction in being made aware of his particular culture.

Language is a limited barrier; some of the examples of students' work presented are good examples of how people can still talk about their culture with all levels of language ability. Both examples below come from people with traditional backgrounds, one with extensive European education, the other with limited European education. However, it can be seen that both express the content of the relationship well - one in the language and expression of English, the other within the limits of English as a second language, but at the same time preserving the patterns and content of her own language very effectively.

"Relationship with Mother and Father"

Mother, she always get her relationship with Father, because when they both married they have lots of relationship between the both. When a Father want to go out hunting, the Mother she goes too. They both found food, then she goes in the bush and she looks for yams. The father he goes down along the beach and he spear some fish to bring back. When the mother finish digging yams she come out of the bush and she started to make a fire so she can cook the yams. While the yams are cooking, she lie down and go to sleep. She wait for her husband to be back to eat some yam. Then the father comes back. He's carrying some fish. When he get there he feel very tired and weak. So the father say to his wife, "I've brought some fish back for us to eat". Then mother say to father, "Please have some rest - go to sleep for awhile. When we both get up we can cook our fish". So they both go to sleep. After a while they both get up and start to cook the fish. When it cooks they both get up and start for home. When they

get home they give some fish and yams to their family - like the mother goes and gives her family some fish and yams to eat, the same with the father. Also they feed their children too. They both go to bed and sleep. If the mother wants some more children, she have to talk to her husband, so that they can have some more children. If a mother went for a walk to visit her friends she can get more relationship with her friend. Sometimes she take her children with her to see some friends. It goes the same with the father. He get more relationship with his mate, or he goes to his parents. She stays for just as long as she wants, then she goes back home and she starts her relationship with a husband. Both love each other very much. The father loves mother very much - she loves him too, and they both like each other.

"Family Relationship - Father/Son" (Son about 21)

The father gives some advice to the son - that's if the son comes to him for advice. The father should never refuse to give it to him if he comes to ask. The son may go to other relatives too, if he likes to, like his father's brothers or mother's brothers.

The father may help his son to do some work, like cooking kangaroo, and show him how to cut it up in proportions for the family. They both can go hunting together. They help each other at ceremony time in handling sacred things. It's the father who shows the son his dreaming birth rights and totemic line, and relationship to other totems. The father may help his son to make weapons, boomerang spears, nulla-nulla, etc.

The father and son can eat together when they want to, but they don't eat in front of their women - or with them. They eat a distance away from the father's humpy, the sister or the mother or other sibling has to bring the food to them. Father and son may fight other people together but they never should fight each other. The son learns all his fighting skills from his father once he has been circumcized.

They should love each other - by this I mean that they should have lots of respect for each other, be likeable towards each other and by doing these things there never

should be any antagonism between them. There should be a deep mutual friendship between them and that's why I think that's love in its own kind of way.

The father and son should share their food, weapons, some responsibilities (when the son is about this age). The son should defend the family, when the father is away from troubles. The son should provide food and a sense of togetherness with the family by just being close to them all the time.

If the son is married, they never talk about their sex life to each other. This would seem obscene to each of them. The father copulates with the mother and the son with his own wife. They'd never, even in fun or when joking together, refer to sex about each other. They may talk about certain other men or certain other women. These people would be in the father's WMB and WMBS and WMBD, and the father would joke about them to his son. The son in return would joke about his WMB, WMBS, and WMBD. These people would be o.k. to joke about because they are the wife's family. And they'd do the same too (vice versa). They'd be father, son and daughters of the other moiety. The father can be friendly to few other women but they'd have to be the same skin group of his wife. He should never copulate with them. The son can be on the same terms with his wife's sisters (same skin group).

I will talk very little more about the course, but include examples of students' work.

("You" in the following extract refers to the lecturer.)

My mother comes from the song and ceremonies of the "honey ant" dreaming. It has a lot of meaning to the Aranda people as well, even though it started from Papunya and travelled northwards to Anmatjerri tribal country. But if we took your learning experience spent with the Port Keats Aboriginal people it starts from the main idea when you married your wife who's of that particular tribe. You have been classed into their system of skin grouping, blood lines, and social relationships. You have learned a lot of your work from reading books, studying in teacher training C.A.E.'s (Torrens) and also D.C.C.

The difference about our learning experiences with the Aboriginal Culture is I was accepted in my tribe because my family is all Aboriginal, and I was born into the Aboriginal culture, whereas you came from a European family background, studied in Training Centres, but the thing that shook up your knowledge of Aboriginal culture is through the marriage of your wife.

"Cultural Symbols - Symbol"

This symbol is in remembrance of a child after his birth. She (mother) keeps the cord until her husband and her family and relations talk it over. When they all agree the father goes away to another settlement and asks the singers and dancers to come and have a ceremony. First the leader of the group sits inside the house and ties the cord on the feathers and string, and then they tie it on to the bird's head just in the middle.

When he is finished he gets the singers and dancers to get ready and take the symbol and hand it to the boy. They do this when the boy is 6 or 7 years old. The father of the boy and all his relations get everything ready, like buying clothes, blankets, sheets to pay the dancers and singers. It takes them about one or two weeks to finish. Because the singer and dancer have to think way back in the dreamtime of this symbol, where the bird comes from, which clan, family and dreaming.

The following response was to the question - "Why does Western culture tend to destroy other cultures it comes into contact with?" The issue had not been discussed in any way during the year but the answer given implies a good use of discussions in other areas during the year

Western culture has ignored our Aboriginal culture and bit by bit it's destroying our beliefs and Mardayin Law. In my culture when a person becomes powerful and debates directly across all men, he is a foolish man because he becomes unpopular with his fellow mankind. It's a powerful culture because the balanda people can make the law by themselves and we can't. They can also make change with new technologies to defend themselves in his country. Western culture has borrowed ideas and is still taking

things away to become more powerful and these tools will slowly destroy our culture.

In a way, this powerful culture can be held up. Sometimes it doesn't know which road to take for survival, friendship, object exchange (import and export) for the sake of the human race. (Seems to be a reference to uranium negotiations).

It is a strong culture but we are slowly reaching into it by learning Western education so that we can express our point of view and prevent a lot of problems that confront our culture. Some people will be assimilated but a great sadness will fall upon them.

Another student from an urban background talks about kinship.

Kinship in Aboriginal Society means much more than in European society, where it is used mainly in terms of blood and blood lineage. In our society kinship involves social and religious relationships as well as blood and blood lineage. It is not only the immediate family but the extended family which includes aunts, uncles, and cousins of both parents, three or four times removed. To my mother and father, who were both taken from their tribe when quite young, anyone who came from that area was considered a relation and was accorded respect from us, their children.

With my European way of thinking I used to wonder how all these relations came about but now I can understand that relationship also involved relationship to the land where they were born. These ties were very strong and the nature of the relationship included responsibilities of sharing and caring for each other, so that one is never alone or bereft of relatives.

There is too a special relationship between those of the same totems and moieties. In the compact well-knitted society of Aboriginal people of former years, there were no loopholes in its structure. It catered for needs of every member. Kinship was and still is one of the mainstays of our Aboriginal Society. It holds people together and gives a sense of belonging and responsibility to each other.

European people try and build up this feeling of kinship through social clubs, societies and religious orders. This is where the strength of a people lie, in its oneness and brotherhood. I am a Christian - I regard those of the same faith as brothers and sisters and in a wider sense all men as my brothers.

The students are keen to see the course develop in a more meaningful way, by division into men and women's groups, comparative Aboriginal culture - Top End Aboriginal life in comparison with Centralian Aboriginal life, more audio-visual material as a basis for discussion of other Native cultures similar to their own, and more transfer of knowledge from traditional people to part-Aboriginal people.

A further point needs to be made that this particular course is but one thrust of a many sided attack on producing an Aboriginal teacher. As well as Cultural Studies (comparative), the course described above, the following units also contribute to this goal:

Aboriginals Today	48 hours/year
Teaching of Bilingual Programs	48 hours/year
Teaching of Cultural Studies	48 hours/year
Development of Personal Approach to Education	48 hours/year
Teaching Skills Aboriginal Style	16 hours/year
Literacy in Aboriginal Language 1	64 hours/year
Literacy in Aboriginal Language 2	64 hours/year
Aboriginal Literature in English	64 hours/year

The last two mentioned are Optional Units which are chosen by the majority of students.

The account given is brief because the course is developing within a minimal framework imposed on the students so that in a true sense the response will be culturally relevant.

References

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(references continued bottom of p.30)

In natural science we talk about different animals on sea and land, we tell how they walk, where they live, what they eat, and what they look like, and also we eat some animals, these are the things we teach them. And in Homeland Centre she talks about some of the outstation areas what tribe of the people live there and what language they speak, and also how they make their shelters.

In Old Ways we also teach them how to cook food and kangaroos and any animals that we eat. Also how to make a fire, how to make spears, dilly bags, yam sticks and many other things. So these are the main things that we teach the children - our own cultural things so that when they grow up they might know many things from us. Not only they learn in school but they learn at home with their mother and father because this is the way we must teach the children to do things in our own way and to speak their own language when they grow up. Sometimes the teacher finds it hard in their preparing a lesson and don't know what to do, so they just come and ask me what to do and I help them. Anyway these are the things that we do in our Aboriginal studies, and we are still doing it now.

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References (continued from p.28)

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