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THE PEOPLE OF BROKEN BAY :
AN ABORIGINAL STUDIES COURSE FOR SECONDARY STUDENTS
CONCEIVED AND IMPLEMENTED BY AN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY MEMBER

*T. Cook

The Aboriginal Studies course outlined here was conceived by Jennie Fraser, a member of the Woy Woy Aboriginal community. In 1979 Jennie, who lives in Woy Woy with her family, approached the principal of Woy Woy High School with a proposal to introduce Aboriginal Studies within the school. The principal, in consultation with the Social Science and History masters, agreed to the idea and responded by allocating for Jennie Fraser's proposed course, a segment of the Years 9 and 10 Social Science program.

This showed considerable flexibility on the part of the school and left Jennie Fraser with a commitment to develop and participate in the teaching of an Aboriginal Studies course in 1980. She realized the constraints on the program, her own lack of teaching experience worried her and the curriculum aspects of developing a unit were of concern to her. However, she had expertise in Aboriginal Studies, and with the assistance of the school, was able to meet appropriate resource personnel. She contacted the Curriculum Consultant (Aboriginal Studies) and several visits and planning workshops were arranged for consultation which was beneficial to all parties concerned. During this process she met with the N.S.W. State Aboriginal Education Consultative Group and a workshop was organised to consider curriculum rationale at which she was able to discuss approaches to designing a unit. Alan Fidock, from the Curriculum Development Centre, attended this workshop.

Out of these meetings Jennie Fraser has been able to develop a course of study in Aboriginal Studies. The course is school based and is organised around five discrete lessons/series of lessons. The central theme of the course is the valuing of social and cultural differences. The course focuses on the question: who are the Aboriginal people of the Broken Bay region? Other questions asked

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include -

1. Where did the contemporary Aboriginal people of Broken Bay come from?
2. How did the current Aboriginal people of Broken Bay get there?
3. Who were the original people of Broken Bay?
4. How has Western society influenced and affected Aboriginal society?
5. In what ways could Aboriginal society contribute to mainstream Australian society?

The rationale, aims and objectives of the course are outlined below.

RATIONALE

The following rationale outlines the reasons behind the development of the unit.

1. The lack of knowledge, understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal society.
2. The need to recognise the multicultural nature of Australian society.
3. The need to develop an awareness and appreciation of contemporary Aboriginal society in the local area.
4. The need for more positive attitudes towards contemporary Aboriginals and contemporary Aboriginal communities
5. The need to recognise and understand the values of the Aboriginal family unit.
6. The need for a local Aboriginal Studies course.
7. The need to involve Aboriginals and the Aboriginal community in the development, writing and teaching of Aboriginal Studies courses.

AIMS

The course aims:

1. To develop knowledge of, and positive attitudes towards, contemporary Aboriginals of the Broken Bay region by studying the local Aboriginal community in historical perspective.
2. To clarify values held towards the local Aboriginal community.
3. To develop an accurate historical account of Aboriginal and European culture contact in the Broken Bay region from both the European and Aboriginal perspectives.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the program are:

1. To evaluate what the pupils know about Aboriginal society generally, and specifically about the Aboriginal people of Broken Bay.
2. To develop an understanding of the origins of Aboriginal society.
3. To develop an understanding and knowledge about the Aboriginal people of Broken Bay now.
4. To develop knowledge and understanding of the Aboriginal people of Broken Bay in the 18th and 19th centuries.
5. To develop knowledge and appreciation of the outcomes of culture contact between Aboriginals and Europeans.
6. To develop knowledge, appreciation and understanding of Aboriginal culture and society before culture contact with Europeans.
7. To develop insight into ways in which Aboriginal society can contribute to mainstream Australian society.
8. To develop an appreciation and awareness of how Western society has influenced and affected traditional and contemporary Aboriginal society.

The program is in progress at Woy Woy High and Jennie Fraser hopes to continue developing and refining the unit. She plans to visit the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies to further research the content of the unit. She is also interested in developing further teaching strategies as she gains experience in the teaching situation.

What is of particular importance in what Jennie Fraser has done is the realisation of the role Aboriginal community members can and should play in the development of Aboriginal Studies courses, and indeed, as with this particular case, the conception and development of Aboriginal Studies courses. An important consideration also, is the role of the school and school systems in providing the supports needed for people such as Jennie Fraser, so that they can get access to the resources and resource personnel they need access to.

That an Aboriginal Studies course has been conceived and implemented by an Aboriginal community member is hopefully a portent for Aboriginal Studies in the 1980's.

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