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Academic

To develop in children a knowledge of the various types of plants in their environment from an Aboriginal viewpoint.

Oral and Written Discourse

Ethnobotany provides an excellent vehicle to stimulate oral and written discourse. With upper-primary children these studies lead easily into Injibarndi language studies, a development we will look at next year.

Methods

Children with the aid of Aboriginal elders make field trips weekly. In doing so the children are able to observe the plant life in the natural environment. From there they collect samples, return to school, press them and record information, both in English and in Injibarndi.

Conclusion

The program has been extremely successful in fulfilling the aims outlined. Essential to the success of this program is a good working relationship between the school and Aboriginal community.

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ABORIGINAL STUDIES IN THE SCHOOL: A PORT AUGUSTA EXPERIENCE

M. Edwards

Following co-ordinated effort on the part of teachers and Aboriginal school assistants from three Port Augusta schools and an Aboriginal Education and Aboriginal Studies adviser throughout 1980, courses have been developed for an Aboriginal Studies program at Year 8 and 9 levels.

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All Year 8 students at Port Augusta High School, Augusta Park High School and Caritas Catholic School currently participate in the one term course. Each of the three secondary schools has committed both teacher time and available facilities to the successful development and implementation of the course. They continue to co-ordinate their activities and resources through the management of an Inter-school Aboriginal Studies Faculty which meets fortnightly.

The initiation of these developments came from the felt need of the schools to cater more for the cultural requirements of the Aboriginal students and to provide *all students* with an insight into local Aboriginal cultures.

Each of the people involved in developing the course had previously made efforts to incorporate elements of Aboriginal Studies in other subject areas like Social Studies, History, English and Science but felt that the topics were not being developed to their full extent. *Also*, whether or not Aboriginal Studies topics were taught tended to depend upon the individual interest of the teachers. By developing a course outline that could eventually be taught at each year level and accepted as a part of the curriculum of the course, writers believed that the future of the course could be ensured.

The course has been running for only one year but the results have been undeniably successful; all students enjoy the different learning experiences which take them outside the traditional classroom practices and introduce them to new people and new ideas.

While texts like *Before the Invasion* and R.M. Bigg's *The Aborigines* are used, emphasis is given to students participating in activities and listening to local people describe their skills.

Aboriginal students are now less hesitant to speak up in class and share their knowledge with teachers and other students, and the schools are gaining more credibility in the eyes of the local Aboriginal community. The Aboriginal community supports the course as the schools are actively encouraging them to play a large part in the program.

The teachers and advisers involved have already prepared an outline of recommended topics for Years 9, 10 and 11 as they see that Aboriginal Studies should be developed as a course with educational significance equal to the more traditional subject areas. Of course, much more detailed work and organisation of resources is required at these levels.

Topics studied at Year 8 level

Mythology
Weapons and Tools
Hunting and Gathering
Preparation of Food and Cooking
Arts and Crafts

Topics proposed for Year 9, 1982

The Adnjamathanha People
Tribal Boundaries
Local Dreaming
Trade and Inter-tribal Relations
Child Raising and Family Structure
Plants and their Uses

In all these areas, we seek to emphasise the study of local Aboriginal cultures with both traditional and contemporary lifestyles in order to avoid giving generalised and therefore inaccurate impressions.

Throughout the writing of the course, Aboriginal advisers insisted that the students should not receive the impression that 'Aboriginal' could only be applied to those people living in tribal areas and following a traditional lifestyle. Wherever possible, people of partial Aboriginal descent who have been raised in an urban environment are invited in to talk to the classes in order to provide a balanced picture of Aboriginal Australians. We are fortunate in that we have the whole-hearted support of Aboriginal organisations in the town. This was demonstrated when the local National Aborigines Day co-ordinating committee invited the classes to contribute to the week's celebrations by performing myths and displaying skills learned through the course.

During this week a play, *The Letter of Hope*, was performed at Augusta Park High School to schools and the public. Approximately 500 students and adults saw it. The people involved in the production were Aboriginal students, teachers and some members of the Aboriginal community under the direction of Rob Seidel, a teacher at Augusta Park High School. The play was unique because of several things. Firstly, the cast devised their own script and scenes through discussion and a need to express certain feelings and thoughts. Secondly, after each performance the cast assembled before the audience inviting criticisms and discussion. This provided a means to make clear what was intended, as well as to discuss the issues concerned.

At Port Augusta High School the course is also integrated with the Pitjantjatjara language course which was funded by a Multicultural Grant in 1980 and is now taught at Years 8 and 9.

The Pitjantjatjara course, introduced in 1980 at Port Augusta High School, has been developed into a two year study by Mrs Millie Taylor, Rosalie Sluggett (Aboriginal Education Adviser) and Andrew

Thomas. It incorporates a study of aspects of the social organization and family structure, and practical experience of children's dance and environmental knowledge. Camps and excursions have been included in the course to enable the students actively to participate in learning environmental skills from Pitjantjatjara people. A book, *Tjukurpa Putitja - Bush Stories*, was written and is being published with accounts, written by students, of building wiltjas, digging up rabbits, finding and using gum, cooking kangaroos, and of other activities.

The courses's major emphasis has been upon the language and the development of the ability to use the language both orally and in a written form. An understanding of the structure of the language is also developed.

It is hoped that the course can be further developed to continue at higher year levels.

As over 20 teachers in Port Augusta are involved in co-ordinating and teaching the course, each with varying familiarity with the subject, an Aboriginal Studies Conference/Camp at Chambers Gorge in the Flinders Ranges was organised early in Term 1, 1981. It aimed at providing teachers with a chance to increase their knowledge and get to know the Aboriginal resource people who have expertise in different fields. Over a four-day period, Cliff Coulthard of the Adnjamathanha Rangers, Mrs Millie Taylor, a Pitjantjatjara woman and Nyirutjuku, an initiated Pitjantjatjara elder were assisted by Terry Coulthard, Buck McKenzie, Andrew Thomas and Roslyn Colson in explaining Aboriginal methods of hunting, food gathering, preparation and cooking of bush foods. It was interesting to compare the Adnjamathanha and Pitjantjatjara methods of cooking. Samples and photographs were taken for future course resources.

Cliff also explained the local mythology of Chambers Gorge and how it is tied into other stories of the Flinders Ranges. The history of the Adnjamathanha people since contact with Europeans was also traced and related to the position of Aboriginal people today. A follow-up camp for teachers also occurred at Nepabunna in the Northern Flinders Ranges during September. Again Aboriginal people (mostly those who attended the Chambers Gorge Camp), were accepted as leaders and instructors, the main difference being that more intensive research work was done.

People from the local community were extremely helpful and offered information, historical documents and photographs, while both traditional and contemporary knowledge of the Adnjamathanha people

was expanded upon. Valuable information was gained - the main part will be used as a basis for the Year 9 course in 1982. The camps provided the Aboriginal teaching assistants and other resource people with a chance to explain to teachers how they saw their roles in the course and the school in general.

The enthusiasm with which the teachers came away from the camps, was largely due to the efforts of the Aboriginal people on the camps. Equally, the success of the course so far is directly attributable to the valuable contributions made by individuals from the local Aboriginal community.

An initiated Pitjantjatjara man, Nyirutjuku, visited one of the Port Augusta High classes regularly. While, at first, many of the students found difficulty overcoming the language barrier, as they had limited Pitjantjatjara and the elder spoke little English, they were obviously impressed that such an important tribal man would give up his time to pass on his knowledge. Mrs Millie Taylor, the school's Pitjantjatjara teacher, and Mr Andrew Thomas, Aboriginal Studies Co-ordinator, acted as interpreters between the students and Nyirutjuku. These visits provided a unique opportunity for many of the students to meet and talk to a tribal elder.

Unfortunately, Nyirutjuku's visits to the class had to be curtailed after he fell ill during the teacher's conference for Aboriginal Studies at Chambers Gorge. As a sign of their concern that he might feel lonely in the hospital, the class made get-well cards in Pitjantjatjara, and a group took them to the hospital, with their teacher.

Mrs Mirian Dadleh's contributions to the teaching of the subject at Port Augusta High School were equally appreciated by the students. Her undeniable talents in instructing young people in the arts of children's games, sand drawings and general aspects of Aranda lifestyles were also an excellent example to the teachers involved. Many students who had previously experienced difficulty in their subjects were captivated by her style and their involvement in their studies improved greatly.

Augusta Park High School experienced similar success in the introduction of Aboriginal Studies into the Year 8 courses.

As a supplement to the classroom teaching of Aboriginal studies camps were arranged for the students at the Pichi Richi campsite in the Flinders Ranges just 20 kilometres from Port Augusta. Three camps occurred and at each, one whole day was spent on activities such as

the identification and collection of plants, hunting for food of various types, playing Aboriginal children's games and learning how to make tracks and identify them. Each day culminated in cooking kangaroo in the traditional way. Of course, eating the meal afterwards was a treat.

Mr Dean Mahomed, Mr Pompeii Lang and Miss Ros Colson were instructors. Importantly, it was these people, as much as what they taught, that influenced the students to learn and enjoy the experiences offered to them.

Also at Augusta Park High School, with the inclusion of the Year 9 course in 1982, they plan to establish a Resource Room similar to the one at Port Augusta High School. This will allow the students to identify with a particular room as a base for Aboriginal Studies. Artefacts would be put in the room on display as well as any work done by students.

Associated with the development of the Aboriginal Studies course, the work done in the Walytja Piti group has been valuable at Augusta Park High School. Walytja Piti, meaning 'family', has now been running for one year. This program caters for Aboriginal students who may have difficulties communicating with their respective teachers, who have home problems which are preventing them from working effectively in class, or who may just need that extra care and attention during High School. We stipulate that the group must be small in number in order to work more effectively.

Walytja Piti is not seen as segregating the Aboriginal student but as a means to help the student to recognise his/her Aboriginality and his/her abilities. Thus the Aboriginal child will be able to cope more and understand himself in his own classroom situation.

The program runs for one term at a time. 1981 program catered for Years 8 and 9 in Term 1, Years 9 and 10 in Term 2 and Years 10 and 11 in Term 3. Hopefully the course will continue in 1982.

Mr Dean Mahomed, Aboriginal Contact Person for 1981-82, spent a lot of time relating Aboriginal myths to the classes and explaining how these stories explain to the Aboriginal people how the world was created. Because of the success of the children's participation in acting out these stories, the local 'Come-Out' Week Committee invited them to tour primary schools during 'Come-Out' Week. This exercise provided good publicity for the course amongst the wider Port Augusta community and enabled the Port Augusta High students to display their skills. Recently Mr Leon Colson has been acting as Aboriginal Contact

Person since Dean's resignation and he, too, shows the same perseverance and patience in his approach to the job. Fortunately, a visit to Port Augusta by Yalata artists and dancers coincided with the teaching of dance and food-making topics. Students were treated to a display of boomerang and spear throwing, the making of weapons, of artifacts, and *inma* (traditional dance).

With each of these visits by Aboriginal people, the students' commitment to the course increased noticeably.

We have found many advantages to be gained from participation of different cultural groups in school activities:

- 1) All students see demonstrations of Aboriginal skills and gain respect and tolerance for different cultural perspectives.
- 2) The Aboriginal students can see that the school places importance on the contributions made by their community and therefore gain confidence in the school environment. Equally importantly, the teachers involved feel more confident that they will not unconsciously trespass upon secret/sacred knowledge that could offend any Aboriginal groups as the course material is checked by representatives of the Aboriginal community.
- 3) As an offshoot, the school gains more credibility in the eyes of the Aboriginal community and therefore improves school/community relations.

Mr Paul Hughes, Chairperson of the South Australian Aboriginal Education Committee and member of the National Aboriginal Education Committee, is a strong supporter of our program: -

The development and implementation of the program is in line with the policies of the NAEC and Aboriginal Education groups around the country. The involvement of the Aboriginal people of the area, the teachers, the schools and the Education Department resource groups culminating in the delivery of such a course is a credit to all involved and a model to other parts of Australia. It is essential that the heritage and history of our people be presented to Australian students. The work done in Port Augusta is an excellent start and a lesson in what can be done if staff, school and Community come together.

Without the involvement of Aboriginal people, the course would lose its unique appeal and relevance to the Port Augusta situation. Consequently, we believe that if we are to show that the schools value their knowledge and expertise, we need to be able to pay them part-time instructor's fees. In this respect, the course is limited only by its ability to attract funding and teachers interested in being a part of the future development of the course.



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"WOOLAH" OVERSEAS

* A. Haydock

**K. Miller

"Woolah" means "Hurray - Well done" in the language of the Aboriginal people of the south-west of Western Australia and is the title of the magazine published by the Aboriginal students at the Kewdale Senior High School¹ and of the program that focuses on the magazine's production.

The aptness of this title has been demonstrated by the students in their latest endeavour, a study tour to Bali, planned and financed by the group. It all started this way :-

In third term 1980, at the conclusion of their Social Studies program and study of various cultures around the world, student discussion centred on how much they would like to travel and see the world for themselves. Their thinking was wishful, centring on the fact that such trips were far out of their reach, in fact impossible to attain.

These were "fightin' words" to the teachers and after much discussion we all made a commitment to travel to South-East Asia in 1981. This commitment had three thrusts -

- 1) to make an in-depth study of the area concentrating on the diversity of the people;

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¹ Twenty-three students in Years 8, 9. 10. Fourteen are from the Kimberleys. The others are from Perth.