



# The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

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

- 2) to make a major study of one minority group that had not only retained its culture but reinforced it in the overall picture,
- 3) to raise the costs involved by themselves.

Firstly, the support and permission of the school principal and the regional superintendent were obtained. The most important step, in our opinion, came next - consultation with the community leaders and parents in the Kimberleys. Many of our students come from that area to Perth for secondary schooling and live in a hostel near the school. The same consultation was sought with the parents of the students living in the Perth area. All were enthusiastic, thought it worthwhile educationally and pledged support. In fact, one Fitzroy parent came on the trip with us as a representative of the community. More parents would have liked to come but were not able, as was the case with one community leader.

The support of the hostel parents was sought and received and they worked actively with the students in fund-raising and saving for the trip. The hostel mother introduced rice and Asian foods into the students' diet so that new and strange foods would not be a traumatic experience as well as unsettling to their metabolism. The help and assistance given by the hostel parents was invaluable.

The students' homework tutors were also made aware of the projected study tour and a homework program was worked out together so that the work in school was reinforced.

In first term 1981, our goal was to travel to Singapore/Malaysia for a fortnight at a cost of A\$600 per student. This was the students' first choice. We set about studying this area, its physical geography, history, ethnic groups, religions and used the festivals and stories of the various groups as the stimulus for the language program.

Fund-raising commenced. Students made craft articles, potted plants, sold raffle tickets, had paper and bottle drives, sold used clothing, made lunches, had community stalls and we all hope we never see another lamington! We obtained a pamphlet delivery contract for weekends. All of this fund-raising was done out of the school area in order not to cut across the fund-raising efforts of the school Parents' and Citizens' Association. Proceeds from additional printing helped considerably. The students put together an edition of their magazine and commenced a statewide drive for subscriptions. Slowly the bank balance built up.

As many of our students are far from home and the family support that helps make fund-raising easier, we did ask service clubs and other organizations if they could help us by having a function for us with students helping at such a function. It was disappointing that there was only one response to this, so the students were really on their own.

The moment of truth came at the end of first term when we realised that the Singapore-Malaysia trip was out of our reach. However we considered that this was a part of the learning process, as we had to look at the reality of the situation and make decisions from the alternatives that were available to us.

After much discussion, the island of Bali fitted our criteria and the fares were A\$150 cheaper per student for the fortnight. The students decided to make their second term project the study of the Balinese people and their brand of Hindu religion which does differ from Hinduism in India. The island of Bali has become increasingly popular with tourists and this added piquancy to the study. There was transfer for the Aboriginal students of Australia in looking at their own culture which is in a minority in Australia and the changes taking place in Bali, to appreciate what makes for sensitivity to other people and their culture. The intrusion of tourism to Bali caused a discussion of the intrusion of mining companies into the Kimberley communities.

So a tentative booking was made to go to Bali in the 'shoulder' season for airline travel, on 5th October 1981. This timing was a lesson in itself as students learned the difference between 'high' and 'low' seasons, the reasons for this, the difference in fare structures, weather, etc. We were all sure that we had made wise decisions when in October, fares, weather, etc. were all perfect.

All the formalities of passports, visas, etc., were included in the program as class exercises, with the students being responsible for obtaining parent's permission when required. Passport photos were processed at the Development Centre. Always it was emphasised that the responsibility for the tour lay with the students, both individually and collectively.

Homework tutors again reinforced this and did exercises in filling in immigration forms, hotel registrations, etc., in consultation with us. Their support was invaluable. If there is one thing "Woollah" students can do - it's fill in any form without a qualm!

A Balinese lady now resident in Perth brought slides to the school and talked with the students about Balinese family life, explaining simple courtesies, giving the students language lessons in everyday phrases and greetings. She cooked Indonesian dishes for us all and even helped with the fund-raising. She visited the hostel with her family in the evenings to show slides and talk with and get to know the students. This culminated in her family entertaining us at their home once we got to Bali. In fact, her brother met us at the airport in case we had any difficulties with language in clearing Immigrasi: an unexpected kindness, but one that summed up the attitude of the Balinese people towards us.

The school nurse, Sister Hodges, became part of the team and accompanied us on the study tour. Both at the school and at the hostel in the evenings, she discussed with the students the health picture in South-East Asia. She helped them become aware of possible problems, precautions that could be taken, and a general awareness of preventive action at all times. The Public Health Department in Australia do not have requirements for treatment that must be taken before visiting Bali. They advise on procedures that could be useful and helpful. However, the students made a choice to take all possible precautions for a trouble-free time and undertook to have typhoid and cholera injections as well as embark on a course of anti-malarial medicine. A local doctor whom the students visit undertook to come to the school, give injections to the group, explain the medical reasons and help complete commonwealth health forms. This awareness was a learning experience in decision-making and made for a trip completely free from any illnesses.

A Balinese doctor, a paediatrician trained at Princess Margaret Hospital in Perth, and a friend of our adopted Balinese family, wrote offering to be our doctor in Bali as a gesture of friendship. This was gladly accepted, and although we did not need medical attention, the doctor and his whole family came to visit and get to know us whilst we were there.

Arrangements were made with Qantas to have a simulation exercise in departure procedures, to include ticket registration, baggage check, immigration and health controls, boarding an aircraft. The Qantas training officer then took us on a tour of a Boeing 747 showing the students all facilities, likely seating and emergency drills. The Qantas staff took quite an interest in the students and on the day of our actual departure arranged a special check-in, gave us the gifts normally reserved for first-class passengers and were at all times most helpful and supportive.

Everyone we met became interested in the students' efforts to get their study tour off the ground. When there were difficulties with obtaining the passports, the Officer-in-Charge of the Department of Foreign Affairs in Perth was helpful and expedited obtaining all our clearances.

By the end of second term, fund-raising was almost complete when the Federal Budget hit us with the new Departure Tax which added \$480 to our costs. Despite representations at both state and federal levels, we were unable to have the tax waived for the students. So we had to quickly find the money. One parent helped to organise a Quiz Night which the staff of the school loyally supported. It also gained the support of the local newspaper for advertising and some local businesses contributed prizes. We wondered, with all the obstacles, if we would ever go.

As far as we could ascertain no other group of Aboriginal secondary students had ever gone on an over-seas study tour\* and for such a unique tour and for such a unique occasion we wanted to make a filmed record. We invited the government and television channels to send a cameraman to accompany us with a view to filming a documentary and all declined.

Twenty-five now made up the contingent. There were nineteen students, two teachers, the school nurse, a parent from Fitzroy Crossing and the hostel mother.

We took off from Perth on 5th October 1981, on Qantas flight 29, for Denpasar. The media took an interest in the tour and visited us at the airport to talk with the students and Mr Ernie Bridge, the member for the Kimberleys, who had come to see us off. Our next trip will be to the TV studios to see ourselves on TV.

Our stay on the island included a variety of experiences. As well as staying in the capital, Denpasar, we went off the tourist track to stay with a Balinese family in their compound in the old capital of Singaraja. We travelled to Java by local bus and ferry. A highlight for many of the students was our stay at Ubud, the art and cultural centre of the island, before returning to Denpasar and then back home. It was a packed two weeks, with the students having unique experiences that are not the lot of most tourists to the island.

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\* See *The Aboriginal Child at School*, Vol.5, No.3, June 1977 -  
Educational Tour to Papua New Guinea, pp.44-52.

This happened because of the kindness of a friend, Janice Mantjika, a New Zealander, who has lived on the island for twenty years. She arranged that we visit ceremonies and dances not being performed for tourists but in villages for their religious significance, e.g., the harvesting of the rice, a temple anniversary, the cremation of a member of the royal family, dinner with the Prince in his palace in Mengwi (a relative of hers). It made for an unforgettable stay.

We also visited the original Aboriginal people of Bali, the Bali Aga in their walled village of Bug Bug, due to the kindness of another friend. This was of considerable interest.

The highlight of the tour was something quite unexpected. A local newspaper had published an account of the students' efforts to get to Bali and this was read by another visiting group. They arranged with their tour guide to catch up with our schedule and in the middle of a road leading through a rice paddy, our bus was waved down and from the bus meeting us poured - A MOB FROM DARWIN! They were trainee teachers from Batchelor College in Darwin who had been there four days and were feeling quite homesick. We had a great meeting and talk in the middle of the trip. One student said, "It was like finding friends in the middle of a strange country."

Each day the students kept a diary and recorded their experiences. From these diaries and the photographs and slides taken on the trip an overseas edition of "Woolah" magazine is being published.

The students used the Balinese equivalent of their names whilst we were there and we used Bahasa Indonesian as much as possible. In fact, as students had learned to count and the rudiments of the money system before leaving Perth, they soon became expert at balancing their budgets and bargaining to stay within their limits. One student became proud of the fact that she was the best bargainer of us all, and she did in fact manage to get goods cheaper than most.

It was interesting that earlier in the year some urban Aboriginal students viewed the study tour with an air of disbelief. Because they still felt that it would never come off, they were less than half-hearted about saving for the journey. In the end, as it looked as if our goal was to be realised, one student took a job baby-sitting to raise her spending money.

Since returning, the students have made displays using our photographs, sorted the slides preparatory to making tape-slide presentations that will be able to be used by the Social Studies Department for the whole school. This has become a realistic exercise

in sequencing. Teaching has become easy; students are self-motivated and disciplined in their work habits; their writing is more fluent as they use slides, diaries and photographs to create a permanent record of the trip for themselves and others. We have tried very hard to have the students relate to the trip at a feeling level, not as moment to moment events. Some have responded to this.

The students are a more cohesive group. Previously there were separations within the group and this was mostly an 'area' separation. The Perth and Kimberley students are now obviously welded into one 'family' and the white students are part of this too. Needless to say, our working together and our sharing of peak experiences has made all our relationships more caring of each other and happier. So impressed were they by the Balinese caring for them that several felt they were motivated to be more welcoming to migrants to Australia.

The students and the parent who came with us felt that the trip was worthwhile in terms of the accomplishment of the task, the appreciation of another culture, the many friends made and the new life experiences.

A statement often made with regard to Aboriginal students leaving their home communities and coming to Perth for secondary schooling is that this separates them from their community and therefore that it is not a good thing. So the same question needs to be asked with regard to this study tour. Would such an experience alienate them from their own people?

This brings up, as we see it, the primary importance of giving the parents and community the courtesy and respect which is their due in consultation with regard to their children's educational program. This study tour was talked about with the community and we ourselves were well known to the community. Community permission was given and a representative came with us. The presence of even one parent (we would have liked more to come) as a member of the co-ordinating team did represent a security and an enrichment for all of us. Her report is reproduced in Appendix 1.

Since returning, four students have said that they will save to return to Bali. One parent has booked to go in February. The parent from Fitzroy Crossing has written to say she would like to go on another trip with us and several of her friends in Fitzroy Crossing wish to come with us should we travel again. It is gratifying to see such evident widening of horizons and deeply rewarding to think that in planning for future trips some students have made a breakthrough and will be able to set goals and make long term plans for

other things. We hope that this will carry over into goals for their own personal academic achievement.

As teachers, we received affirmation for the project in not only the students' growth but also by the many comments from people met by the students. We were told by airline personnel, restaurant staff, tour operators, that the students' behaviour was exemplary and that our students were a pleasure to have as guests. People came up to the students to say how pleased they were to see Aboriginal students representing their country overseas. Australian tourists made themselves known to us to say they had read about the students' efforts for their trip and congratulating them.

At all times the students presented a positive and confident model for their nation and their people.

## APPENDIX 1

### MY TRIP TO BALI

Topsy Chestnut  
Fitzroy Crossing

In October of this year a group of Kewdale High School students took a two week trip to Bali. On that trip most of the students were from Fitzroy. There were seven girls from Fitzroy and others from Broome, Wyndham and Kununurra. There were a few from Perth, along with two teachers, one nurse and a hostel mother from Kewdale. I was asked to accompany the children on this trip and I agreed to go along with them. This trip was an educational trip for the kids and also for me. All of us have learnt so many things about Bali. We spent two weeks in Bali staying at different hotels in different towns.

The first two nights we stayed at Denpasar which is the new capital city, then we moved on to Sigaradja which is the old capital city situated on the northern end of Bali. Denpasar is at the south of the island. Bali is a very beautiful little island with so many interesting things to see. After Singaradja we moved on down to Ubud, a small village nestled on the hillside. We spent four nights there. All the towns are different. Singaradja is a bit dry but Ubud and Denpasar are much greener. They have lots of rice paddies in those areas. The way of life and culture is so different from the Aboriginal people. We also went to another island called Java, over on the other side of Banguwangi. We took a ferry across from Gilimanuk to the port of Java. We didn't go much further on the

island but we did see some interesting things. The people of the island are mostly Muslims and the people of Bali are Hindus.

The most eye catching sights on this island are the temples. There are lots of little temples in every village. There is a big temple in Besakin called the Mother Temple situated on the slopes of Mt Agung. There are ceremonies being held with colourful offerings. It was very interesting to see how the people of this island work and never complain about anything. Although they are very poor each family has its own farm or shop. The most interesting thing in Bali is how the people are so happy. They are so friendly and happy. The ladies work equal to men, even the young girls, they work so hard yet they never complain about anything.

I have learnt so many things in Bali. Our Aboriginal people are very much the same as Balinese yet they differ in culture and the way of life. It is very interesting to know and see what other people in other countries are doing. I'm glad I went to Bali and saw some very interesting things. I don't mind going back there again but I'd like to take a trip to another country to see how the people in other parts of the world live in comparison to the Aboriginal people of Australia. Educational program is different. Kids go to school on Sunday too in Bali. They only have holidays during special ceremonial days or on national days. I really enjoyed my trip to Bali because I have learnt so many things there. The people in Bali don't live on Social Service benefits like the Australian people do. They just live off the land. They raise bananas, coconuts and so on. They sell those things to anyone they see to get some money. These people are very skilled for stone carving, cane making. They make their own furniture and other things. Bali is a small island with lots of lovely and friendly people. The people of this island work together as one big family.

Every place that we have been to the kids really enjoyed it. They said that Bali was very interesting. They really learnt some very interesting things of the Balinese life style.

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