



The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

This article was originally published in printed form. The journal began in 1973 and was titled *The Aboriginal Child at School*. In 1996 the journal was transformed to an internationally peer-reviewed publication and renamed *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*.

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RESOURCE PEOPLE IN THE CLASSROOM

R. Shelley

Some members of the Central Queensland Aboriginal Corporation for Cultural Activities recently attended an in-service seminar. The focus of the seminar was on the teaching of Aboriginal students. The group identified a number of concerns relating to the participation of resource people in the classroom. These matters are given wider circulation in the interests of making more effective use of the valuable expertise which is available in the Aboriginal community.

Perhaps the key concept amongst the list of concerns is that of empathy with the Aboriginal visitors to the classroom. A clear understanding of the skills, life experience and the guest speakers preferred means of relating to children will help to ensure a productive and satisfying outcome both for the speaker and the students.

When inviting resource people into your classroom think about -

1. Sensitively negotiating the lesson format with the resource people.
2. Taking time with the resource people to develop friendship and confidence before presentation of lessons, even before planning the lessons.
3. Is the classroom the most suitable location? Under a shady tree in the playground may be more appropriate.
4. If the classroom is used, a display of artifacts and posters should be arranged.
5. If the resource people don't have teaching experience, how will you take this into account and still make the lesson effective?
6. Can support be given to resource people by the teacher sitting at the front of the class with them?

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7. If the speech style of the resource people is significantly different from the class, how can the children be prepared?
8. Are the expectations of teachers and children realistic regarding the performance of resource people?
9. Aboriginal resource people are of three kinds: those who are elders, others with limited experience and those who get their knowledge from books.

While addressing these issues will lengthen the preparatory process, yet it will also help to ensure that cultural enrichment of classroom activities is soundly based, it will facilitate communication between pupils and guest speaker, and it will increase the likelihood of improved cross-cultural community relationships.

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