



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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BOOK REVIEW:

Whitefella School: Education and Aboriginal Resistance

AUTHOR'S RESPONSE TO DR GALE'S REVIEW

In her review of *Whitefella School: Education and Aboriginal Resistance* (Vol.15 No.4, *The Aboriginal Child at School*) Gale demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding of both the argument I present and the emergent aspirations of South Australian Anangu communities. The central issue is not that the schooling offered in these communities is either good or bad in itself, but that it is inappropriate. It is no contradiction of the thesis presented in the book to say, as Gale does, that other communities have comparable school programs but no problems. The point is, that Aboriginal communities do not all want the same sort of school programs, no matter how theoretically sound academics think they may be.

Whitefella School demonstrates the enormous costs to communities and teachers of providing a type of education which has limited community support. The challenge of Aboriginal education is to cater to the diversity of educational needs, as perceived by Aboriginal people themselves, and this demands much more community control. *Whitefella School* stands opposed to mainstream arguments, as endorsed by Gale, that we already have the 'right' forms of education (such as bi-cultural programs) and need only to implement them more effectively. The Pitjantjatjara community leaders from whom I received permission to publish *Whitefella School* hoped this endless round of review and repair would be replaced by an effective restructuring of educational services.

The criticism of *Whitefella School* by an Aboriginal teacher aide which Gale quoted was, in fact, based on a review rather than the book itself. A group of teachers from the same school who published claims about me and the way the research for the book was carried out were subsequently told by the Director General of Education in South Australia to apologise to me, after a departmental investigation found their allegations to be false.

Readers will be interested to hear that behind the scenes some positive moves are afoot, including a plan to create a tri-state educational region which may embrace SA, WA and NT Pitjantjatjara communities.

-sgd- Ralph Folds