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ABORIGINAL STUDIES PROGRAM AT NULUNGU CATHOLIC COLLEGE

TONI FAMILARI



Nulungu is the name of a water hole (near Broome) where two legendary hero men of Aboriginal culture rested for a while eating and drinking. From Nulungu they went through the North straightening out the Law. Young people come to the College and they too rest a while to share their learning at the water that each gives to and takes from. They return to their people to share what they know.

The school caters for Aboriginal, Asian and European students from year 8 to 12. Plans are underway for the unification of the College with the local Catholic primary school that will see a range from pre-primary to year 12 with a student base of well over five hundred students. A new name for the unified schools will also come out of this process.

Aboriginal Studies is for all students at the College in particular as the units have full departmental approval in terms of accreditation. While some new programs in Aboriginal language and Culture studies will be only for students who have parental support for them to do the program.

LANGUAGES AND NULUNGU

At times the College has had students from as many as 21 different language backgrounds. Aboriginal adults in the Kimberley are keen for their children to attend school and learn English, but most also want them to learn the traditional languages. One of the concerns of Aboriginal languages has been a part of Nulungu's curriculum for some time now and has more recently been incorporated into the Aboriginal Studies Syllabus. The school offers a number of Aboriginal Studies units which focus on the learning of literacy skills in a range of Kimberley Aboriginal languages.

AIMS

- * To promote knowledge of Aboriginal cultures and societies, traditional and contemporary.
- * To promote respect, appreciation of and a positive set of attitudes towards contemporary Aboriginal peoples and their varying cultural and social situations.
- * To Aboriginalise Aboriginal Studies so that Aboriginal people are vital to the planning, direct delivery and evaluation of the programs.

IMPLEMENTATION

- * Aboriginal involvement in teaching and development of the programs.
- * Inservice staff prior to working with materials.
- * Training programs for Aboriginal Teaching Assistants in Aboriginal Studies Units.
- * Develop local and regional resource materials.
- * On-going evaluation and revision of units.

UNIT DESCRIPTIONS

KIMBERLEY: PAST & PRESENT

This unit examines the history of the Kimberley from the perspectives of Aboriginal language groups and the effects of colonisation. Since its publication in 1988 *Kimberley: Past and Present* has been a valuable resource used in schools throughout the region. Written for lower secondary school use in the Kimberley, the unit has practical applications for educators throughout Australia. The unit was revised in 1993.

The Unit is made up of three components:

1. Kimberley: Past & Present Teachers Handbook.

This includes Teaching-Learning outline, background notes, maps, timeline, resource materials, student worksheets and language names (audio tape, language names for *Kimberley: Past & Present*).

2. Kimberley Aboriginal Communities Student Text.

A comprehensive list of Aboriginal communities in the Kimberley. Includes maps, language names and descriptions of the type of communities.

3. Stories of the Kimberley: Past & Present Student Text.

Stories that reflect the history and more recent experiences of Kimberley Aboriginal peoples.

KIMBERLEY ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES

This unit provides an opportunity for students to experience listening, speaking, reading and writing words in Aboriginal languages. Before these language words are introduced there are activities to help students discover where English and Aboriginal languages fit into a world perspective and to explore some methods of communication and writing systems other than the Roman script of English. To conclude the unit students are asked to work on a project which explores attitudes of Aboriginal people to preserving their languages and ways in which languages can be maintained through support of schools and other agencies.

KIMBERLEY BUSH FOODS

This unit discusses the contribution that bush foods can make when considering healthy food choices. It identifies bush foods that are common to desert and coastal habitats, and methods of preparation and cooking, thus extending student's knowledge of other habitats beyond their own region. It also explores the seasonal availability and the origins of contemporary foods in bush camp situations. In addition, students will learn about foods other than their own by comparing specific bush foods to Western convenience foods in order to reflect on the positive contribution that bush foods can make to a daily diet.

MEDIA IMAGES OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

This unit considers the images of Aboriginal people in the mass media and other literary forms. It identifies a series of stereotypes of Aboriginal people and relates their emergence to:

- * the changing relations between Europeans and Aboriginal people since colonisation;
- * cross cultural and historical misunderstanding within Australian society.

This unit explores the role of the mass media in perpetuating these stereotypes and considers ways they, and the racist attitudes they reflect, can be changed.

IN GENERAL

There are several other units such as art and science units and so on however space does not permit more details.

Students doing these studies have indicated strongly that it has been a special part of their schooling.

At present the College is looking at placing on a trial run some of the Aboriginal Studies work on a Multi-Media-Mode in particular computer activities that students can work with over a range of experiences and skills linked to audio and visual learning situations. However the direct human experience of learning from Aboriginal people will remain a vital part of the units of work.

Also we are happy to have an Aboriginal woman who is currently writing Aboriginal Studies work in Yawuru language Culture Studies. In particular she will also deliver the program.

We are working towards a process of local ownership for Aboriginal people of Aboriginal Studies where non-Aboriginal people work with and for rather than in front of Aboriginal people. In fact I feel strongly that gone are the days when non-Aboriginal people can create Aboriginal Studies Curriculum. People like myself must work on a process that can facilitate curriculum packages that are owned by Aboriginal people.

All materials cited can be obtained by phoning (091) 922 275

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