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Aboriginal Studies Units: Holy Rosary School – Derby

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Holy Rosary School, Derby

This is a P-7 school with 200 students. Aboriginal students: 85%. There are 2 qualified Aboriginal teachers in the school while some Aboriginal Teaching Assistants (ATAs) are in their second and third year of teacher training. Ngarinyin, Worrorra, Wunambal, Nyikina, Bardi and Kriol are all spoken in Derby.

The Process

During 1988 the following ATAs worked together on the original research and outline of some Aboriginal Studies units: Dorene Wescombe, Jeffery Hunter, Bernadette McCarthy, Charlene Armstrong, Brigitte Bin Maarus, Derek Hunter and Floyd Churnside. From that process a curriculum writer, Carolyn Davey, was employed as a compiler and curriculum developer, with Lesley Baxter as a Research Assistant.

Materials were further developed by the following ATAs: Lynette O'Meara, Dorene Wescombe, Jocelyn O'Connor, Michelle Marks, Floyd Churnside, Derek Hunter and Jeffery Hunter. They edited worksheets and resource sheets, designed games and activities, made concrete aids and illustrations, and gave consultation on content as well as working with the relevant elders for their permission on illustrations, and with the particular support of Daisy Utemorrah.

Assistance with the Aboriginal language came from the Kimberley Language Resource Centre and from Janet Oobagooma, Wendy Morlumbum and Pudjawala Parunga – Aboriginal language speakers.

From 1992 the school ATAs worked with Tony Familari on assessments, evaluations, general revision of the units and also with Jawa Curriculum Support Centre on layout and design, with a view to publishing the units for local use.

Background

These units were developed and written at Holy Rosary School, Derby. The units have been written to provide teachers and students with content relevant to the local area with particular emphasis on the involvement of Aboriginal people in the contemporary and historical development of the area. They have been written to teach the understandings and skills outlined in the K-10 Social Studies Syllabus.

Rationale

- The units will broaden students' knowledge of the social, linguistic, cultural and historic complexity of the area.
- The relevance of the content to the lives and backgrounds of the students will enhance the learning of specific skills.
- Oral histories and stories: important sources of local information are oral histories. These can provide excellent insights and background material to supplement and illustrate aspects in the units. Oral histories can be recorded, transcribed, rewritten, illustrated, filed and referred to in the relevant section of the unit. When a story is rewritten it is important to check the revised version with the original story teller.

Content

The History of the Mowanjum People (Year 5)

This unit is presented in three sections:

- **Part 1:** investigates the lifestyle of the Mowanjum people before Europeans settled in the Kimberley. Students study where these people lived, what languages they spoke, how they lived, what contact they had with early European explorers
- **Part 2:** looks at the reasons why the three language groups, which comprise the Mowanjum people, moved from their traditional land to Derby
- **Part 3:** looks at the situation of the Mowanjum people today.

The Establishment of Towns and Aboriginal Communities In the Derby Area (Year 6)

- **Part 1:** in this section students learn about Aboriginal communities in the Derby area. Students define what Aboriginal communities are and look at how they are established, why they are established and how they operate.
- **Part 2:** students will study in detail the establishment of Derby and the relationship between Derby and outlying communities.

History of Derby (Year 7)

- **Part 1:** Students investigate the history of the Derby area by studying Aboriginal languages and lifestyles before Europeans settled in the area.
- **Part 2:** students study European settlement and the effect this had on the languages and lifestyle of Aboriginal people living in the area.
- **Part 3:** Students study aspects of Aboriginal languages spoken in Derby today, their spelling, pronunciation and 'state of health'.

With reference to the Year 7 unit, Tony Treacy, a teacher of this unit in the past and presently the Principal of the school, presented me with these comments:

The completion of the Unit was a week-long field trip to the old sites ... including Windajana Gorge and Tunnel Creek. An Aboriginal man, Sam Lovell, led each trip and was able to support our study with his vast knowledge of local history, bush lore and the movement and customs of local

Aboriginal tribes. ...The children prepared a display, and with a full photographic record of the trip, prepared project charts with pictures, information and a display table. They then prepared talks for the whole school as a presentation (in stages) of all they had seen and heard and learnt from their study and field trip.

Mr Treacy added:

The trip allowed all the children to view first hand many examples of bush tucker,

different plants used for medicine, making fire etc.

References

- The History of the Mowanjum People* (1994).
Derby: Holy Rosary School.
- The Establishment of Towns and Aboriginal Communities in the Derby Area* (1994).
Derby: Holy Rosary School.
- History of Derby* (1994). Derby: Holy Rosary School. □

