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Tiwi Culture Must Be at the Centre: An Analysis and Synthesis of Tiwi Views on Education

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*We are Tiwi. We are black people.
You white people live in a white man's way.
You live in a white man's way, you white people.
We are black people.
Now then? Now do you understand? Do you
understand now?*

(Allie Miller in Osborne, 1974: 88-89).

Introduction

Tiwi educators (Tungatalum, 1991; Pilakui, 1991; Tipiloura, 1992; Tiparui, 1992; Munkara, 1992; Orsto, 1993) have raised issues of concern regarding educational operations, curriculum design and the educational structure of community education. These educators are writing in a context vastly different to their grandparents and parents, where a number of critical events have influenced, and are still influencing the social, political, spiritual and economical lives of Tiwi community

members. Through their analysis of the current educational system they have isolated a number of issues and have suggested alternatives to the current structure. Language and culture appear as the greatest concern to these educators and the maintenance of both emerge as a priority. They also state that community education programs do not adequately address the importance of Tiwi culture as the foundation of education, and the powerful role that community members and Tiwi teachers should play in determining the direction of education. From Tiwi educators' collective concerns, an alternative model has been constructed and salient issues are discussed. The model is certainly not seen as an answer to Tiwi educators' collective concerns, but it presents an alternative to the current *Muruntawi*¹ dominated system.

Tiwi Society: The Merging of the Two

To analyse the writings of recent Tiwi educators, it is necessary to describe the context within which Tiwi society operates. In order to present this as an overview, a model (Figure 1) has been designed to give an overview of the critical events that have influenced, and continue to influence, the functioning and direction of the community. At the centre of this model is Tiwi knowledge but

¹ A Tiwi word meaning light coloured people and used throughout this paper rather than the negative 'non-Aboriginal'.

since permanent settlement by *Muruntawi*² Western knowledge has been imposed through a number of other critical events. The lasting effect of these new critical events means that Tiwi

knowledge now shares centre place with Western knowledge as the basis for Tiwi society in the 1990s.

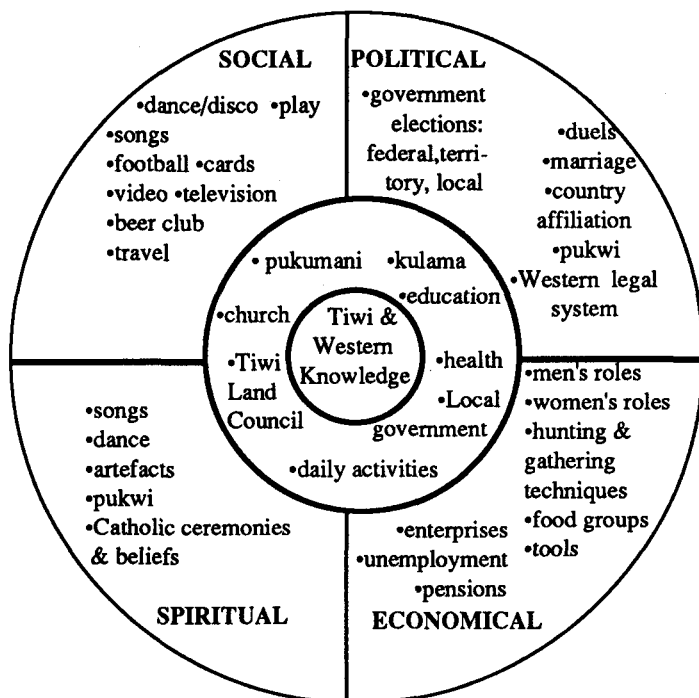


Figure 1: Tiwi world of the 1990s

Critical events of *kulama*³, *pukumani*⁴, and daily activities are the foundation of Tiwi knowledge and through the performance within the social, political, spiritual and economical spheres this knowledge is reproduced. However, Tiwi knowledge now has to compete with imposed Western knowledge and the critical events used in its reproduction. For example, Catholic doctrine is taught within the education system. This knowledge is then reproduced through per-

formance in the social, political, spiritual and economical spheres. For example, spirituality is accommodated through such activities at Catholic ceremonies where, according to Gardiner (1993), the Tiwi have been inculturated with the Christian message:

Father Gsell's task was to evangelise a culture which had different roots to his own. He came to inculturate the Gospel

² The British made an unsuccessful attempt at permanent settlement in 1824, setting up Fort Dundas at the northern end of Apsley Strait. Joe Cooper, a buffalo shooter set up camp at Paru on Melville Island in the 1890s. Father Gsell, a French priest, established a Roman Catholic mission on the south-eastern tip of Bathurst Island, opposite Paru in 1911. This site became the community of Nguui.

³ An initiation ceremony and increase ritual, the *kulama*, was also important in establishing the marriage laws.

⁴ A mortuary ceremony.

message of Jesus. Unknown to him, the people he came to were already very strongly rooted in their own spiritual history. Let me stress here the definition of inculturation. It is the dynamic relationship between the Christian message and culture, or an insertion of the Christian life into the culture (Gardiner, 1993: 3).

Ceremonies such as first communion, confirmation and Easter are all big events, combining dance, song and cultural artefacts that take on the image of the dominant, imposed Catholic culture. As you drive into the school grounds you are met by a carved and painted cross, derived from the *kwampi* spears traditionally used for sneak attacks, while a visit to the church also reveals cultural artefacts. The imagery of the church also relies on Tiwi cultural artefacts, combining a *pamijini*⁵ with a Catholic symbol of the Cross of Lorraine.

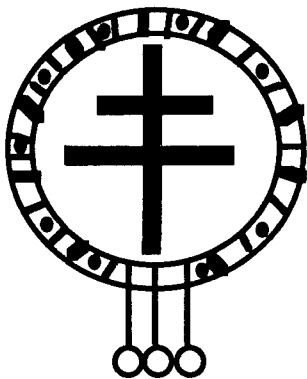


Figure 2: Bathurst Island Mission's logo

The circle represents an armband worn by the Tiwi, a people with a beginning unknown and a future unknown, a timeless people. The Cross of Lorraine represents Bishop Gsell's country and

so we have the merging of the two (Pye, 1977: back page).

*Parlingarri*⁶ Tiwi had to deal confidently and competently in discourses in a wide range of social, economic, political and spiritual contexts. This discourse could be formal or informal depending on the context. To participate fully in traditional Tiwi life, particularly at *pukumani* and *kulama* ceremonies, participants performed specific visual and verbal texts, either through song, dance or the manufacturing of cultural artefacts. These texts reproduced and transmitted Tiwi knowledge. The arrival and permanent settlement by *Muruntawi* considerably changed this practice, with Tiwi having imposed upon them a third dimension of discourse — written text. This powerful discourse was controlled by *Muruntawi* and used in attempts to achieve their aim of indoctrination and assimilation. In the 1970s a Tiwi orthography was developed so that Tiwi language could be reproduced in written text. This has led to critical events of *pukumani* being reproduced in written texts for use in the bilingual education program. It has also meant the Bible, and certain Catholic hymns and prayers have also been published in Tiwi.

This then is the context in which recent Tiwi educators write, a society changed through imposed critical events and one now based on Tiwi and Western knowledge. Through their writings, Tiwi educators express dissatisfaction with an education system that places Tiwi culture and knowledge at the periphery, rather than at the centre of the system. The system has also frustrated the Tiwi in determining their own educational future. Tiwi educators have argued for an approach that recognises Tiwi teaching and learning styles. They say that the teaching program should be

⁵ An arm or headband worn during both *pukumani* and *kulama* ceremonies.

⁶ Loosely translated means the 'remote past' or 'a long time ago'.

based on traditional values and principles. They have also called for greater input from the community. Tiwi educators have also expressed their concern about language maintenance and the training of Tiwi teachers. It is from a synthesis of these issues that an alternative model has been constructed.

Educational Issues: We Need to Know About Ourselves, About Where We Live, About the Community in Which We Live and About What Is Going on In the World at Large

As more Tiwi become involved in the education system at Nguui, and as they become further educated as teachers, issues relevant to their teaching context arise. Evidently language is a prime issue with many Tiwi educators who are concerned about the threat to Tiwi language, despite the existence of a bilingual program. Connie Orsto (1993) states that the problem with Tiwi language is in its usage within the community, and that the classroom is a contributing factor to the problem of language erosion:

There are problems for Tiwi language in the way it is spoken in this community. The community elders and young people are very worried about the use of Tiwi language. They feel that younger people and children are not using the proper straight Tiwi traditional language in the classroom when taking Tiwi lessons and when they are out in the community (Orsto, 1993: 22).

Unlike the other Tiwi educators, Orsto makes it explicit that she is an advocate for teaching traditional Tiwi to the children, rather than Lesser Traditional Tiwi to Modern Tiwi which appears to be the basis for the school's bilingual program:

Traditional Tiwi is the original language spoken by Tiwi people and now is only

spoken by the elders and some young people. Modern Tiwi is the language that most Tiwi people speak now. It is very different from traditional Tiwi. Traditional Tiwi has very long words which are shortened in Modern Tiwi. The pronunciation is also different. People today are using the modern language more because it has more borrowed words so it is easier to talk about things in modern life (Orsto, 1993: 22).

John Bernard Tiparui has also stated the importance of Traditional Tiwi as the language used in the performance of *kulama* and *pukumani* ceremonies (pers. comm., 1993). Lee (1987) confirms the use of Traditional Tiwi in these ceremonies stating that:

The Tiwi still hold traditional ceremonies and the singing in these ceremonies is in Traditional Tiwi. Some of the songs, particularly some of those sung in the *pukumani* ceremonies are old songs which are passed down from composer to his brother and/or his descendants. However most songs used in the *pukumani* and *kulama* ceremonies are newly composed for the occasion. In both ceremonies songs can be about mythological, historical or current events, fiction or natural history. The language used in the ceremonial songs is traditional language (Lee, 1987: 330-331).

Tiparui acknowledges the link between language and cultural practices and states that the language maintenance is linked to cultural maintenance. Tiparui also acknowledges the role he has to play in keeping language strong along with the role of community members:

It is important to save this language because it is our culture. Our people have used this for many years, and are still using it now. I think what we are doing to save the language will work, because we still have our culture,

ceremonies and dancing. The most important thing is that we hold very strong to the Tiwi language. I am involved in the strategy to save this language as a parent and through programs within the school and in the community as well (Tiparui, 1993).

Molly Munkara (1992) writes that it is important for Tiwi teachers to be good Tiwi language role models and that, wherever possible, community members should also be involved in language activities at the school:

Tiwi teachers say they want to improve their teaching. They also want to be strong speakers and want to be good language models for the children. They want more involvement from the parents and elders in participating in the school (Munkara, 1992: 2).

As Munkara has pointed out, the role of Tiwi teachers as language models is important, but equally as important is their knowledge of language maintenance issues. Munkara states that many Tiwi teachers are inadvertently damaging language maintenance attempts by code mixing:

Tiwi teachers are not providing good language models because they are mixing Tiwi and English. The writer found how the language is mixed. To do this the writer went to observe Tiwi teachers in the class teaching the Tiwi language program. This is an example of how the teacher and a child used mixed Tiwi language. Teacher: *'Maka ninja ku'*. Child: *'Ngiya ku kangi nanyi'*. It should be – Teacher: *'Aya kirinjini, maka nyimipikija'*. Child: *'Ngiya nyikija kitawu'*. In the class the Tiwi teachers also used modern Tiwi language. When teaching they use modern Tiwi which contains English words. They use loan words like *mistaki*, *learnimi*, *languji*, *prapa*, *katimi*, *kitimi*, *holimi* and *lukimi* (Munkara, 1992: 3).

Orsto supports Munkara's observation, stating that language is not being correctly used by teachers when they are taking lessons and participating in language activities, such as reading shared books. She implies Tiwi teachers, by not being good role models, add to the problems in maintaining language:

In the classroom there is incorrect mixed language used by the Tiwi teacher when taking a lesson. For example when giving instructions, the teacher says *'nuwa lool naki yimanka api nyirrarikirimi picture'* ... The Tiwi teachers are not thinking deeply and carefully about using the language when talking to a group of children. They use a lot of mixed language both in Tiwi and English for example doing the activities such as playing with puzzles, reading stories, and drawing pictures. During Tiwi lessons both teachers and children are using a lot of language mixing when reading shared books and asking questions e.g. *learnimi*, *mistaki*, *holimi*. The children learn to speak mixed languages because they hear it from teachers (Orsto, 1993: 23).

Classroom Tiwi teachers need to be trained in bilingual education as many of the language issues are complex and require constant monitoring. *Muruntawi* teachers also need to undertake further training in bilingual education, as they too unthinkingly code mix within classrooms and in the wider community. Orsto recommends that Tiwi teachers are inserviced so that they can develop skills as language teachers, 'Tiwi teachers need inservice for their Tiwi language to develop their own skills' (Orsto, 1993: 25).

Both *Tiparui* and *Munkara* single out the role of community members in maintaining language, and that gifted language users and traditional language events could play a large part in language

maintenance programs. *Parlingarri*, the role of language and the performance of exemplary texts were an important part in the critical event of *kulama*, so by revisiting this language event as part of the school curriculum, exemplary texts could be reinforced.

Due to the complexities of issues in language maintenance — code mixing, code switching, domain theory, two-way learning, bilingual education — teachers need to be trained and to be aware of their own language use, so that they become language models. Gifted language users from the community can be used within the school context — through their involvement in activities such as cultural days; and within the community context — this in most cases happens anyway through their participation in cultural events and ceremonial activities. Trained teachers will need to be aware of the issues and monitor language activities (Frawley, 1992: 12).

A criticism made by a number of Tiwi educators of the current system is that culture appears to be supplementary to the schooling system, and in doing so does not play an important role in the development of a true Tiwi school. As it is, the bilingual program appears to be in the school to reinforce *Muruntawi* concepts and act as an assimilation agent, underpinned by Catholic doctrine. Emmie Tipiloura has stressed her desire to see Tiwi knowledge at the centre of the schooling system from which courses and curriculum can emanate:

They need to understand the knowledge, skills, and values of both Aboriginal and *Muruntawi* culture and need courses and curriculum that are based on Tiwi knowledge and experience (Tipiloura, 1992:12).

To dismiss this desire to reinforce Tiwi culture, particularly at a young age, is to weaken the importance of culture which could lead to inhibiting further transmission. Emmie states that if this occurs then it would have detrimental results:

If the kids are being told then they will pass it on but if they are not being told then that is bad luck for our culture because we will lose part of it (in Jimbidie, 1993: 18).

There is a strong desire to integrate language and culture, rather than to isolate it within separate domains. For writers such as Francine Tungatalum, it is also imperative to have culture at the centre of a curriculum so that it is not only taught but it is experienced throughout everyday life:

As I see it, the culture afternoons at the school are out on their own. I believe that cultural activities should be integrated into the language program at the level of the school's curriculum. However Tiwi culture must be at the centre, the lived curriculum of the school, that is the base of the total experience of the school for teachers, children and parents (Tungatalum, 1991: 24).

The current educational structure when compared with Bishop Gsell's early mission approach, still has one common feature and that is its imposition by *Muruntawi*. The structure at Nguui is similar to any other structure in mainstream schools. The school year starts at a certain time and is segmented into terms and follows a traditional pattern of western schooling. Relationships between teacher and student are expected to be uniform, with teachers maintaining a professional distance between themselves and their students. No thought is given to traditional Aboriginal structures.

Pilakui (1991: 44) suggests a structure based on correct relationships, in this case one based on *pukwi*:

Teaching in the Tiwi way should be structured around the correct personal relationships. These are much more complicated than the *Muruntawi* teacher/student relationship as they are based on skin groups and kinship. Tiwi children and adults feel more comfortable when the teaching situation is set up on these correct relationships.

Tungatalum (1991) endorses this view and goes further to suggest that knowledge relevant to particular groups be taught by elders from specific *pukwi*. As the degree of knowledge about sacred places varies from one *pukwi* to the next, she emphasises that the importance of teaching cultural knowledge is the responsibility of elders from the respective *pukwi*:

Tiwi teachers work in the same sub-section within their own group of children ... The storytelling will be done in the school area. Older men and women tell stories of different sacred places on Bathurst and Melville Islands. These sacred places in Tiwi are called Pukuwiyi/Yiminga which means giver of life. These sacred places have special meanings to particular groups of people in relation to clan and subsection. And also we tell them how we relate to these sacred places in terms of kinship (Tungatalum, 1991: 20-21).

Tungatalum (1991) adds that certain knowledge should be taught only at certain times, and that children should learn this knowledge through their gradual progression from one stage to the next. This concept draws a parallel with the stages of initiation where initiates moved from one grade to the next as they demonstrated the knowledge gained at a particular stage and at

certain ceremonies. Tungatalum underlines the importance of developmental stages, and the role of the teacher in teaching children from their own *pukwi*:

We discussed what each of these groups of children should be learning. What kind of knowledge should be taught by the elders to this group of children? ... Elders from a section group should teach their own children ... We worked out that the children should be taught Tiwi knowledge that is suitable for each stage of development (Tungatalum, 1991: 21).

The appropriateness of teaching children based on a Western style of learning has also been challenged. The context of learning, that is one predominantly based in a schoolroom and the surrounding school environs which uses a Western idea of teaching — I'm the teacher, you're the student — has been criticised for its inflexibility. To teach from a curriculum with Tiwi culture at the centre, calls for a different approach in a more meaningful environment:

By taking Aboriginal culture and concept of teaching and learning into consideration, it will allow for relevant, and appropriate curriculum development and implementation that is also flexible and conducted in an appropriate learning context (Tipiloura and Jimbidie, 1993: 5).

Tungatalum (1991) agrees stating that the whole school experience is one based on the values, expectations and practices of *Muruntawi*. She states that despite the community's experiences of working under an imposed *Muruntawi* system, that they are still culturally strong enough to make the most appropriate educational decisions:

The Tiwi community members and teachers are strong in their culture and capable of making curriculum decisions about

appropriate methods of teaching our children and what they should be learning. But the lived curriculum of the school, that is the whole experience of schooling, is based on *Muruntawi* values, expectations and practices. That must change (Tungatalum, 1991: 42).

Tungatalum (1991) identifies Tiwi teaching and learning styles as a strategy for culture and language maintenance. She also argues for a change in attitude by a predominantly *Muruntawi* system. This would also call for a more open approach to Aboriginal education by Northern Territory and Federal government, particularly in regard to funding. To do otherwise, according to Tungatalum, is dehumanising:

Education was once an integral part of Tiwi life, and utilising Tiwi teaching and learning styles will help us hold on to our culture. We will not lose it to the wider dominating Australian culture ... If Tiwi knowledge and a Tiwi pedagogy is not recognised and implemented in the school curriculum then *Muruntawi* are dehumanising Tiwi (Tungatalum, 1991: 42).

Tiwi educators (Tungatalum, 1991; Pilakui, 1991; Tipiloura, 1992; Tiparui, 1992; Munkara, 1992; Orsto, 1993) have highlighted a number of issues of concern for Tiwi education. Language issues are high on their agenda and there has been concern expressed about ensuring the development of good language models as part of the bilingual process. To ensure that this occurs it is imperative that Tiwi teachers are adequately trained to increase their Tiwi language expertise and awareness of Tiwi language issues. On the issue of training, in 1981 there were two female Tiwi teachers with eight male Tiwi teaching assistants and four female Tiwi teaching assistants (Stanley, 1983: 14). By 1992, eleven Tiwi teachers had gained teaching qualifications through

Batchelor College, with seven of these currently teaching in the Tiwi schools (pers. comm., 1993). From the issues raised by Tiwi educators, it is imperative that qualified Tiwi teachers are adequately inserviced or supported to undertake post graduate educational studies in bilingual education.

Cultural maintenance, and the positioning of language and culture at the centre of a lived curriculum, is also an area of concern. It has been argued by Tiwi educators that the current educational system is inappropriate as it is based on a *Muruntawi* operational structure and calendar, that there is a heavy emphasis of *Muruntawi* subjects which are taught using *Muruntawi* teaching and learning styles, and that the purpose of the system is to fulfil *Muruntawi* expectations. In short it is based on assimilation and indoctrination. All these issues are concomitant to the central issue of control. Tiwi educators are all saying in one way or another that without control resting in the hands of the Tiwi community through school councils, action groups or whatever is deemed appropriate, the strategies to make schooling more meaningful would only amount to window dressing. Tungatalum (1991) mentions the role of the Tiwi Action Group but is critical of the control the principal has in determining the action group's function, even down to the setting of an agenda. Control of the educational system by the Tiwi is vital, otherwise educational decisions are meaningless as they would still reflect *Muruntawi* views. This is perhaps the biggest challenge for both Tiwi and *Muruntawi*:

All of the Tiwi teachers would like more Tiwi control of the school, but some *Muruntawi* are reluctant to allow it to happen. They say we are not ready, but mean they do not want to lose control (Tungatalum, 1991: 41).

What then are the essential elements of a true Tiwi community education system? An explicit criticism by Tiwi educators is that Tiwi language and culture should not just be an element of the bilingual program, rather that it should underpin the whole system's philosophy and that it should inform the system's pedagogy. The first, and perhaps the most important element for educational change is ensuring that control to make educational decisions rests with the community. The way in which community control is made explicit, is up to the community, but it is obvious that they have started the process through the establishment of an action group. No matter what strategy is used, it is essential that the community is involved and that the power to make decisions is with the Tiwi. This should lead to a powerful reshaping of the Tiwi Action Group.

Tungatalum (1991: 38-39) has elicited what could be regarded as a Tiwi education manifesto in which she sums up what needs to be done to change the present system in order to establish a clear direction for education that is not only appropriate but also truly Tiwi. This 'manifesto' summarises the concerns of her Tiwi colleagues who have expressed similar views, i.e. there must be community involvement through consultation; that power is vested in a Tiwi Action Group to undertake decision-making and consultative processes; that children should learn in their own *pukwi* with teachers in the right relationship; that *pukwi* must be an element in the planning and implementation of the curriculum at all levels; that meaningful learning environments are implemented; and that certain knowledge be taught at certain levels of development. In order to achieve this it calls on Tiwi teachers to be appropriate role models both in culture and language, and take on the responsibility of preparing their community members to participate in wider society on Tiwi terms. It is indeed a

challenge, but according to Tipiloura (1991: 27) essential if Tiwi are to understand the world in which they live:

We need to know about ourselves, about where we live, about the community in which we live and about what is going on in the world at large. If we don't get access to information about ourselves and our communities we are being depowered.

These Tiwi educators are then the products of a schooling system that has been dominated by *Muruntawi* expectations. For Tungatalum this has meant taking on *Muruntawi* practices which reflected Bishop Gsell's assimilationist aims. Attempts to recognise cultural difference through the implementation of a bilingual program has not been wholly successful. Tungatalum calls on the bilingual program and the total schooling systems to become truly Tiwi. Tungatalum states that this can be achieved by having culture at the centre of a lived curriculum and having the system based on an appropriate structure that facilitates Tiwi teaching and learning:

I have followed the *Muruntawi* rules and programs through the use of the prescribed school curriculum. I have taught my Tiwi children using the concepts of Western styles of teaching. Tiwi children responded in so called Western learning styles. I had not realised that the children were developing Western ways of learning, and becoming more Westernised. I have always felt a tension between myself as a Tiwi woman, and the pressure to teach like *Muruntawi*. I now know what I want to do, I want my teaching, the curriculum and the school to become truly Tiwi. Language and culture are important to express in Tiwi education (Tungatalum, 1991: 23).

An Alternative Model: Tiwi Culture at the Centre of a Lived Curriculum

Drawing on the issues raised by Tiwi educators, an educational model has been constructed which takes into account Tiwi educators' concerns and recommendations. This model is based on elements of critical events, and the language and cultural maintenance aims of bilingual education.

Many of the issues addressed by these Tiwi educators are associated with language and cultural maintenance. The issue of Tiwi control of the schooling process, has been a stumbling block for a number of years. Tungatalum (1991) states that the role of the Tiwi Action Group in the development of the school as a truly Tiwi school is vital, however the issue of control is a stumbling block. The Tiwi Action Group or school council need to take control of the Tiwi educational system so that *Muruntawi* who serve within the system operate under the direction of the Tiwi and in accordance with their wishes, and not act as educational mercenaries. Orsto (1993: 25) endorses this appeal for co-operation rather than domination and obstruction, when she states that:

The elders and young people say that they want the language program to be linked together to the culture and they are willing to help in this. Also [the] Catholic School should join together as a group to talk about this issue.

Tungatalum agrees stating that even though the Tiwi will have the final say in educational matters, Tiwi teachers will rely on *Muruntawi* for support and advice. It is implied here that *Muruntawi* subjects, such as English and Maths, are developed and taught under the direction of Tiwi educators, with support and assistance of *Muruntawi* teachers

and advisers:

I have emphasised especially that Tiwi teachers must have the final say in education because they know what is best for Tiwi children. The non-Tiwis must be supportive and give advice where it is asked for and needed, but it is Tiwi teachers who must do the work, provide the direction and make the decisions (Tungatalum, 1991: 42).

The power to make educational decisions must rest with the appropriate Tiwi body, whether it is an action group, school council or advisory body, and this body must be seen as operating within community guidelines and not in isolation.

Tiwi educators have expressed their desire for an alternative Tiwi design to schooling. A synthesis of their desires within an alternative framework is illustrated in Figure 3. This model has as its structure the traditional initiation grades, separated into male and female divisions. While still in the *Kiritini/Malakuninga* and *Kiritinga/Alilinga/Murukiburastages*, Tiwi children would continue in the primary bilingual mode of co-educational schooling. Each child could be placed into this structure according to their *pukwi*, and taught by teachers and elders from their *pukwi*. On completion of the early stages, students would then progress to initiation grades where young men and women would be taught by the appropriate older men and women in separate classes. The structure could be based on Tiwi knowledge and Western knowledge, with Tiwi culture at the centre. The important element in this structure is culture; therefore the *kulama* and *pukumani* ceremonies would be central to its implementation. Rather than being a linear model, its implementation could be cyclical, commencing and ending at *kulama*. The call for an alternative school structure is particularly evident in the writings of Tungatalum (1991) and Pilakui (1991).

Molly Munkara (1992) expresses her concern about language issues, particularly code mixing. Within an alternative model, thought must be given to addressing language issues and strategies to promote language maintenance. A Tiwi-controlled educational system could also include supporting other community agencies in promoting good language usage. The development of music bands has had a dramatic rise in the past few years, I can think of four separate groups — Tiwi Wailers, Missing Mattress, Black Sands and a school band. Through their music Tiwi language and culture are promoted as many of their songs are sung in Tiwi and are focussed on current issues or events from parlingarri. Bands such as these should continue to be promoted. The Literature Production Centre should continue to include activities such as recording music, video documentation of cultural and sporting events, production of oral stories on audio cassette, publishing of written texts and so on.

Returning to Munkara's concern of code mixing and considering the increased role community members may play in this alternative model, the linguistic training of Tiwi teachers and community educators, including elders, becomes imperative. To be good language models, there needs to be a realisation by the speakers of the language issues involved. How this training takes place would have to be determined by the action group or school council. The training should be offered in a culturally appropriate mode, either through a community-based program or a mixed-mode program currently operated by Batchelor College.

Finally, considering the location within which Tiwi language operates, a uniform policy is critical. Presently there are three communities where Tiwi is spoken — Nguuu on Bathurst Island, and Milikapiti and Pularumpi on Melville Island. Considering the mobility of Tiwi families

and the amount of travelling that occurs within a year, a uniform school and language policy would need to be established covering the three communities.

In a recent video produced by SBS, *Teach Tiwi Proper Way*, a sense of frustration was evident from Tiwi who live at Pularumpi and Milikapiti. Although a bilingual program was implemented and failed at Pularumpi there appears to be genuine concern for the establishment of a Tiwi education program across the three communities. With this in mind a uniform program aimed at *Kiritini/Malakuninga* and *Kiritinga/Aliinga/Murukibura* stages could be implemented in the separate communities with continuing education from the *Marukumarni/Marukumarninga* through to *Mikingula/Mikingulinga* stages taking place at a central location. At the centre of this continuing curriculum would be the Tiwi/*Muruntawi* education deemed appropriate for each stage.

Conclusion

I have not intended to impose what I think could be the ideal model for Tiwi education, rather I have analysed Tiwi educators' concerns. A dominant issue of concern by all Tiwi educators is the importance of language maintenance and the role of Tiwi culture within the education system. Most of the writers agree that the maintenance of language is paramount to cultural survival. From an analysis of their writings it becomes obvious that the cultural aims of bilingual education program are not being met. If the cultural element is lacking, or if indeed it appears only on the periphery of the program, then the aims of the program become *Muruntawi* dominated as the purpose of the program becomes clearly defined i.e. the transfer of students into the dominant

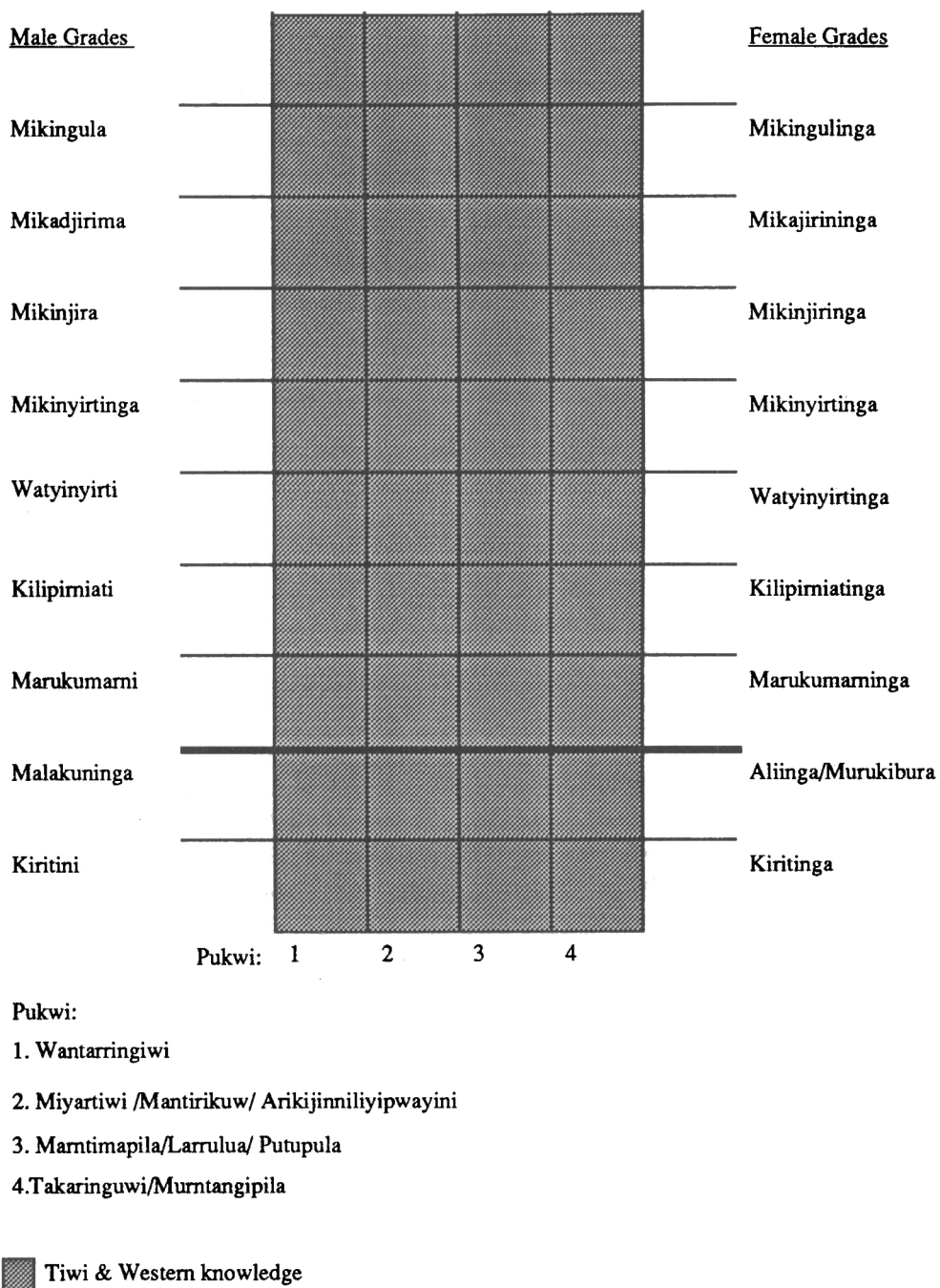


Figure 3: Alternative model for a Tiwi education structure

Muruntawi language and the dominant Muruntawi culture.

The alternative model has been constructed by me from the opinions expressed by Tiwi educators. What I have tried to do is to synthesise their ideas in order to present an alternative approach to Tiwi education. Some of the issues involved have not been thoroughly discussed or explored, but suffice to say that they figure uppermost in the thoughts of Tiwi educators. The alternative model is not short on problems, nor is it utopian in its outlook. The very fact that it would need to cover three communities and involve a good many Tiwi educators would be in itself extremely expensive to fund. However it does do two things: it presents the ideas of Tiwi educators in a cohesive framework and it encourages debate amongst the many Tiwi who are now continuing education and are being encouraged in their studies to think critically and along different lines to what they experienced as children. Tiwi teachers are the key to taking control, reshaping the school curriculum and directing the development of an appropriate school system. What is needed from *Muruntawi* is their genuine support and assistance, and not obstruction, so that the Tiwi achieve their aspirations. For these current Tiwi educators their schooling experiences were within a culturally and linguistically inappropriate educational system. Tiwi educators have stated quite explicitly that they request something vastly different for their children, and that the direction of education is controlled and determined by Tiwi.

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Call for Submissions

The Editors invite readers and subscribers to contribute material for inclusion in forthcoming editions of *The Aboriginal Child at School*. We welcome submissions such as:

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- ◆ news items
- ◆ book reviews
- ◆ notices of forthcoming conferences, seminars, etc.
- ◆ reports on relevant conferences
- ◆ information about resource centres and how to access them
- ◆ resources and materials for teachers and students

All material should be sent to:

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