



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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EDITORIAL

What a great way to finish 2008 with a jam packed, comprehensive and interesting journal reading among them themes addressing access and retention, sport, language, international and medical students just to name a few. Book reviews are covered at the back. We have pondered more recently how exciting *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education* has become in all its hues starting from the early days of *The Aboriginal Child at School* to the prolific testimony it is today and we thank particularly Sean Ulm, Katelyn Barney, Jan Stewart and Lovehate Design for their great efforts, and of course young Macsen Chalmers for his beautiful artwork on the cover. As this is a large journal we begin with an even larger editorial this time around as we found all the articles a fascinating read.

Many of us know that Indigenous higher education is core university business and the articles here will firmly demonstrate this. Authors discuss the need to increase higher education success across the board and some have looked at the low Indigenous representation among university staff. Indigenous secondary school students have a place also and their admission to university and an investigation of remedial strategies are outlined. One of the major messages here is the need for the university to establish and maintain relationships with local Indigenous communities.

Retention and low retention of Indigenous peoples and strategies to overcome this dilemma are other moot points addressed in the papers. Herein support for the development of an Indigenised curriculum in science is a worthy suggestion as well as flexible course delivery and flexible delivery mode as a retention strategy. Community based support strategies are among the positives identified. Indigenous medical students and their reasons for withdrawing is an interesting read as the students were asked about the barriers and disincentives that dissuaded them from graduating.

A not so often look at the approach of tutors of mathematics is also investigated. Here the tutors' reflect their own teaching orientation. Time and time again we witness the crucial relationship paradigm in establishing rapport between the students and Learning Advisers. Both the tutor and student go on a discovery journey and anyone who has taught Indigenous studies and students will know what is meant by this. The science of mathematics is coupled with an analysis of scientific language and how discrimination takes place in the university setting and explores the ways in which academic knowledge production affects the learning

experiences, participation and completion rates of Indigenous students. Providing inclusive learning practices is amongst the keys to successful outcomes.

Further developing a Creole science could empower Indigenous students learning school science to develop the capacity to successfully negotiate the language systems is an innovative method proposed in a research study of learning the science concept of energy and force in one of the articles in this journal. Indigenous students learning school science navigate language negotiations before negotiating the language challenges in science learning.

Policy frameworks strongly influence agency and individual responsibility in the contemporary debates around practical and symbolic reconciliation or welfare-based/responsibility verses rights-based agendas. An examination is made of these arguments within the tertiary education environment and reflects on how the author's thinking and pedagogy have generally been based on a "moral vanity". Internationally, there is an article which looks at First Nations counsellor education and examines "Aboriginal Australian" constructs of counsellor education as expressions of liberal humanist colonialism. Another investigates Zimbabwean rural school teachers who are still trapped in colonial pedagogic practices. This does sound familiar and will strike a chord with us down under. The article explores the beliefs and attitudes of rural primary teachers towards incorporating Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous teaching practices in science education.

"Free the Spirit" illustrates the importance of student motivation and engagement. The article looks at current research into the former and classroom pedagogies for senior primary Indigenous students. What is of particular interest is the cultural interplay of the lived experiences of the students with schools, teachers and classroom pedagogies. "Strong and Smart" became the motto of Cherbourg State School when its journey was charted by well known and respected educator Chris Sarra in 1998 over a four year period. This study discusses the historical context of the school and its impact on the Indigenous people of Cherbourg which addresses the absence and voice missing from history – the voice of the Aboriginal people.

One of the papers addresses the potential importance of assistant teachers in confronting the challenges of Indigenous literacy education through the author's involvement in evaluating a Northern Territory literacy program. When we say literacy –

whose literacy are we talking about? Indigenous or Western English? Many of our children are proficient in their own language/s and to assume that literacy is only English is a misnomer. The role of oral language and representations in negotiating mathematical understanding is a similar article and theme of earlier papers. These meld in together with aplomb.

Sport is also a feature. Sport among Aboriginal children enabled them to positively express their Aboriginal identity together as a group, speak an Aboriginal language and interact with each other in ways that further affirmed their Aboriginal identity in an ethnographic study tested. There is a comparison of non-Aboriginal peers also. The Kickstart program is a well established AFL program. Evidence was collected to ascertain the lifeskills of Indigenous Australians through participation in AFL and in particular improving the education, attitudes and lifestyle choices of Indigenous youth in selected communities.

The last article is about the perceptions of school experiences by male Aboriginal youth at risk of becoming in contact with the juvenile justice system. The adolescent boys are accommodated in a short term residential centre designed to provide them with an opportunity to participate in strengths-based culturally appropriate educational, cultural, social and personal programs. It gives detailed accounts of schooling describing their lives as students or the "insider's" voices. Educators will be challenged by the relational architectures dominating teaching practices.

Now you know why we are excited about this edition of *AJIE* and it could be a hard act to follow if you are up for the challenge.

Jackie Huggins & Elizabeth Mackinlay

Editors