



# 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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- Lobby your local council to promote reconciliation, for example to fly the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags during National Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC week and on other special occasions.
- Consider drafting a formal Statement of Reconciliation for your organisation, recreation, faith or other group.
- Become aware of the key issues of reconciliation and think about those issues that can be advanced by you or your group.
- Reconciliation is about sharing history. Find out about the Indigenous history of your area. Ask a local Indigenous person to come and talk to you and your group about the Indigenous history of your region.
- Ask your local school if they have talked with your AFR coordinator about what schools can do to advance reconciliation. Many students, both primary and secondary, across Australia have participated in activities such as painting, writing stories and inviting local Indigenous people to their school to learn about the dream stories and indigenous history of their area.
- Many small businesses exhibit posters and distribute reconciliation materials from reception and customer areas. Call an AFR coordinator if you require any assistance.
- Local governments across Australia have played a positive role in advancing reconciliation in their area. For example, some local governments have established their own reconciliation committees — forging relationships, developing local agreements, identifying local Indigenous

For further information  
and Council materials  
contact Australians for  
Reconciliation Coordinator  
in your State or Territory:

ACT	1800 804 330
NSW	1800 060 266
NT	1800 060 268
QLD	1800 060 267
SA	1800 060 270
TAS	1800 659 363
VIC	1800 060 265
WA	1800 060 269

history and heroes, displaying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags on appropriate occasions and making available reconciliation materials in government offices.

- Faith groups throughout the nation have established Study Circle groups to talk to each other about reconciliation and what the group can do to advance it.

Reconciliation starts with you. Remember that regardless of what you do, big or small, it all counts. If you need more ideas or just to talk to someone about reconciliation, contact your local AFR coordinator. We are more than happy to assist.

**Editor's note:** These items have been extracted from the proceedings of the Australian Reconciliation Convention which was held from 26-28 May in

Melbourne with more than 1800 people from around Australia participating in the event. The Editors wish to acknowledge The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation and *Walking Together*, Number 19, August 1997, for allowing us to reprint this information here. □

### **Breaking Down Language Barriers in the Top End**

Coping with a communication problem is hard enough for anyone, but for some Aboriginal children living in outback Australia, it has been extraordinarily hard until recently.

Isolation, limited access to speech pathologists, and inappropriate cultural and linguistic testing materials have all played a part in making life difficult for the many Aboriginal communities living in and around the Katherine area, which has one of the highest incidences of cleft palate in Australia. Now the Katherine Regional Aboriginal Language Centre (KRALC) has come to the rescue. KRALC, run by an all-Aboriginal committee, records, researches and documents languages in the Katherine Region. Their task also extends to language maintenance, teaching and training.

Four years ago Merryn Philpott, the local Territory Health Services speech pathologist, began collaborating with KRALC's linguists and language workers to develop culturally and linguistically appropriate assessment tools for the mainly Kriol speaking people of the region. KRALC began training interpreters in Kriol and English. These interpreters provided a critical role in checking and revising the tools, which are based on observation and anecdote by the linguists, and not on research.

Merryn worked with linguists Prudy McLoughlin and Denise Angelo and interpreters Anne Marie Huddleston and Barbara Raymond to produce the revised information. Prudy said, 'We were using material that had been developed in England which had absolutely no relevance to Aboriginal children. So we modified the tests so that children could understand them, which allowed us to gain a real appreciation of the problems they were facing.'

The team returned to the communities with the revised material. They began making the week-long trips to the bush visiting children with speech difficulties and their parents. Prudy said:

The work has been worthwhile. The children could immediately identify with what was being asked of them and we were able to assess them



immediately and accurately. The interpreters were invaluable in helping me to communicate with the parents of children with cleft palates. We are able to discuss future operations on the children, and go through the different therapy programs which are available.

In recognition of its work in breaking down communication barriers, the Centre received the 1997 national Community Contribution Award from Speech Pathology Australia. National president of Speech Pathology Australia, Ms Ann Burton, said, 'The Centre's achievements in a short space of time demonstrate the need for skilled people to come together to tease out problems and come up with workable and affordable solutions.' She added that:

Children with communication disabilities often experience associated difficulties leading to poor literacy skills and low academic achievements. Many people with a communication disability are subject to prejudice. They may be ignored, their ideas and opinions not asked for. The results are frequently frustration and anger. The Centre's work goes a long way to make sure that Aboriginal children of today and tomorrow will be protected from such taunts.

**Editor's note:** This item first appeared in *ATSIC News* Winter 1997, p. 6. We wish to thank the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission's Office of Public Affairs for allowing us to reprint it here. □

### *Olympic Hopeful Lifts his Students*

Aboriginal teacher-aide, Anthony Martin, is well on his way to achieving his goal of representing Australia in weightlifting at the 2000 Olympics, after ranking ninth at the junior world championships in South Africa last month.

Weighing in at 125 kg, the 18-year-old former Rosewood State High School student and current teacher-aide has come a long way since he first decided to lift weights barely three years ago. He began training in Ipswich at the Police Citizens Youth Club and now travels for over two hours, five nights a week to the Chandler sporting complex near Brisbane's bayside, for two and a half hour long sessions with former Olympian Michael Keelan.

Mr Keelan is a retired weightlifter who represented England and decided to stay after the 1982 Commonwealth Games. He is now Mr. Martin's coach, trainer and mentor.

'I'm thinking of building a shed in the backyard so I can train three days at home and not have to