



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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PLANTS *Bush Tucker Medicinal and Other Uses of Minjerriba*

by Margaret Iselin and Lyn Shipway

North Stradbroke Island Aboriginal and Islander Housing Co-operative Society Limited, 1998, 32 pp.

Minjerribah: An Indigenous Story of North Stradbroke Island

by Margaret Iselin and Keith Borey

Joint publication by Moreton Bay Environmental Education Centre, Victoria Point State School, Minjerribah and Moorgumpin Elders in Council and Redlands Tourist, 1998, 26 pp.

Reviewed by Dennis Foley

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Both of these books are introductory texts for the reader to explore the unique community of Minjerribah. The picturesque sand island known as North Stradbroke Island lies to the east of Brisbane, Queensland, located at the eastern extremity of Moreton Bay forming the land barrier between the bay and the Coral Sea.

These publications allow the reader to visualise the beauty of the area and experience snippets of culture, history and the traditional owners' language. Both publications are relatively small at 32 and 26 pages, yet they contain a wealth of knowledge for the school student, the teacher, the visitor, or the armchair traveller. They are easy to read, sharing a common author, Aunty Margaret Iselin, with co-writers who are also traditional people of Minjerribah, Aunty Lyn Shipway and Uncle Keith Borey (in order of the publications).

PLANTS Bush Tucker Medicinal and Other Uses of Minjerriba was first envisaged during the Black Writers Festival in 1994 and has been developed with two issues in mind. First to educate and give the reader an insight into the plants used by the

traditional owners of North Stradbroke Island, Moreton Island and surrounding areas both prior to European contact and in post-contact times. In addition, it includes the utilisation of some introduced species. Secondly, the publication provides an introduction to the language used by the traditional owners of the North Stradbroke area in relation to their natural environment.

Both authors acknowledge that the production of the book was like a walk down 'Memory Lane' — the memories came flooding back of their teachings as a child by their aunts and 'Grans'. The publication in some ways is a trip into the authors' memories, complete with short examples of language associated with the plant species that are intricate parts of their culture, and their matriarchal knowledge. The short snippets of information such as '*jubbums milbool gugarkill gahunga tudleba*', or '*witchetty grubes live in wattle, very good to eat*', allow the reader to picture wattle, its many uses in tools and weaponry, together with its bush tucker association.

Only 14 species of flora are discussed; however, each is represented by a high quality coloured image and in some cases, inserts, in addition to an image in black and white that is visually appealing (almost a silk screen interpretation of the flora). Each species also has a map of Minjerriba depicting the species' distribution on the island.

A short index is given on the last page of Aboriginal words and their European translation. It is not extensive, but is simple and informative.

This publication retails for around \$10.00 and is a must for any school library. Copies can be obtained from the North Stradbroke Island Aboriginal and Islander Housing Co-operative, phone (07) 3409 9340.

The second text, *Minjerribah, An Indigenous Story of North Stradbroke Island* can be described as an introduction to the traditional owner's culture, by short story, by drawing, by historical photographs and by vivid colour pictures. (Note how Minjerribah



is spelt with an 'h' in comparison with the previously reviewed publication.)

Once again this is a must for any school library. It is simple to read, an informative teacher's resource in teaching Indigenous Australian Studies, with its vivid images and clear text. In fact, another booklet has been developed to assist teachers to use this publication effectively in the classroom. Copies are available from Moreton Bay Environmental Education Centre, phone (07) 3396 0754.

The table of contents speaks for itself of the wealth of knowledge contained in such a small publication. The contents are as follows:

- Dreaming and Creation Stories
- Signs in Nature
- Living with the Sea (fish, crabs, turtle, calling the Dolphins, hunting Dugong, making canoes)
- Living with the Land (sources of food, useful plants and medicines, middens and shelter, fire, music, art and dance, trade and utensils, trade regions)
- Special Places to Visit
- Time and Change
- Afterword, Today and Tomorrow.

This publication touches on language, flora and fauna, traditional food and resources. It mixes historical facts of post-European contact with short stories of the island's history, in a mix of clear images (some as large as A4), and concise text. Several of the photographs depict young people from the Minjerribah community who work as Cultural Officers in the Redlands Tourism Office.

The appeal for me in reviewing this text is the enchantment of the short stories, which includes the creation of the South Passage between Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island) and Moorgumpin (Moreton Island), the stories of Bulan (Amity Point), Wail Rock, and Mirrabooka (Southern Cross). They are written without the complex of anthropological jargon or academic correctness. The stories are honest, colourful interpretations delivered in no nonsense style, perfect for classroom delivery.

Retailing at approximately \$10.00 this is an inexpensive resource for the Indigenous educator or interested reader. Copies may be obtained from Redlands Tourism, PO Box 1021, Cleveland, 4163 or Moreton Bay Environmental Education Centre, PO Box 5173, Manly 4179, phone (07) 3396 0754.

The Great White Flood. Racism in Australia

Anne Pattel-Gray

Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998, 312 pp.

Reviewed by Paul Newman, English Department, The University of Queensland

The Great White Food is Anne Pattel-Gray's PhD thesis, written in 1994 at the School of Studies in Religion at Sydney University. The book focuses on the historical relationship between the church, government and 'Aboriginal People', with Pattel-Gray extremely pessimistic about the prevalence of racism in Australia.

There is a wealth of evidence presented on the historical and current manifestations of racism in Australia, especially in the second and third chapters, 'Racism in Australian Society' and 'Racism in the Australian Church'. This evidence should have been marshalled much more effectively — at times Pattel-Gray's accounts of racism lack coherence and accuracy. The various manifestations of the 'protection' of Aboriginal peoples introduced by governments and churches are confusingly analysed, with the claim that 'protection' ended at Federation, followed by evidence of the 'Aboriginal Protectorates' which existed in the 1930s; segregation and assimilation are also poorly delineated in this discussion.

The ongoing demonstration of the existence and persistence of racism is also flawed by the total denunciation of sectors of Australian society, usually made without any qualifying statements. Geoffrey Blainey's (1984) comments on immigration are used to dismiss the debate that (all) academics engage in; more generally, the entire academic