



# The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

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# Editorial

It is my pleasure to introduce this edition of the Journal. It has a definite international flavour along with some excellent articles from Australian researchers.

We had some doubts that we could pull together an edition before the end of the year. While we have just scraped this edition in before the festivities begin, we have managed to bring to you what I think is one of the most exciting editions of the Journal since we established its new format and breadth of coverage of all levels of education.

We could not have brought this edition together without help from two of my good friends and colleagues in the US. Only two short weeks before we sent this edition to the printers there were no articles in our offices and none apparently on the horizon. I sent off an urgent plea to Apanakhi Buckley in Seattle and Franke Wilmer in Montana asking for their help in a call for articles for publication. Their networks worked so well that within days there were expressions of interest from several people. Within another couple of days we had received the articles you will have the pleasure of reading in this edition. That flurry of interest seemed to spark the energy at the Australian end and within the same time frame other marvellous people in Australia responded to calls for papers and also spontaneously others began to arrive in our offices.

The interest from the US has been so fantastic that we have articles available for the first edition of the year 2000 and we will bring them to you early in the new year along with others from the domestic scene.

The collection of papers here is diverse and fascinating. Before commenting on those sent by colleagues from the US there needs to be an explanation of some terminology and concepts regarding Indigenous people that are different from Australian conventions. My own understanding of the US situation is rudimentary and I will gladly receive counsel from US colleagues regarding these matters. There is a general understanding with Australian readers that the 'correct' terminology is Native American rather than American Indian. But I have also read works by American Indians - *Reinventing the enemy's language* - by Joy Harjo and Gloria Bird et al - that suggest that 'Native American' is a construct of non-Indian academics while Indians use 'Indian' comfortably and then they identify by tribes and so on within Indian circles and according to Indian protocol.

The term 'tribe' as used in these papers by US writers is not an Australian convention, at least within academic circles, and readers should be aware of this. The anthropological and broader convention in Australia is to use the term 'group' but there are also many Aboriginal Australians who use the term 'tribe' freely. Reference to boarding schools, grade school and college levels do not equate directly with the Australian [and perhaps other] usage and understanding. Non-US readers should be aware of this and make appropriate enquiries to establish a clear understanding of such terms and expressions.

Apanakhi Buckley's work with American Indian and Native Alaskan medical students is important and provides compelling evidence of the need for programs that bring Indigenous people together working with each other as students and faculty. Mainstream educators and administrators should be able to see clearly the complexity involved in managing effective delivery of access to and successful outcomes from the formal education system, for American Indian and Native Alaskan students. The story told here will resonate with Indigenous people throughout the world and certainly

the experience in Australia for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders as we engage with tertiary level education as staff and students shares many of those trials that Apanakhi details in her paper. Fundamental to Indigenous people is the maintenance of their link with their people and culture. The struggles that students spoke of in this regard is profound and the way that they have managed to accommodate their new professional career with the depth and strength of their cultural upbringing should be encouraging to fellow students and families of these courageous individuals. They have kept true to their path while entering the exciting yet alien world of which they speak. I am particularly pleased to be able to comment on Apanakhi's paper as I met her during the early stages of her work and have maintained a dialogue with her during the time of the research and the writing of her dissertation. I feel privileged that she has so graciously agreed to give us the opportunity to publish some of her work. My gratitude to her and those students who gave permission for this paper to be published in the Journal is immense and I trust that I can repay this gesture in some way in the future.

The focus of David Beck's paper speaks for itself as far as the contribution it makes to the Journal, scholarship and the Indigenous voice in these debates. It is an instructive examination of the history of how American Indians have experienced the formal education offered by the United States of America through government and other means. Such a piece of work is important for Indians themselves and the paper should encourage other Indigenous groups to write their own perspective on these experiences in their countries. An important point of this paper is that Indian peoples had their own form of tertiary education and it is now pleasing to see that their tribal colleges are recognised in the way that they are. This should give encouragement to keep fighting for our voices to be heard at this level of education.

The paper *Towards a New Kind of Two-Way Classroom* by Bradley, Devlin-Glass and Mackinlay is a short but very important contribution to this edition of the Journal and to teaching in Indigenous Studies and about Indigenous cultures. The project is an exciting one which should be seen as an example of how to most effectively work with those people whose Knowledge is being brought into the education field in broader society. One of the constant dilemmas facing responsible Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers/lecturers is how we manage the inclusion or exclusion of Indigenous Knowledge and honour Indigenous protocol. This project provides an example of how this can and should be done. At the end of the day, such processes must accept the notion that those who own the Knowledge must have control of how it is made available for public and outside cultural viewing and used for teaching purposes. I look forward to subsequent reports that expand on this important project.

Jan Stewart's paper emerged out of her work for assessment for the Independent Studies subject taught by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit staff and which is part of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Studies major. These Independent Studies subjects give students the opportunity to take an issue of particular interest to them and work under supervision to produce a single large piece of written work for assessment. Jan has completed an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Studies major and her work here is an example of the extremely valuable contribution that can be made by non-Indigenous people in the field of Indigenous education. The article provides a good account of a program that can work effectively for Indigenous students and community. Crucial is the involvement of family and community and anyone teaching Indigenous students will quickly understand this if they are to be effective. I urge readers to accept Jan's kind offer to critique her paper and establish a dialogue that I anticipate will be mutually beneficial.

John Fanshawe, a former colleague of mine in a former career, brings his vast teaching experience before us in his latest findings on effective methods for working with Indigenous students. His long association with the craft of teaching and interest in teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island

children makes him a most suitable commentator on this matter. While he is not Indigenous and he would be the first to understand and acknowledge the 'limitations' this brings, as a colleague who has taught with him, I can attest to his sensitivity and ability to write about and work in this field. He has drawn on other commentators who bring a depth to this area that is worthy of note for any practicing and aspiring teacher who works with or seeks to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island children.

Dennis Foley, a member of the staff of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit, is well qualified to write on the subject of business, entrepreneurship and education with regard to how it affects Indigenous people. His career in the private sector and now the academic arena, where he has completed a Masters degree looking at the subject of his paper, well equips him to provide this thought-provoking comment. The value of education in the aspirations of Indigenous people to establish themselves in the competitive world of private enterprise is well argued here. He also has an acute understanding of the political environment that such enterprise operates within and how that climate can enhance or inhibit eventual success.

Each edition of the Journal tries to include book reviews. On this occasion there are two books, important for two reasons. One – *Is That You Ruthie?* – is an important work by a senior member of the Aboriginal community. It is a story that needs to be told again and again and the experiences of Ruthie and her contemporaries will resonate with those American Indian people who experienced life at boarding schools. Chris Watson is a non-Indigenous Canadian writing a PhD thesis which compares the works of Indigenous women writers in Australia and Canada. She has worked closely with staff of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit in the development of her work and her dedication and commitment to these writers has ensured that she has the sensitivity to review these works with both a professional and culturally understanding voice.

Sam Watson's review of Melissa Lucashenko's book – *Steam Pigs* – is again superb. Sam has taught the Black Australian Literature subject through the Unit this year and his work has been rewarding for both students and staff of the Unit alike. Sam's considerable skill as a writer makes him an ideal reviewer of Indigenous authors and his own style, enthusiasm and insight shines through in this review. Readers should be suitably enthused by the efforts of both these reviewers and should be eagerly seeking out both these publications for their own enjoyment if they have not already done so.

Finally, I again wish to express my particular gratitude to Apanakhi Buckley and Franke Wilmer for their response to my call for help. They are obviously held in considerable regard to have been able to mobilise such a response. There have been more papers submitted than can be included in this current edition and those that have arrived will be incorporated in coming editions, along with Australian writers' papers that are awaiting inclusion. I have enjoyed reading these submitted papers and I hope that my editing pen has been applied with due care to the intent of the message of the various writers. Thank you all again and a special thank you also to staff of the Unit who have pitched in with energy to get this to printing.

I hope you enjoy reading these papers as much as I have, particularly new readers is the USA with whom we hope to establish a continuing association. I look forward to bringing you another issue in the new year.

**Michael Williams**

Executive Editor