

Editorial

It is my pleasure to introduce this edition of *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education* to all readers.

In so doing, Michael Williams has taken some long-deserved leave and wishes you all the best for the Festive Season and the Year 2001. As to whether it is the New Millennium has perplexed scholars and astrologers alike. Perhaps, then, we might have a double celebration – just in case. Whatever the New Year brings, we would hope that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education finds its way into the homes of many people to educate our country as a whole about the richness and diversity of Indigenous cultures.

Wordage varies greatly in this edition due to the diversity of the presentations. Some are quite short, while others are lengthy, to demonstrate the scholarship and research applied. Here, Indigenous voices and novel ideas are coming to the fore. This journal encourages works about educational activities which may assist practitioners in the field. All articles presented in this Journal are able to satisfy that qualification.

Dr Kim Tan's paper details a new Professional Development course offered completely via distance learning. It arose from a consultancy to develop the special needs of teachers in Aboriginal community schools. The course aims to equip language professionals with skills and understanding in the teaching of ESL to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners.

She rightly contends, 'It must be recognised that learning is an ongoing process involving teachers as learners – which, of course, includes learning from students as well'.

Which leads to the next interesting article by Anne Barnes from Murdoch University, who reports on interviews conducted for students in the Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine and Surgery re learning styles. Relationships with teachers and other students were very important to most of the students, the interviews showed. They like to feel comfortable with the teachers and be able to relate to them. If the teachers were intimidating or overbearing, that was detrimental to participation by the students; he/she would just keep quiet.

Some of our mature-age students here at University of Queensland in fact become the teachers themselves on topics such as Aboriginal health, where they might have worked and which they know well. The most rewarding learning/teaching experience is when it becomes a two-way process. The most exciting thing for those of us who work in Indigenous Units across universities is the increasing number of students completing science and other courses apart from the traditional Arts degrees.

An engaging paper puts Indigenous research at the heart of the matter. Dennis Foley, one of our most prolific writers and published members of staff, explains the question he is asked many times, 'Is he training his kin in a Western science that is often at the opposite end of the spectrum to Indigenous thought and practice?' He looks at other Indigenous models to understand this dilemma.

One of them, complementing his article, is included in his Book Review of 'Decolonising Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples', by Linda Tuhiwai Smith, and is featured later in the journal.

Perhaps the most creative contribution this time comes from Maggie Young, Elcho Island, who demonstrates how thinking outside the box can prove to be a winner in terms of students' attendance, confidence, pride and self-esteem, and can take control over their learning.

The Café Mnymak (meaning 'good') Project has seen how drama can give meaning to literacy skills and involve a positive incentive for the whole community. The learning experience was seen as most rewarding, with many spin-offs for the school's community. Perhaps other teachers can develop their own creative projects to enhance their teaching and reap rewards far outreaching the classroom.

The final article comes from Hilary Colman-Dimon from James Cook University, Townsville which gives us insight into Western education for Aboriginal people on remote communities. Her Master's Degree research listened to Aboriginal peoples' ideas on a particular remote Top End community on correct protocol for consultation and establishing relationships between non-Aboriginal teachers and the community. Her PhD is about improving relationships between the school and community in the same remote community.

That's all for this editorial of the Journal.

Manymak reading,

Jackie Huggins
Acting Editor