



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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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 Minjerriabah 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 Minjerriabah (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



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world is condemned for the propagation of 'falsehoods'. There is little acknowledgement of the work of Reynolds and Rowley, even though both are used to support Pattel-Gray's demonstrations of racism throughout the book, and even in this section on education. Such broad condemnations, also applied to politics, the media, and the churches, apart from their inaccuracy, generate a perception of racism as an all-pervasive monolithic entity. This 1994 analysis leaves little rhetorical space to describe the deterioration in race relations that has occurred in the past few years. For example, while the impact of the 1967 referendum is open to question, especially in the light of the current Federal government's attempt to legitimise 'negative discrimination', it is difficult to justify Pattel-Gray's characterisation of the vote — 'a more racist and dehumanizing action is difficult to imagine' (43).

The central thesis of the book, the attack on the Australian church, also suffers from a lack of careful analysis. While it is true that the Australian church 'was tangled up in its own cultural imperialism and racism' (122), there is no acknowledgement that for much of its early years, the Australian church was an application of a European religion by Europeans. While there is extensive quotation of World Council of Churches studies such as the 1971 report which used genocide to describe white Australian practices, the fact that elements of the Australian churches have recently been outspoken in their opposition to racism is neglected. This distinction appears to be drawn in support of Pattel-Gray's belief in the redemptive capacity of a Christianity which is located outside of Australia — the 'international Christian community' (238). The Australian church's inability to acknowledge its 'Original Sin' is said to disqualify its current 'insincere' support for reconciliation.

Pattel-Gray does provide ample evidence that concepts such as economic development and Christianity have almost always existed only for White society, and spends some time on the churches' role in laying the 'groundwork for government oppression' (147). Pattel-Gray's pessimism seems justified, also in the light of

current events, when she identifies the apathy and lack of profound change that, after initial public outcry, have been the dominant response to events such as the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. However, there is generally insufficient careful analysis in this book to offer such insights.

Excerpt from 'Oppressed but Liberated'

**from *Sister Girl* to be published in 1998
by University of Queensland Press**

Jackie Huggins

The Diploma of Aboriginal Education instilled in me a positive and enthusiastic attitude to teaching. Prior to seven week teaching prac in the Northern Territory, I was looking forward to the challenge of teaching in (what I was led to believe was) an Aboriginal school. I felt strongly motivated to get started.

After many hours of travelling to the bush, this motivation turned to despair on my first meeting with some members of the school staff who had arrived at the motel to pick up our excess luggage. As the door opened, to their amazement there I stood. I had seen that look so many times before, the look that attempts to belittle one's confidence, that asks 'Hey, what gives you the right to be here?' or says 'So you're the student teacher and — you're black!' Only Aboriginal people know what it feels like to be degraded in this way, to feel the taunt of racist jibes.

As I boldly stared back, one woman, as if to cover up a guilty party's embarrassment, kindly informed me that 'the children will be glad to see you — no offence of course love — but someone of the same colour — you know what I mean.' I replied that I was indeed looking forward to acting as a role model for these children. Intuitively I predicted that this would set the scene for the next seven weeks. However, nothing could have prepared me for what lay in store.