WARNING

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this document contains images or names of people who have since passed away.
AITEP AND RATEP — INITIATIVES IN ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER EDUCATION

The Torres Strait Islander Regional Education Committee and Greg Miller (UQ) discussing the Remote Area Teacher Education Program proposals.
(Murray Island, September 1987)
AITEP AND RATEP — INITIATIVES IN ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER EDUCATION

After several years of careful planning the AITEP program at James Cook University is extending its services to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who live in far northern communities and islands. This exciting initiative will be known as RATEP (Remote Area Teacher Education Program) and is aimed at assisting people from these areas to conduct a significant proportion of their teacher training in their own communities. A major aim of the program is to encourage a high participation of students into education which will ultimately assist in the formation of a pedagogy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Last year, the Head of the Division of Aboriginal and Islander Education, Mr Greg Miller spent six months in gauging the perceptions of community people before submitting a proposed model for the program. Early this year Mr Miller delivered a detailed document which outlined the rationale and logistics involved in establishing the RATEP program. A present, practical consideration concerning finance and the exact location of the program are still being discussed. There is little doubt though, that this program will be a forerunner and example to similar programs in Australia in that it draws on our unique geographical location to form close links with our northern community. AITEP News will continue to monitor developments as the program is prepared for the 1989 academic year. In order to gain some initial insights into the program, AITEP News asked Mr Miller to respond to a number of questions.

RATEP

1. What is the RATEP and where did the idea originate?
   RATEP stands for the Remote Area Teacher Education Program. It has been a National Aboriginal Education Committee (NAEC) initiative for a number of years, but was brought into a prominent position by the Torres Strait Islander Regional Education Committee in 1985.

2. Could you explain the various models associated with formulating this program?
   The RATEP is an amalgam of different models of teacher-education. In it, there are components of on-campus, off-campus, and Distance Education modes.

3. How would the RATEP complement the existing Aboriginal and Islander Teacher Education Program?
   It would provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a means of becoming fully qualified teachers while retaining their close links in, and with, their own remote communities.

4. Are there any particular target groups of Aboriginal or Islanders who would be included in the program?
   Yes: our first target group is that which the TSIREC has highlighted for us. These are the people currently employed as Community Teachers in Aboriginal and Island Community Schools.

5. Who are the likely funding agencies for this program?
   At present, it is anticipated that most or all of the funding will come through the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training.

6. Where is the program likely to be based and why?
   The whole point of this program is that it will be mainly operationalised in the remote communities of Far North Queensland and the Torres Strait. Initially, we anticipate that we will launch it in the Torres Strait.

7. What are the likely staffing requirements?
   As the RATEP has been conceptualised, we would have each of the subjects taught by university staff, including a full range of AITEP Support subjects and tutorials. In addition, we anticipate having a Program Coordinator and a Bilingual, Bicultural "Transformer".

In my view, the RATEP could be one of the most innovative and positive programs ever offered in Aboriginal and Islander teacher-education in Australia.
Members of the Torres Strait Islander Regional Education Committee at their conference on Murray Island, September 1987.

Ted Loban (left) and Elder Mosby, both members of the Torres Strait Islander Education Committee.
VISIT FROM DEET
CAIRNS

Rick McCaskill works for the Department of Employment, Education and Training. He has recently been on a tour of campuses throughout Queensland to ascertain the perceptions of staff and students involved in affirmative action programs. Rick gives his views of the AITEP Program as well as possible recommendations for the future.

Recently, I visited Universities and Colleges of Advanced Education throughout Queensland.

My interest was in the support programmes offered to Aboriginal/Islander students at these institutions. The majority of Universities and Colleges of Advanced Education now have designated support programs in place.

Students in the AITEP and AICWEP programmes at James Cook University were very supportive of these programmes. In particular, they spoke highly of the tutorial support. Many said they would not have survived their first semester at University without this intensive assistance. I left with positive impressions of both programmes.

Aboriginal/Islander students with "ordinary admission" into faculties such as Commerce, Engineering, Science etc. do not have designated formal support. These students, in contrast to the AITEP and AICWEP students, are "anonymous". Most other Universities and Colleges of Advanced Education in Queensland, have cross faculty support programmes. Perhaps James Cook should look at this concept.

CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS PROGRAM

For several years the Division of Aboriginal and Islander Education has been providing different modes of 'in-service' education and training to a wide range of community groups.

Recently, the Division held a three-day seminar for Public Service Board personnel who requested a short program for sensitising staff to appropriate forms of communication between Aboriginal/Islander people and non-Aboriginal/Islander people.

Last week, for the first time, the Division was asked to provide a similar program for the prison service.

Last Wednesday, four members of the Division provided an afternoon of 'bi-cultural communication' for newly inducted prison staff at Stuart prison.

The Division members were chairperson Greg Miller, Lyn Henderson, Helen McDonald and Glenn Dawes.

The program not only provided some techniques for communicating, but also introduced inductees to such topics as Queensland's policies on Aborigines and Islanders; how the Queensland education system serves Aborigines and Islanders and communication across cultures.

(Campus News, 8 June, 1988)
Blackman struggle, in this Whiteman's world
He has fought for his honour, pride and land
From 1788 to 1988,
He has struggled to find his existence,
In his own natural home land.
Our forefathers who made the greatest sacrifice,
Gave their lives,
For the land, they so loved and honoured.

During the 50's a new generation was found,
Who made the protest of their inequality
Through marches and rallies,
And sit-ins on government lawns
Their life was hard,
But they saw the progress,
As they moved closer and closer to equality.

Now in the modern world,
We find a new generation of teachers and lawyers,
Who fight for equality, not with violence and bloodshed,
But with education and words.
The new found power,
That is stronger than the fist of man.

PAST STUDENT WINS OVERSEAS STUDY AWARD

Letitia Murgha (Kennedy), one of the first three students to graduate from AITEP has been awarded a three month overseas study bursary. Her study will be based at the Bi-Lingual Education Program at Rock Point School in the American south-west. She will concentrate her research on the Navajo and Zuni Indians, focussing on the involvement and control they have and exercise within their community.

All the very best, Letitia; we know you'll do well!
An experience which has stayed with me over the years is this. Imagine sitting on coconut fronds up-wind from the cooking fires with a dozen or so old men. The rays of the fierce dry-season sun are filtered through the canopy of coconut trees some 60 feet above as they rustle in a gentle breeze. The early afternoon heat seems to weigh us down as we struggle to stay awake. Some are smoking to keep their eyes “open”. We all take turns to sip the milk of a green coconut while the women prepare cooking pots, peel vegetables and scold noisy children playing in the background. Dogs sink around the edge of our circle, occasionally brawling in their search for food morsels. I am ready with my notebook and tape-recorder. One old fellow, a clan leader, clears his throat, spits some betel-nut juice to his left and says: “Tell us about your place”.

This happened when I was doing my PhD field-work in a Markham Valley village in Papua New Guinea. I was interested in what the Amari people did and said in their everyday life. They were interested in where this young Australian came from and his people: Did he have a family? What were his brothers and sisters called? Why was he interested in schools? What kind of person was he? (After all, he’s too young to know anything worthwhile...)

I of course became a member of an Amari family. Nobody can live in the village without being part of the social network. I learned the proper way to speak about my “fathers” and my mother’s sister’s husband, that some of my “sisters” were boys, how to plant bananas, what to do when I had a stomach ache and so on. I saw that Amari parents told their children many of the same things about growing up that my mother and father had told me. I learned much about what it is to be human in that village.

Above all, I learned that formal Western style education sometimes separated the young from the old, that it often contradicted the knowledge of the elders. But I also learned that “education” was one of the key things that young people needed for their lives in a soon to be independent Papua New Guinea. Many of the older men and women agreed even though they had trouble in seeing how it might be done, and indeed, what “education” was.

Before this stay in the Markham I had been a primary teacher in remote parts of Papua New Guinea for six years. Later, I lectured Australians who were going to be teachers in Papua New Guinea at the Canberra College of Advanced Education. I also taught some courses in traditional Aboriginal life to people going to teach in the Northern Territory. One of the main things I emphasized was this: it was very important for teachers to learn the culture of their students, including as much of their language as possible. On the basis of my experiences in another cultural setting I figured then, and my view has not changed, that it is up to us teachers to learn as much as we can about the people we teach if we are to “teach” them at all.

Nevertheless, our job as teachers is to “teach” really important knowledge rather than to be cultural researchers in a strict sense. In the schools we work in, the knowledge that we teach is, more often than not, very strange for our students. This strangeness is sometimes used as an excuse for failure on the part of students, and an alibi for teachers, even in urban schools where almost all the students are Anglo-Australians! Our job is to develop our own knowledge and skills so that school-knowledge is made available to all. Not to do so is to keep our students ignorant of what is happening in the rest of the world.

Young people everywhere are heirs to our world (perhaps we are holding it in trust is a better way of saying it?) and they have to be knowledgeable about it if they are to have some control over their own lives. Formal education has the potential to encourage us all to see beyond our own selves and own communities.

We are fortunate at James Cook University in having the AIITEP program, one of the best of its kind in Australia. AIITEP is a considerable achievement in the Australian context. What we all need to ensure is that AIITEP continues to change into the 21st century as the role of the University evolves. One of the most important changes that we must work for is that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids, even in the remotest settlement or island, get access to good curricula and excellent teaching. Teachers are the key to both. A large bit of the future for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youngsters and their communities lies in the hands of teachers. This quite serious work is what we are about at James Cook University.
Another important project is that of ensuring the staffing of AITEP with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics. The overall measure of our AITEP successes in the future too will be the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduates in Law, Engineering and so on. I welcome comments from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (and others) about how we might go about these and other goals.

I come to James Cook University as a former school teacher, trained in anthropology and, for the last ten years or so, a university teacher and researcher in the sociology of education. My wife, whose cultural traditions are Greek, comes to Heatley High school with over five years of working with disadvantaged urban kids from forty or so different cultural backgrounds. We look forward to using our experiences and interests in our professional work in Townsville. To AITEP colleagues, students and communities I say, let's get on with what I consider to be one of the most socially relevant programs in Australian universities.

Hello! I'm Sharon Hayston, and very happily, I have just been appointed to AITEP as Senior Tutor (Primary). Some of you would already know me from last year as part-time tutor in EZ827: Contemporary Australian Society.

In fact I feel I have spent half my life at James Cook already. I started the BEd here in 1971, and graduated to begin teaching in 1976. Since then, I have taught at high schools in Ingham (four years) and Tully (five years), and have been in my present position as History Subject Master at the local Pimlico State High School for 3 and one half years. Again I seem to be a bit of a slow mover in life, because ironically, I also started my own high school life at that particular school.

I look forward to beginning in my new position with AITEP.
In one of the semesters of the stretched first year, Aboriginal and Islander students have the opportunity to undertake school experience in Aboriginal and Islander community schools.

During the teaching career of these students, it is highly probable that she/he will teach in a school located on an Aboriginal or Islander Community or in a school with a significant Aboriginal and Islander enrolment. Because of this, and because many of these students have had little or no experience of life on a remote community, the provision of such a practicum is necessary to ensure that students gain appropriate experiences which will assist in their future careers and thus be of mutual benefit to all.
During my time at community practice, I learnt about the various expectations of a teacher: the way to be a role model, how to treat children, the way to structure the class; most importantly to learn respect for children on a community. This was one of the best experiences of my life.

I really enjoyed community practice. I went to Hopevale for three weeks and I had an excellent supervisor. It wasn't until the second and third week of my practice that I was confident that teaching was for me.
FAREWELL TO DOT STANLEY

On Friday 3 June a small function attended by staff and students was held at AITEP to farewell Dot Stanley.

Dot began as a tutor here in 1983 on a part-time basis and took up full-time teaching in 1986. She worked in several areas during this time concentrating mainly on maths and study skills and written communication yet “backing up” in teacher development and even music when the need arose.

Before working with AITEP, Dot had enjoyed an extensive and long career with the Queensland Education Department. In that time she taught in all levels within the primary system throughout the whole state with the exception of the north-western region. For 22 years of that time, Dot specialised as a “scholarship teacher” teaching the past equivalent of year eight and nine students.

She held the position of deputy-principal for 12 years — being one of the first two women to be promoted to that level in Queensland. In addition to this, Dot was acting principal in various large primary schools over a number of years, both in Townsville and further afield.

Dot’s broad practical experience and very warm, personable style have been valuable assets to AITEP. Dot will be sorely missed by staff and students alike. We wish her all the best in the future.
SCHOOL VISIT TO AITEP

Recently AITEP hosted a school visit from year 3 of Wulguru State School. The visit was planned to complement the children's study of Aboriginal and Islander culture as part of their social studies unit.

Mrs May Abernathy from the Material Culture Unit gave the class an informative session on the wide range of Aboriginal and Islander Cultural Artifacts held on the Eastern Campus. Following this the class was treated to a story telling session by Kassandra Sorrenson on an Aboriginal Legend. With the assistance of the winter weather, the children were able to participate in a mural painting exercise on the lawns of the campus. Lela Ara and Veronica Cootes then treated the children to two traditional Torres Strait Islander songs which were obviously enjoyed by each student. The classroom teacher, Mrs Magella Hart, commended the enthusiastic AITEP student involvement and commented on the value of the visit in making the students increasingly aware of facets of Aboriginal and Islander culture. Similarly, the AITEP students suggested that a visit to the school in the second semester would create higher student involvement in the planned activities.

Visits by school groups to the AITEP programs are becoming increasingly popular at the university. Last year's visits included several groups from the more remote parts of the state such as Doomadgee and Weipa.
Year 3 students and their teachers with copies of AITEP News.

Lela Ara (centre) and Kassandra Sorenson (left) with the students from Walguru.
ART APPRECIATION

The following article describes the perceptions of one AITEP student regarding the visual arts course at James Cook University. Chris Stanley, a member of the GI I group, is one of several AITEP students involved in presenting a display of his art work.

This is a course entailing sketches, pottery, a sculpture and a painting which will all be exhibited for marking at the end of the semester. Students also have to write an essay on some aspect of contemporary art. Except for sketching, which I did during my school days, I had no previous experience in this course. The course starts with students making a sculpture of a nude model. This was done over a period of nine hours with the lecturer explaining step by step, the shape and form of the body. Of the thirty odd students in the class, you would never have thought that they had the same model. Everybody had their own interpretation of what they could see. Some sculptures were long and thin, others short and fat, but all had the satisfaction of completing a sculpture they can call their own.

The sketches covered still life (a branch, flower, twig, etc.) and a nude model. For the still life, students had to find their own piece to draw in pencil and worked at their own pace. The nude was drawn in charcoal, ink, felt pens and crayons. These were done within a time limit with the model changing position for each drawing. The time limit ranged from one minute to thirty-five minutes with students pacing themselves over that period. These sketches were framed and will be displayed in the exhibition.

For pottery, students had to make a pot or pots by rolling coils of clay and placing them on top of each other progressively until the desired shape and height was achieved. The finished product was up to the individual and all the students completed at least one pot. These included fruit bowls, pot plants, cups, jars, and lamps which would also be displayed.

A painting also had to be completed using acrylic paints, with students having to mix and match paints to achieve the finished piece. This painting had a variety of topics and students simply had to pick a topic and paint. The finished pieces would be displayed with all the other individual students' pieces in the form of an exhibition.

This exhibition was very effective with students showing off their pieces of work. Some students brought in other accessories to improve their display such as plants, flowers and fruit.

This course is both rewarding and exhilarating considering the finished products.
If you are interested in becoming a teacher through AITEP, write to:

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School of Education  
James Cook University  
TOWNSVILLE, Q. 4811

or telephone (077) 814629  
(077) 814948

AITEP NEWS  
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