A look at North American Indian history programs
—some ideas for Aboriginal programs in Australia
When the shown by history has been seen
Let those truths more lasting be known.
Consider how instruction and
To those who will come and will know
For life is but those pursuits, and desire
Instruct me not but live by vision
Two are in answer to the question.
Wonders to number, nor know
Civilization many and mighty.
Our days were many which we sought
And victory and time was known.
Her alter over our disperse men
Wrest warriors back and bound on

Knowings from without infirmities come,
Great to number of our brothers
For as the vast is in one heart
True to words the one mighty

Knowings are not to numbers know
My hands are made by my head for honor

Hymn to Minstrels

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A Comanche dancer performs in a street procession in the sixtieth anniversary Gallup Intertribal Ceremonial in New Mexico.
This report is the result of an overseas study program I completed in North America between July and October 1981 after I received an Aboriginal Overseas Study Award from the Commonwealth Department of Education. At the time I was a research officer with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies and I was given the award to study methods of recording a people's history, particularly oral history. During my study tour I was very fortunate to have the company and support of my friend and colleague Cathy Guinness who, under her own arrangements, accompanied me throughout the tour. Working together, we decided we would present this report from our observations as a team. We hope the report will be for the benefit of the Aboriginal community. Commonwealth education and the wider community; and for ourselves as a reference paper for Aboriginal studies.

The focus of our studies was on American Indian oral history and Indian studies programs. Our main interest was in programs organised and run by Indian communities on reservations. However, we also visited programs run by Indians and non-Indians in universities and schools. From visiting all these programs we hoped to gain an understanding of how people first got them going; what methods are being used in collecting and documenting oral history; how Indian studies are being taught; and what sort of funding and assistance is available.

The aim of our report is to provide readers with a picture of what is happening in these areas, and some ideas that will be useful for Aboriginal programs in Australia. The report is not a day-to-day account but, rather, concentrates on the most valuable programs we learnt from. For the interest of future Aboriginal Overseas Study awardees, we have included at the end a list of all the organisations we visited, their addresses, and a contact person in the organisation.

Wayne Atkinson
The land rights question in Canada and the U.S.A.
Before describing the various American Indian history programs we visited, we will give a brief historical background to Indian affairs so that you can see the context within which the programs are operating. The simplest way of doing this is to point out the major similarities and differences between colonial treatment of the indigenous people of North America and Australia.

We found, as surely any Aboriginal visitor finds, that the first thing we had to understand was 'Treaty rights'. We were asked whether Aborigines had made treaties. No? Why not? Treaties were made with Indians in Canada and the U.S.A., and are the cornerstone of Indian rights in both these countries. We came across treaties everywhere we went — in current court cases, in cultural centres and museums, in Indian studies courses and in tribal history books. So we set ourselves the task of studying the background to treaty making in an attempt to answer the questions: why no treaties between the British and the Australian Aborigines and why no recognition of Aboriginal occupancy?

Recognition of Indian occupancy in North America
The whole issue of treaties and recognition of Indians as the prior occupants of their tribal homelands goes back to the original principles set down by international law in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The foundation of this law originated in Spain and was later adopted by the major colonising powers of Europe. The British applied these principles in their settlement of Canada, and subsequently the United States Government applied them in the U.S.A.

To explore this difficult question more deeply, we would like to summarise our present understanding of the background to treaty making in North America and throw some light on the issues we have raised, including the absence of treaty making in Australia.

Wherever the European touched, during the various discoveries and the subsequent intrusion into the Americas, he found inhabitants. From the southern part of South America to the northern regions of North America, the land was occupied by peoples misnamed Indians, because in 1492 Columbus erroneously believed he had reached Asia.

Prior to the entry of Europeans into Indian territories, Indian nations recognised the sovereignty of one another and treated each other as separate independent nations. The same recognition was given by the colonial powers, who engaged in treaties with them guaranteeing their 'free and undisturbed rights' to their lands.

In North America, recognition of Indian sovereignty and land rights was first legally set down by the Royal Proclamation signed into law by King George III of England in 1763. However, there were certain principles of law established before then.

International principles
At the time of the colonisation of North America, there was an accepted morality in relation to indigenous sovereignty and land ownership. This morality was expressed, for
example, in the sixteenth century, by the Spanish jurist Franciscus de Victoria, who was regarded as the founder of international law, or the 'Law of nations'.

He said, in reference to American Indians, that 'the aborigines undoubtedly had true dominion in both public and private matters just like Christians, and that neither their princes nor private persons could be despoiled of their property on the ground of their not being true owners'. To do so, said de Victoria, would be 'theft and robbery no less than if it were done to Christians'.

The arguments of de Victoria displaced those of his predecessors who dealt with international relations upon the basis of Christian and non-Christian or infidel peoples, and the belief that Christian States had a God-given right to take the lands and possessions from the infidels. It was commonly believed that infidel nations were non-States, that their rulers lacked true jurisdiction, and that their lands were open to be taken without the takers feeling guilty.

The influence of de Victoria on the practice of colonisation is also summarised by Indian historians Rupert Costo and Jeanette Henry:

In 1532 the King of Spain directed Franciscus de Victoria to advise him on the rights of Spain in the New World. De Victoria asserted that the aborigines were the true owners of the land. If Spain was to acquire land in the New World, it must be done by treaty with the sovereign Indian nations. The findings of de Victoria were accepted by European countries, and treaties with the natives were negotiated on the basis of international law.

There were also others of authority in Europe who recognised that the original inhabitants of the New World had rights. 'Pope Paul III issued a Papal bull (official statement) in 1537 which stated [that] Indians are truly men, they should freely and legitimately enjoy their liberty and the possession of their property.'

**Doctrine of discovery**

As interest in the New World became stronger, all the major colonising powers of western Europe — Spanish, Dutch, French and English — entered into an arrangement laid down by the Law of Nations called the 'doctrine of discovery'. It implied that new territories and their inhabitants became the subject of the colonising power. The inhabitants were in possession of the land, however, until such time that the invading nation negotiated with them to extinguish their title by treaties.

**Land rights in Canada**

In Canada, these principles of international law were adhered to by the British in the Royal Proclamation of 1763.

The Royal Proclamation of 1763 was issued by King George III of England, following the Treaty of Paris, in which France ceded all her rights to sovereignty, property and possession in Canada to Great Britain. The Proclamation, which has the force of a statute in Canada, established the government of the territories acquired from France, and announced a new policy with respect to Indians and their lands.

Although it was a new policy, it was described by legal opinion in the 1960s as establishing a charter of Indian rights that did not create new rights but, rather, affirmed old rights. The Proclamation laid the founding principles of Indian rights which were then incorporated into Canada's treaty system.

**Principles of Indian rights**

1. The Indian allies are not to be disturbed in the possession of their hunting grounds.
2. The hunting grounds that have not been ceded to or purchased by the Crown are reserved for the Indians.
3. No patents should be issued for lands beyond the bounds of the newly created colonies.
4. Private individuals may not purchase the reserved lands, and private persons settled on the lands must leave them.
5. Lands may only be purchased from the Indians by the King at a public meeting held for that purpose.

On the basis of these principles, a procedure for treaty making was developed.

**Treaties in Canada**

Between 1794 and 1929 the Indian nations in Canada conducted negotiations with the Crown, resulting in the signing of more than twenty major international treaties. Adhesions were signed up to 1956.

A similar story can be told of the Indians in what became the United States, following the American War of Independence.

One of the first acts of the American Congress, before it had even adopted a Constitution, was to pass the North West Ordinance of 1778 which said, concerning the Indians, their lands and property shall never be taken from them without their consent.

**Treaties in the United States**

The United States made 394 treaties with Indian nations and tribes between the years 1778 and 1868. Congress ended treaty making with the Indians through the device of the Indian Appropriations Act in 1871. But the Federal Government continued to deal with Indian tribes as recognised governments. The process then became one in which agreements were signed which had to be ratified by both houses of Congress.

During the treaty-making period (1778–1871), 'the U.S. maintained a policy of extinguishing native title by negotiating treaty purchases. More than five million square kilometres, 90 per cent of U.S. territory, were purchased under the treaties mentioned at a cost of $800,000,000 in cash and services.'

**What is a treaty?**

It is important to define what a treaty is so that we can clarify its meaning. Black's law dictionary states that:

A treaty is an agreement, league or contract between two or more nations or sovereigns, formally signed by properly authorised commissioners and solemnly ratified by the sovereigns as the supreme power of each State. A treaty is an agreement which is also binding in international law.

Justice Marshall, of the United States, in the 1832 decision *Worcester v. Georgia*, comments on the meaning of treaties by concluding that international law was invoked by Europeans when entering into treaties with the Indians.

The words treaty and nation are words of our own language, selected in our own diplomatic and legislative proceedings, by ourselves, having each a definite and understood meaning. We have applied them to Indians as we have applied them to other nations of the earth; they are applied to all in the same sense.

The Indian nations entered into the treaties to establish peace and friendship with the colonists and to obtain guarantees in exchange for the cession of certain areas of Indian lands.

**What was in the treaties?**

A typical treaty both in the United States and Canada included guarantees such as the following:

1. Reserve lands were to be established within the ceded territories for the use of the nations signing the treaties.
2. Small cash payments were paid to the chiefs and their people who were parties to the treaty, and thereafter annuity payments were to be paid to them and their descendants.
3. Farming implements and supplies were provided as an initial outlay, and thereafter ammunition and other hunting and fishing materials were to be furnished to the Indian people on an annual basis.
4. Indians reserved the right to hunt, fish, and trap over unsettled areas of the ceded land.
5. The Government was to establish and maintain schools for the education of the Indian children on the reserves.
6. The Government promised to provide suits of clothing, flags, and medals for the chiefs and headmen of the tribe.
7. The Government was to provide a 'medicine chest' for the use of the Indians.
8. The Government was to provide assistance to advance the Indians in farming or stock-raising or other work.\textsuperscript{10}

The whole process of treaty making from the start to the finish, and whether the conditions and agreements were honoured by the respective governments, is another history in itself.

One thing that does stand out is that the Indian nations believed that the treaties were a guarantee to them that they would be allowed to live as Indians and govern themselves on their own lands; that is, they would retain their sovereignty and would remain separate, independent nations within a new nation. Treaties laid down the peace terms.

However, those of us who have been fortunate to go to North America and experience for ourselves and those who have read the Indian histories of the Americas portrayed in Dee Brown's \textit{Bury my heart at Wounded Knee}, or Vine Deloria's \textit{Custer died for your sins}, know that treaties were not a peaceful solution to European–Indian relations and that a violent history followed during and after the treaty-making period.

The policies of the North American governments had the same effect as those in Australia, where the indigenous population was deliberately and systematically removed from its homelands, and forced on to reservations isolated from the general community, and controlled by missionaries and government officials.

Although the Indian nations strongly resisted these culturally genocidal policies and gained treaties, this was not the end of the struggle. From the time treaties were signed and reservations granted, there has been a continuous struggle until the present to hold on to their lands from further pressures by governments and other interest groups to alienate more Indian land for their own economic purposes. For those tribes which have managed to retain or regain their tribal lands, the advantages can be many: cultural continuity, economic security, and a base for the exercise of Indian sovereignty and development.

\textbf{Comparison with Australia}

In 1763, King George III issued the Royal Proclamation of Canada, affirming Canadian–Indian rights to undisturbed possession of their land, and establishing the principle that land had to be acquired from them by the Crown in order to extinguish native title.

Seven years later, in April 1770, Captain Cook took possession of the eastern seaboard of Australia in the name of King George III.

The simple act of planting the flag, making a formal speech and firing a royal salute were considered adequate to assume absolute title to the land, superseding any claim that thousands of years of Aboriginal occupancy implied.\textsuperscript{11}

Why was Aboriginal title not recognised in Australia?

We have not found satisfying historical evidence on this point. We have found four articles discussing the question, and will summarise the points they make. The authors are Diane Barwick, G.J.L. Coles, Alan Frost and A. Barrie Pittock.

\textbf{Moral principles ignored in nineteenth century legal theory}

By the time Australia came to be settled, moral principles had been set aside in the debate in England over how overseas possessions could be legally acquired. In 1722, Privy Council confirmed that 'new-found country is to be governed by the laws of England'.

5
The Crown could also decide what status a colony should have: whether the territory was ‘occupied’ and needed to be conquered or was ‘waste and uncultivated’ and therefore simply needed to be discovered and settled.  

Coles explains the change like this: the old concern was with the moral principle that indigenous people, whatever their state of civilisation, had equal rights to their possessions as did Europeans. That concern was gradually replaced by an approach that emphasised the actual practice of States, and a new rule emerged that sovereigns had the right to wage war and to annex territories by conquest. Four years before Captain Cook first sighted Australia, the great British jurist Blackstone admitted the possibility that the American plantations could have been obtained by the right of conquest and the driving out of the natives.

The Law of Nations became a law which applied only to ‘civilised’ nations. In England in the nineteenth century, leaders of opinion insisted that the British sovereign had the right to annex land from backward, ‘uncivilised’ peoples and to deny them their sovereignty. 

*Terra nullius*

Apart from conquest, which required a brute show of force, it had become convention by the mid-eighteenth century for a State to acquire land in one of three ways:

— by persuading the indigenous inhabitants to submit themselves to its overlordship;
— by purchasing from those inhabitants the right to settle part or parts of it;
— by unilateral possession, on the basis of first discovery and effective occupations.

The third way did not concede the indigenous people a right of possession. Europeans decided whether the indigenous people had this right on the basis of a collection of ideas which are summarised by Frost:

If, then, the inhabitants of a region over which a European State was interested in acquiring sovereignty had advanced beyond the state of nature and mixed their labour with the land so as to have enclosed and cultivated it, made roads and raised houses and towns; if they had formed themselves into a society exhibiting the use of reason in systems of customs, religion, and commerce; if they had developed a code of laws, and a government to administer this code... then they had established sovereignty over the region, and the would-be possessor had either to persuade them to accept overlordships, or to lease a portion. However, if the indigenous had advanced beyond the state of nature only so far as to have developed language and the community of the family, but no further; if they had not yet mixed their labour with the earth in any permanent way; or if the region were literally uninhabited, then the permanent way; or if the region were literally uninhabited, then the Europeans considered it to be *terra nullius*, to which they might gain permanent title by first discovery and effective occupation.

These legal arguments ignored the established principles of international law. Thankfully, these principles were reasserted after the Second World War with the establishment of the United Nations, and much work has since been done to define the human rights of indigenous and tribal populations. ILO Convention No. 107 defines international measures for the protection of indigenous populations, including their land rights and cultural heritage.

**The Australian case: how did Britain justify annexation?**

We want now to look at what actually happened in Australia’s case. What instructions were given to Cook and the early governors in relation to Aborigines? What debates went on in the British Parliament about the status of Aborigines, and their rights? What arguments did they actually use to defend their genocidal behaviour in settling Australia?

Barwick summarises what happened:

(Cook) had been instructed to take possession of this land ‘with the consent of the natives’. But he claimed possession of the east coast of the continent in 1777 after only a few days’ observation
of the Aborigines. Knowing nothing of their land tenure system, he decided they 'move about like wild beasts in search of food' and reported that 'we never saw one inch of cultivated land in the whole country'. From 1786 to 1825, the instructions given to the colonial governors made no mention of Aboriginal land rights, and then only urged Governor Darling to protect them 'in the free enjoyment of their possessions'. It was not until the colony of South Australia was established that a governor was required to recognise Aboriginal rights to occupy their lands — and this instruction was soon cancelled.16

The British Government never ordered Australian officials to inquire into Aboriginal land ownership, or to extinguish native title by treaty. When Batman made a private treaty in 1835 with headmen of the Woiwurrung and Bunurong clans who owned land around Melbourne, the colonial governor quickly declared the treaty to be void. The treaty embarrassed the Government: it showed that the land was occupied and that it was possible to negotiate treaties with the Aborigines.

The actions of the colonial government in ignoring Aboriginal possession did not go completely unchallenged.

Barwick describes the only challenge we have encountered:

So well-established was the British practice of making treaties to purchase land for settlement that an 1837 report of a Select Committee of the House of Commons expressed astonishment that the Government had completely ignored the claims of the Aborigines as 'sovereigns or proprietors of the soil' and had taken their land from them 'without the assertion of any other title than that of force'. These members of Parliament questioned the Government's 'oversight'. But the Government's neglect continued to be excused by arguments that the Aborigines lacked any recognisable system of political organisation and customary land tenure.17

Contrast with New Zealand

In 1840, the British Government persuaded a number of Maori chiefs to sign a treaty. By the Treaty of Waitangi they were guaranteed 'full, exclusive and undisturbed possession of their properties subject only to the Crown's right of pre-emptive purchase'. When, in 1848, the British Government tried to wriggle out of its treaty obligations, the Chief Justice of New Zealand insisted that abandoning the 'old national principle of colonisation by fair purchase' was a violation of 'established law'. He said Britain had an obligation to honour its promises as a 'matter of national faith'. The British then decided to abide by the treaty guarantees.18

Failure to recognise Aboriginal ownership

In Australia, the courts continue to uphold the original legal fiction that the land was 'unoccupied' in 1788. This is despite the fact that judges have acknowledged, as Justice Murphy did in the Coe case (1979), that there is a wealth of historical material to support the claim that the Aboriginal people had occupied Australia for many thousands of years; that although they were nomadic, the various tribal groups were attached to defined areas of land over which they passed and stayed from time to time in an established pattern; that they had a complex social and political organisation; and that their laws were settled and of great antiquity.19

In retrospect, there are many possible factors behind the initial failure of the British Government to recognise Aboriginal ownership. We have discussed the legal background, but the political climate of the time was perhaps more influential in deciding how to treat the Aborigines in practice.

It seems to us that the circumstances of the settlement of Australia enabled the British to get away with ignoring the whole question of Aboriginal legal status and rights. They were able to excuse this behaviour, or justify it by using the argument that the land was terra nullius or 'unoccupied'. In the circumstances, there was little criticism either from home or from international circles.
At home, there was political urgency to find new territory to take convicts, and from which to import raw materials for domestic industries. The American War of Independence had cost the British half of North America, and Captain Cook’s discoveries offered a suitable alternative that was quickly snapped up. Also, as Pittock pointed out, Australia was so distant in space and time from England that the higher principles of colonial theory never came to be enforced in a frontier situation ruled by ‘practical’ men.20

Within Australia, convicts and free settlers were taken up with matters of survival in a harsh land and a harsh society which had little time for moral scruples. Then again, Aborigines had little power to force the invaders to treat them better. For although there was certainly resistance by the Aborigines, perhaps the low population density, the difference in armaments, and the lack of large-scale leadership made resistance ineffective in the long run.

Internationally, perhaps it was the absence of competing colonial powers that worked against Aborigines. In North America, Britain competed with the Spanish in the south and the French and ‘Yankies’ in the north for the loyalty of the Indians, who were able to gain advantages from this situation.

We have said that Britain justified ignoring Aboriginal rights by arguing that the land was *terra nullius* — that Aborigines lacked any recognisable system of political organisation and customary land tenure.

In our view, this argument cannot be sustained when you consider that:
- Batman did make a treaty, showing that those Aborigines did own certain land, and that they were politically capable of making such agreements; and
- many North American Indian tribes were nomadic and led by clan headsmen, but treaties were made with them, that is, they had a similar political organisation to Aborigines and did not cultivate the soil, but they were treated differently by the British.

**Unfinished business**

In the final analysis we conclude that:
- It was expedient for the British to avoid making treaties.
- This was justified by reverting to old arguments about the inferior status of ‘uncivilised’ peoples.
- Accepted principles of international law were ignored at the period of settlement, whereas they had been honoured in earlier and later periods.
- Aboriginal groups have many precedents to use in their presentation of land rights claims, such as the British recognition of North American Indian and Maori land ownership.
- Justice has yet to be done in relation to Aboriginal land rights and compensation for unlawful dispossession.

**Conclusion**

Having attempted to provide a historical overview of the land rights question in North America and its comparison with Australia, we want to conclude this section of our report by explaining what relevance this has to the issues and problems Indian and Aboriginal communities are still dealing with today.

First, the basis of Indian identity and cultural heritage lies in their ‘mother’, the land. The spiritual attachment is still strong with the land. The continuity of Indian religion, art, literature and philosophy depends on maintaining the links with the land.

Second, Indian people still regard themselves as separate independent nations with sovereignty over their lands.
Third, economic development is a major concern which depends on Indians having control over the use of their lands, to develop their own programs.

All of these and other basic needs depend on tribal land ownership which is still a matter of contention in the courts of North America and Australia. Indian historians and lawyers are therefore obligated to contribute their knowledge to the land rights struggle. Tribal histories and, recently, oral history projects are all part of the historical evidence and testimony which Indians are using in their land claims.

Indian history begins with the emergence of the people from the land, and much of this history is only known by the elderly members of the community. The present cultural revival has made younger members more aware of the importance of this knowledge for their own identity and cultural heritage. Because a lot of the knowledge has been lost, and more will be lost as the elders pass on, there has developed an 'urgency' among Indian communities to set up oral history and tribal history programs.

Indian studies programs emphasise strongly the importance of knowing the historical background of Indian relations with the Federal Government. Vine Deloria Jr is a strong advocate for this. He believes the most powerful political tool Indians have is a thorough knowledge of documentary evidence relating to Indian-government relations. He stresses to his students that they must know this area better than those government agencies which deal with their affairs. Criticisms of government policies and practices lack hitting power when they are not supported by accurate historical knowledge.
Indian oral history programs in North America

This section will describe the oral history programs visited in North America. The main focus will be on those being conducted on reservations, which we will refer to as community-based projects, and those based in universities.

Reservations:  White Mountain Apache reservation, Arizona 
  Navajo Nation reservation, Arizona 
  Hopi reservation, located in centre of Navajo reservation, Arizona 
  Yakima reservation, Washington State 
  Pine Ridge reservation, Sioux Nation, South Dakota 

Universities:  University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona 
  University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah 
  University of South Dakota, Vermillion, South Dakota 

Indian view of oral history

Oral history to the American Indians is viewed in a similar light to Australian Aborigines, that is, it is not a new phenomenon: in fact, it has been part of Indian cultural traditions since the beginning. Written history in the form of pen and paper is a new thing that was introduced by Europeans, and forced onto people at the start of the reservation system.

Simon Ortiz, of the Acoma people in New Mexico, who is an Indian historian and author of several books, says about oral history:

Indian oral history is a recognition of what has moral value. Passing on that oral history to another generation of people is an affirmation of that value. Elder Indian people say to the younger: these things that are told to you from the past have a value that is your responsibility to carry on and teach your children. The elder people say respect that which has value. Respect this because it has relationship with you. Its value comes from that relationship. This history contains within it all the struggles that our people have gone through. Therefore its continuance means the continuance of our current struggles of our lives.

Indian people feel strongly about their oral history being retained and, over recent years, there has been what they see as an urgency to record and document their histories, particularly from the elders. In the past (which is similar to our own situation in Australia), Indian people were forced to conform to government policies aimed at destroying Indian culture and replacing it with the European way of life. The survival of their identity and traditions has been extraordinary. The urgency, then, is to record and document Indian values and experiences so that the Indian cultural heritage can be retained and passed on. The cultural revival among younger people has also influenced them to find out more from their elders about history, and become involved in community projects.
Origins of oral history in North America

When we talk about oral history we must remember it is only a recent thing that has been developed since the advent of recording equipment. Indian people and other indigenous people throughout the world passed on their histories by oral tradition (meaning it was a traditional method of passing on their history) which is thousands of years old. History was passed on by word of mouth — stories and songs — and by visual things — rock art, painting and dances. Oral history, then, is a more modern method which began in North America in the 1940s. The combination of traditional method and modern technology is generally credited to Allan Nevins, who established the Columbia Oral History Project at Columbia University in 1940. He first started recording oral history with a wire recorder in 1948. However, wire recorders were soon superseded by tape recorders, and then by portables. We can now record information that people will be able to listen to 200 years from now.

Reservation programs

Those programs being conducted on reservations among the Apache, Navajo, Hopi and Sioux are all community-based projects. The information being gathered remains with the community and is stored either in the cultural centre libraries (Apache) or community colleges (Navajo & Sioux).

The immediate concerns of Indian oral historians are to record information and to transcribe it on to paper. As we have mentioned, they see this as the ‘urgency’ part of their programs, and once the material is transcribed, it forms part of a resource bank for future consultation and research work. Some of the projects are published in book form. However, in most instances this is not the main priority. The main objective is to record and document it now, and work out the best way it can be presented later.

The author, Wayne Atkinson, visits the Apache Arts and Craft Center on the White Mountain Apache Reservation in Arizona. The Center was formerly part of the historic Fort Apache.
White Mountain Apache Culture Center

This program is operated from the cultural center on the reservation. It was initiated by the Director of the Center, Edgar Perry, who is Apache, and the project is part of the cultural museum, which was set up to preserve the culture and language of the Apache people. This preservation includes their artefacts, history, photographic material, language and religion. The museum is operated through the White Mountain Apache tribe funded by the Tribal Council.

The oral history project has been in operation for some years, and they have an extensive collection of taped interviews, which are currently being transcribed and translated into English. The material will be used for teaching Apache history in schools on the reservation. The cultural center also has a library for researchers, containing books, manuscript materials, and all of the official documents and records of the U.S.A. war department from 1878–1911 when it ran the military post at Fort Apache. This material is of importance to the Apache people and the oral history project, as it provides a background of Apache history from the written records.

Navajo and Hopi

Both the Navajo and Hopi Indians still retain their oral traditions because they, too, never lost their language or all of their land. The Navajo and Hopi have developed bilingual education programs which have helped to maintain their own traditions and history.

We visited the Navajo Community College at Tsaile on the 40 million hectare reservation and spoke with Peggy Scott, who is of Hopi descent and the Director of the Navajo and Indian Studies course. During our discussions of Indian history and oral history, she made some most valuable comments. The curriculum of the Navajo and Indian Studies program is developed in consultation with the elders of the community. This includes the involvement of medicine men or tribal historians in the teaching of Navajo oral traditions. The Navajo have also produced an oral history of ‘The long walk’, which is an oral account from descendants of the original people who were forcefully removed from their homelands to a reservation in New Mexico some 300 miles away. They later returned after the 1868 treaty. ‘The long walk’ is an excellent account of how the Navajo saw it from their side of the story.\(^2\)

The Navajo believe their oral history will never be lost. Since the establishment of the Navajo Community College in 1968 and other community schools on the reservation at Rough Rock and Rock Point, Indian oral tradition and history will be perpetuated through their own educational programs. The Navajo nation also has its own media station where radio and TV programs are transmitted to the community of 177,000 people. Virgel Wyaco is the director of this program which is bilingual and disseminates information to the community on a variety of subjects and issues, including oral history programs from Navajo people.

Hopi reservation

The Hopi, whose reservation is in the middle of the Navajo, still retain a rich oral tradition. Not long after our visit, there was a conference on the topic of Hopi history. The purpose of this conference was to discuss ways and methods of recording and writing their history. We met the organiser of the conference, Eugene Sekaquaptewa, who is currently preparing an oral history project among the Hopi. The project is supported by the Hopi Research and Development Company which is involved in doing research work and producing materials on Hopi culture and history. The project is focused on recording interviews with Hopi elders, and using those interviews as a resource bank. In fact, this project was much the same as the Apache.
The architecture of the Navaho Community College, on the Navaho Indian Reservation in Arizona, reflects Navaho tradition and philosophy. The College’s administration centre (foreground) is built in the style of the tribe’s traditional ‘hogan’ dwelling.

A Hopi silversmith demonstrates his craft at the Hopi Cultural Gift Shop on the Hopi Indian Reservation in Arizona.
Sioux reservation: Pine Ridge

We visited the Red Cloud Indian School, which is run by the Catholic Church and members of the Oglala Sioux tribe on the Pine Ridge reservation. Sister Pat Thalhuber, who is a senior teacher at the school, has developed a course called cultural journalism. This course developed out of the Foxfire Project which is based on the idea of students going out into the community and finding out information by talking with the elders rather than being told everything in the classroom. Students are encouraged to interview elders of the community and then bring that information back to write it up as a group project. This enables them to develop skills in doing research, interviewing and writing. It also develops more awareness in the students of their history and their cultural heritage. Sister Pat supervises the project and assists students with their work in the field and in the writing-up process. The Foxfire concept is a very popular one now being adopted by a lot of schools in the United States, and one that we see as being of great value to our education system in Australia. The Red Cloud School has produced booklets and slide presentations from its projects which are of excellent quality and value to both Indian and wider communities as educational material.

The other major contribution the Sioux nation has made to oral history has been the book *The great Sioux nation*, which was compiled from the oral evidence given to the Sioux Treaty Hearing in 1974 at the Federal District Court in Lincoln, Nebraska. The treaty hearing was mainly devoted to the testimony of traditional Indians, historians, attorneys and anthropologists. Forty-nine witnesses testified for the defence. The book contains most of the testimony of every witness, edited and rearranged topically. Contained in this compilation is probably the most complete history and analysis of Sioux culture and of Sioux-United States relations ever made available to the American public. Furthermore, the Sioux perspective through Sioux oral history forms the basis of the hearing and the book.

Analysis of programs

The community-based projects seem to us to be the most relevant to the Indian situation, that is they are firstly initiated by members of the community and then carried out in consultation with the community. This, we feel, is the most effective way that oral history can be done. If the project is being done from outside the community then the old problem arises where the people from whom the information was collected wonder if they will ever see that information again, or what it is going to be used for. The community-based one belongs to the community and it is the responsibility of the oral historian to consult with the community and work out what it is going to do with the information.

Although we did not get the opportunity to see what methodology Indian people are using in collecting oral history, we were able to listen to some of their tapes and discuss this topic. Methodology seems to be a trial and error situation. Oral historians develop their own skills as they go along, learning something new from each interview and adopting that for the next. The most essential tools are knowing what you want to focus on; having a background knowledge of the history by doing your homework first; consulting with the community; and working out the end result of material.

Most of the elders — Apache, Navajo, Hopi and Sioux — speak in their traditional language, so the interviewer has to be able to communicate freely in the tribal language. These interviews are later translated into English in the transcript, which poses a problem in translating a dissimilar language into English. Indian people have their own way of describing their history and events which is full of imagery and symbolic descriptions. When this is translated into a foreign language, it gives a foreign interpretation and a lot of meaning is lost, so you can imagine the difficulty the person has who translates the tapes.
In all, Indian oral historians, although they have been working at oral history for some time now, still see themselves learning new approaches as their programs develop.

**Application to Australia**

Community-based projects in our view are the most effective because they involve and belong to the community. This concept and the other concept adopted from the Foxfire Project would be ideally suited for Aboriginal communities.

We feel it is most important to involve younger Aboriginal people in this sort of work, which will give them a sense of their identity and a knowledge of their cultural heritage. Both these models could easily be implemented in Australia and should be supported by appropriate funding sources.

**Recommendation**

That the Commonwealth Department of Education, together with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, recognise the importance of community and school-based oral history projects, and establish oral history centres in each State from where oral history projects can be funded and co-ordinated.

**Oral history programs in universities**

**University of Arizona**

The University of Arizona, Tucson, has a course on oral traditions which is part of the American Indian Studies program — recognised as the most outstanding Indian studies program in the States. We will talk more about this program later in the Indian studies section. The oral tradition unit is taught by Scott Momaday who is of Kiowa descent and author of *The way to Rainy Mountain*. Scott teaches about the historical developments of oral tradition and the advent of written literature. Oral tradition, he believes, is something we have become separated from, being more reliant on written history. Today, we write things on paper and store it away for later, whereas oral tradition was based on memory. He discusses the special qualities of oral literature and examines what becomes lost in the changeover to written literature.

Scott’s course is very popular and students have to apply early to get into it.

The University of Arizona also conducted an audio-visual program which was co-ordinated by Larry Evers, a lecturer in American Indian literature. This project involved a team of experienced audio-visual technicians and interviewers who conducted interviews with Indian people on various topics of Indian affairs. The project took four years to complete and operated on a budget of $80 000, which resulted in the production of eight 30 minute video-taped interviews with Indian people.

Larry sees audio-visual documentation as the best method of recording oral history because it captures everything. One of the problems with transcribing oral history into written form is the loss of the real feelings, imagery and expression which are all captured by audio-visual recording. One of the problems here, however, is the funds for the technical expertise, field-work and equipment needed for this type of project.

**Other programs**

The two other oral programs we visited were:

1. American West Center, University of Utah, Salt Lake City
2. South Dakota Oral History Center, University of South Dakota, Vermillion

These two programs are recognised as the most extensive oral history programs in the States. Both have been funded by the Doris Duke foundation.
The development of oral history in both universities began in the 1960s. Doris Duke, heiress to the American Tobacco Company fortune, funded seven oral history projects dedicated to the collection of oral history from American Indians. Miss Duke’s goal was to allow Indians to tell their own history and culture in their own words, and to preserve this knowledge in the hope that it would ultimately affect the non-Indian viewpoint — a perspective that dominates the history of Indian people. Thus, the universities of Utah and South Dakota established their oral history projects.

University of Utah

For more than twenty-five years, the University of Utah has gathered materials related to Indian culture, literature and history. These are housed in the Marriott Library, the American West Center, and the Utah Museum of Natural History. Professor Floyd O’Neil is the director of the American West Center. He was also involved in the oral history project.

American West Center

The Center, founded in 1964, has done extensive research into American Indian history. After receiving a Doris Duke Grant for the collection of Indian oral history, the Center gathered over 1500 hours of interviews between 1967 and 1972.

The Center has also helped tribes develop archives and write tribal histories (as discussed in the tribal histories section) and has been involved in producing over thirty-seven publications on Indian history.

Although this is more of an academic approach, Indian people are also involved and trained by the Center, in conjunction with the Newberry Library, Chicago, to develop research and oral history skills.

The oral history materials are stored in the University’s Marriott Library which houses the Western American Division of Special Collections. This collection includes primary and secondary source material related to western themes such as Indians and the fur trade. It also covers a wide variety of topics pertaining to the Intermountain (West Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah Wyoming) and includes a substantial number of rare books on Western travel and exploration.

South Dakota Oral History Center

This program began about the same time and was called the American Indian Research Project. Since 1966, researchers have collected 1068 interviews with American Indians representing more than forty Indian tribes. The subjects range from Indian history before contact to some of the more social and political problems of the 1970s. In 1970 the South Dakota State legislature funded the South Dakota Oral History Project: a project designed to collect and retain the oral history of the State. The oral history archives currently maintain a collection of over 2000 personal interviews. The subjects of this collection cover a wide range of interests, including homesteading, the cattle industry, political movements, town developments, family backgrounds and social and cultural activities.

In 1974, the South Dakota Oral History Project and the American Indian Research Project were combined under the auspices of the Oral History Center, a program of the Office of Cultural Preservation, South Dakota Department of Education and Cultural Affairs. By combining the two programs the Oral History Collection became the second largest in the nation. It preserves a priceless portion of the past not only for the people of South Dakota and the Western region, but also for the nation.

The Oral History Center is directed by Dr Joseph H. Cash, one of the pioneers of oral history in America whose published work includes To be an Indian: an oral history (ed. Joseph H. Cash and Herbert T. Hoover, 1971) and a handbook The practice of oral history, jointly written by Ramon I. Harris, Joseph H. Cash, Herbert T. Hoover and
Stephen R. Ward and published by Microfilming Corporation of America, Glen Rock, N.J., in 1975. This handbook is an excellent guideline for oral history practitioners.

Policy governing the use of the materials developed by the Oral History Center

Policy governing the use of the archive holdings generated by the Oral History Center is designed to make both tape recordings and typescripts of interviews accessible to researchers within limits prescribed by State and Federal copyright regulations. Because of the wording of the congressional copyright statute that became effective on 1 January 1978, the Center will:

1. make recording and typescripts available for research use under supervision at the I.D. Weeks Library at the University of South Dakota, at the Historical Resources Center Library in Pierre, South Dakota, and the offices of the Oral History Center as rapidly as they are processed by the staff of the Center;
2. supply copies of tapes for research purposes on request by interviewees or by persons or agencies with written permission from the interviewee, such as for deposit in county historical associations or use by Indian tribal governments; and
3. publish typescripts for general distribution as copyrighted microfilm throughout the Microfilming Corporation of America as rapidly as the microfilming process can be completed. This policy does not permit the Center to supply copies of any tape or typescript for any person except the interviewee, as his or her designated representative, before it is published under copyright by the Microfilming Corporation of America, for to do so may violate provisions of the 1978 Federal copyright law. Researchers may use any tape or typescript in the Center’s collections under supervision, however, at the I.D. Weeks Library, at the Historical Resources Center Library, or in the offices of the Oral History Center.

Analysis of programs

The university-based programs offer an alternative source of historical information for students and researchers. The directors of these centres see oral history as bridging the gap between the established historical discipline and the Indian viewpoint by providing an alternative source of evidence. Their aim, then, is to have the Indian viewpoint incorporated in the professional historian’s account of the past.

One of the most interesting aspects of these programs was the organisation of materials in university libraries. Materials are systematically indexed and catalogued for their easy retrieval. Request forms are a formality and applicants have to state the purpose of research.

The training of Indian students in oral history is another important aspect. Interviewers receive proper training from skilled people, and must be well read in Indian history.

Oral evidence is also being used by Indian communities in their land cases, which is another benefit of university-based projects.

Finally, the funding of university-based programs is something that needs mentioning. Apart from the Doris Duke-funded programs, there seem to be various other sources that funds are available from. The National Endowment for the Humanities, together with foundations such as the Ford Foundation, and the South Dakota State Legislature, have all contributed generously towards the development of oral history programs in America.

Application to Australia

Oral history programs should be encouraged and developed by universities in Australia. The Aboriginal viewpoint in Australian history has generally been neglected by universities. Oral history programs based in universities and jointly run by Aborigines and
Europeans would provide an alternative source of evidence for students and researchers. The programs being run by the American West Center, University of Utah, and Oral History Center, University of South Dakota, could be used as models for the development of oral history programs in Australian universities.

**Recommendation**

That the National Aboriginal Education Committee lobby universities to introduce oral history programs along the lines of the Universities of Utah and South Dakota, in order to provide an alternative primary source of information on Aboriginal history and culture for students and researchers.
In the U.S.A. we came across many tribal histories — books relating the history of a particular tribe and written and authorised by members of the tribal community. It was clear, from the availability of funds and professional help, that there is a considerable commitment to these tribal histories by the U.S. Government.

**Programs visited**

1. Dr Dave Warren, Director, Research and Cultural Studies Development Section, Bureau of Indian Affairs. This section of the Office of Education, B.I.A., is located in the Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe, New Mexico. The functions of this section include the development of materials through seeking proposals from tribal groups.

   In the effort to develop more cogent and culturally relevant materials, the center has supported oral history–tribal history text, literature and folklore projects. From these projects result histories, literature collections, and other instructional resource materials. Through location, organisation and interpretation of materials for publication, a tribe becomes acquainted with the range of resource materials relating to its heritage.

   **Such projects hopefully bring the tribe to a position where it becomes an authority on its history and culture.**

   Follow up or related programs in the tribal development of materials include teacher-training workshops, curriculum development projects, formation [sic] of tribal resource persons, and similar educational projects that provide maximum application of the expertise in the tribal community.23

   In our discussions with Dr Warren, himself an Indian, we found that a major part of his work is assisting tribes to take advantage of the Section by entering into contracts to produce materials. The B.I.A. will fund for two years only (an ‘initial boost’), so Dr Warren helps them tap other funds to keep projects developing. He also facilitates relationships between tribal historians and councils, and resources such as university researchers, library collections etc. These relationships are important in assisting the tribe to produce a sophisticated product (i.e. one that will be taken seriously and reflect the depth of the knowledge), but also in getting historians and anthropologists to rethink their attitudes and assumptions through relating on a footing of equality with tribal elders.

   In an article titled ‘Concepts and significance of tribal history literature projects’, Dr Warren points to another benefit of tribal history projects.

   Through this process a systematic way is suggested by which the Indian community can evaluate the factors or elements of tradition that have provided them with useful alternatives for maintaining cultural viability. The tribal projects provide important insights into the analysis of (such) conflicts between disparate systems and the manner that [sic] Indian personal life is affected. These studies also provide an understanding of the viability and vitality of indigenous institutions.24

   Dr Warren has been actively involved in several tribal history and literature projects and has given us copies of some of the products as modes:— *Wa She Shu: a Washo tribal*
Application to Australia

The publication of books for the community, as a result of tribal history research programs, contrasts sharply with the traditional pure research orientation of universities. From our knowledge of the Institute of Aboriginal Studies, the Institute has carried on the university approach of funding individual researchers to produce a research product for the academic community. This approach has two major disadvantages: research findings may never find their way to those who need to apply them; and Aboriginal people are more and more being deprived of being authorities on their own history and culture as white 'experts' write more and more books about them.

Recommendations

That the Institute of Aboriginal Studies makes a fundamental shift in commitment towards the production of culturally relevant materials, including tribal and community histories written by and for the tribe or community.

That the Institute of Aboriginal Studies makes a commitment to reversing the trend whereby non-Aborigines become the authorities on Aboriginal issues and actively seek to ensure that Aboriginal communities become authorities on their own history and culture.

2. Dr Floyd O'Neill, American West Center, University of Utah

Dr O'Neill, whose involvement in oral history we have already described, has also played a major role in the production of tribal histories. He is subcontracted by tribes to act as consultant—co-ordinator of history projects. It is clear from the model he has developed for working with tribes that Dr O'Neill is committed to the development of tribal expertise in research and the building of knowledge banks within tribal communities. His long experience as consultant has made him aware of the problems involved in developing co-operation between tribe and university, and in working out the roles each should play.

The contract between tribe and American West Center for the production of a tribal history

Dr O'Neill is very particular about defining the contract clearly and sticking to it. These are some of the features of the contract:

• The contract must be with a legally recognised group within the tribe.
• All money is to be administered by the group.
• Application for funding is to be made jointly by the group and the A.W. Center.
• Copyright and final editorial approval are to be in the hands of the tribal group.
• The group is to select one of the tribe to be a trainee historian to be trained in research methods and to write the history.

Other features of a successful program

• The tribe needs to want to tell its history abroad.
• A person with good reading and writing skills is needed as a trainee historian.
• Trust must be developed between the trainee and the university helper.
• Schools must be involved to negotiate what material is needed, and material must be checked for grade level by a competent person (Fry method used).
• A committee of elders needs to work with the trainee for him to get advice from and tell where he is at, to be involved in writing an outline of the book, and to review the final manuscript.
• The tribe needs to decide what informants should be paid.
• All information about the tribe discovered in libraries by the trainee should be copied, filed and stored by the tribe for its future use.
Dr O'Neill gave us copies of histories produced with his support. He also expressed his interest in visiting Australia to share his experience.

**Application to Australia**

Dr O’Neill’s model of co-operation between a tribe and an academic consultant is of direct relevance to the production of tribal histories in Australia. It offers a practical way to return knowledge about the tribe to the tribe, and to train Aboriginal historians. It guarantees a culturally relevant product which will be used in schools.

At present, the Institute funds Aboriginal researchers, but does not provide the support they need to develop their research skills and to present their findings for community use in book form.

**Recommendations**

That the Institute of Aboriginal Studies develops new working arrangements in relation to the training of Aboriginal historians along the lines of the program run by the American West Center, University of Utah.

That those arrangements should ensure the return of authority over cultural materials to Aboriginal communities and also ensure the publication of materials useful to them.
American Indian studies at U.S. universities

History

Although the system of higher education in the United States set out to educate Indian and non-Indian youth, in fact, the universities concentrated on the education of non-Indians. Only over the last decade has the national system of higher education returned partially to its original mandate by recruiting and admitting increasing numbers of Indian students. With the arrival of Indian students on campus, Indian studies programs became a more obvious need. The presence of Indian students made apparent the ethnically biased content of campus offerings — virtually all ethnic studies were European in character (languages, literature and history). After World War 2, ethnic studies had widened to include Asian, Latin American, Russian studies and so on, but it took the Third World student strike at Berkeley in 1969, for example, to shake that university into acknowledging its neglect of Third World communities within U.S. society. As a result, that university made a commitment to develop and maintain a culturally diverse academic setting where students from all social and ethnic backgrounds could study together. The Native American Studies Department was established as a result, and two years later the Native American Counselling Unit was set up to provide academic and personal counselling and financial assistance. American Indian (Native American) studies are now to be found in at least eighty universities and colleges throughout the U.S.A. although they tend to be located in the western and mid-western States containing larger Indian populations. The larger more prestigious universities which have such courses include Arizona, California-Berkeley, U.C.L.A., Minnesota, Dartmouth and Harvard.

Curricula offerings of American Indian studies lead to a bachelor’s degree in American Indian studies, or an area of concentration for a bachelor’s or graduate degree in another discipline e.g. history or anthropology. Instructors range from native speakers of Indian languages and those intimately acquainted with Indian cultural practices to historians, musicians, artists, lawyers, anthropologists, linguists, social workers, educators and sociologists. Many are Indians themselves.

Course offerings are, however, relatively homogeneous from institution to institution. Representing a blending of traditional and contemporary American Indian life, they cover three general categories: traditional Indian life, including languages; changes since European contact; and contemporary issues and events.

Current issues

We visited American Indian studies programs at the following U.S. universities: California-Berkeley, U.C.L.A., Arizona State, University of Arizona at Tucson, Minnesota and South Dakota. In Canada, we visited Indian studies programs at the Universities of British Columbia, Regina and Brandon.
Discussions with Indian scholars teaching within these programs gave us a good insight into the issues that will face Aboriginal scholars when Aboriginal studies programs become established in Australian universities. Issues we picked up from discussion and reading included:
whether American Indian studies units should be located within traditional disciplines (history, anthropology, education) or within a discrete American Indian studies department;
whether American Indian studies can justify being accepted as an academic discipline: the need for good scholarship;
what impact research programs can have on Indian community life: the community service function of research;
the development of interdisciplinary masters and doctoral programs in American Indian studies;
the problem of the clash of values between university life and Indian community life: the distance between 'educated' Indians and reservation communities;
the importance of Indian languages as a basis for understanding Indian values; and
how can traditional Indian education be incorporated into the university system?

As there are about fifty American Indians with Ph.D.s in the States the development of Indian studies programs rests mainly in their hands. For further elaboration of their thinking, see the American Indian Culture and Research Journal 1978, 2, 3 & 4 combined. University of California, Los Angeles.

The University of Arizona, Tucson — the most outstanding Indian studies program

This program has developed within a university which has been serving Indian communities since 1890 through agricultural extension and other development research. Special services to Indian students on campus began in 1959 with a student adviser and a financial adviser. Many departments of the University are involved in special Indian training programs on and off campus, including the fields of education, medicine, business administration, energy resource management and telecommunications. Many departments are involved in applied research relating to Indian affairs, but only after approval by the Co-ordinator of Indian Programs, Dr Gordon Krutz, whose role it is to promote good university relations with Indians. See An inventory of Indian programs 1979–80 for details of these programs.

It is in the context, then, of a university long committed to the Indian community that American Indian studies is developing in a unique way. The program has been guided by Vine Deloria Jr, Ogala Sioux, Professor of Political Science and author of several well-known, hard-hitting criticisms of Indian–Federal Government relations. Other prominent Indian academics teach in the program in the areas of history, political science, literature (Scott Momaday previously mentioned), religious studies and anthropology. They all happen to come from different tribal backgrounds, and Indian students from all over the U.S.A. and Canada are encouraged to participate in the program.

The most recent development is the setting up of an M.A. in Politics for Indian students, as Vine Deloria, a lawyer by training, sees a great need for Indian people to be very well informed in relation to how government functions, including their special relationship with the Federal Government and sovereignty issues. It is only by being better informed than the bureaucrats about their rights that they can hope to maintain an Indian way of life.

Any Aboriginal students interested in studying politics, history or anthropology would gain a great deal by studying in this American Indian studies program for a year. They would be most welcome, and would find themselves at home among friendly Indian students and a relaxed, supportive staff. We discussed the idea of student exchange
programs with the Director of the program, Professor Robert Thomas, and he was most enthusiastic.

This could be taken up by Commonwealth Education (see Recommendation).

The Saskatchewan Indian Federated College: an Indian-run college operating within a university!

This college, in the University of Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada, is unique. It is a fully accredited Indian-controlled institution. It offers a B.A. in Indian studies within the Faculty of Arts, and programs in Indian art, Indian education, Indian management and administration, and Indian social work, with legal studies in the pipeline. Students of the College attend both general lectures in the various departments of the University, and Indian studies within the College. Indian control is through a board of directors responsible to the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians. Indian studies is the core subject area for all awards, and is taught by Indians with the guidance of a resident elder.

Application: Aboriginal studies in Australian universities

The development of Indian studies departments in North America is an inspiration to those within the Australian university system who are working towards Aboriginal studies departments. It is a picture of things to come.

However, a major breakthrough is needed before real progress can be made here. The first step is to actively recruit Aboriginal students into universities, and to actively support them with counselling services and with the provision of courses relating to Aboriginal history, culture and social concerns. Without a dramatic increase in Aboriginal graduates, there will not be the necessary core of Aboriginal academics to run Aboriginal studies departments.

The Aboriginal Task Force at the South Australian Institute of Technology has demonstrated that active recruitment and support programs are effective, and that there are many Aboriginal people with the potential to complete university degrees.

Indian studies at Indian community colleges and schools

Away from the academic pressures of the university, housed on reservations and managed by community councils, Indian community colleges are in a good position to offer real community-based alternatives in the Indian studies area.

Outstanding in this respect is the Navajo Community College: the oldest and largest of the community colleges. We have already described the large part oral tradition plays in Navajo and Indian Studies (NIS). Here, we want to describe the purpose of the NIS program and the influence it has had on the whole college philosophy. This bilingual, bicultural college aims:

- to provide its students with relevant academic or vocational–technical skills so that they can go on to university or enter the job market; and
- to promote among Navajo men and women an understanding of their unique heritage, language, history and culture, and to perpetuate traditional values for Navajos as individuals and as a nation.

As we all know, schools have failed to accommodate to Aboriginal and Indian cultural backgrounds. This NIS program takes account of the reasons for that failure, which leads to negative self-concept, and accepts the mission of restoring the Navajo students’ lost sense of self and lost knowledge of Navajo philosophy and wisdom. This goal encompasses four levels of knowledge. These are the concepts of ourself as an individual person; a Navajo; an Indian; and a ‘universal’ and ‘philosophical’ being.

The fourth level involves comparing parallel concepts, theories and knowledge of Navajo and Western culture in all areas of the curriculum.
These ideas will not be new to anyone who has struggled with the meaning of 'bicultural education', but you will be much rewarded by reading about how the Navajo Community College has gone about putting these ideas into practice. All this is described in Model for educational development, Navajo Community College, 1981.

Fundamental to all Indian studies programs at community colleges and schools was the fact that all staff were Indian themselves, and that they were all concerned with developing ways of teaching Indian students pride in their heritage.

We visited several school-based Indian studies programs. At Red Cloud School on the Pine Ridge Reservation (which we have already mentioned in relation to oral history) Indian studies was taught at all levels, starting with dance and music at the lower levels, Dakota language, and history and social issues at the upper levels. Most of the instructors were Indian elders, but history was being taught by a young Sioux staff member.

The Red School House, St Paul, Minnesota, is an urban Indian alternative school with the children from different Indian backgrounds, many of whom come to the school because they cannot ‘hack’ the State school system. Here, we heard an Indian history lesson based on the need of the students to learn to value positively their past and their religion. The students were encouraged to be a family to each other, and to respect the Indian elders who came to teach Indian values through the oral tradition of the tribe. We were most impressed by the active learning going on among these ‘drop-out’ students.

Curriculum development and materials

Going hand in hand with these countries is a lot of work on curriculum development and production of culturally relevant materials for the various age grades. We visited the Navajo Curriculum Center at Rough Rock Demonstration School, the Indian Country Press which publishes curriculum materials for the Red School House, and, most notable, the Coqualeetza Cultural Education Center, Sardis, B.C., Canada.

The Coqualeetza Center works within the State school system in a mixed race, non-reservation area with a minority of Indian students. We want to mention it because of the impressive co-ordination achieved there between the Indian community, curriculum writers, and the predominantly non-Indian teachers in the many schools in the area. The program is led by a trained Indian teacher and the aim is to produce elementary and secondary curriculum materials. The unique aspect is that material is developed from oral history research with Indian elders in such a way that curriculum development is leading a cultural reappraisal: a comparison of old and new life-styles shows up continuities with a traditional past. Also vital is the fact that the Center runs in-service workshops in the curriculum materials for interested teachers, so that these teachers are learning directly from Indians as equal members of a team.

We were given materials from each of these curriculum centres. The basis on which each of the centres worked was oral history collection. Knowledge collected from the elders by Indian people was being used by Indian educators to produce printed materials and audio-visual materials for classroom use.

Recommendations

That Australian universities commit themselves to establishing active recruitment and support systems for Aboriginal students, and Aboriginal studies degree courses, along the lines of the Universities of Arizona, Tucson, and Regina, Saskatchewan.

That the Commonwealth Department of Education explore the possibility of student exchange programs with the American Indian studies program, University of Arizona, Tucson, U.S.A., and the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, University of Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada.

That Aboriginal studies curriculum developers recognise the importance of oral history collection as a basis for the production of materials about Aborigines today.
Cultural heritage centres have a high priority in Indian programs on reservations. Indian communities believe they have a responsibility to preserve their own cultural heritage so that it can be passed on and taught to everyone. Indian people and Aborigines have similar experiences in this area where most of their material cultural heritage is in the hands of non-Indians, stored in museums, historical societies, or in the possession of private collectors. Indian communities believe that the days of non-Indians being the custodians of and authorities on their cultural heritage are finished, and Indian cultural heritage should be returned to its rightful owners. This, in fact, is happening in some places with museums and private collectors depositing their holdings in Indian cultural centres. Examples of this are the Apache, Navajo (Arizona) and Yakima (Washington State) reservations where museums, libraries and private collectors have co-operated with Indian communities by donating historical books and records, relics, photographic materials, monuments, arts and crafts. This has enabled cultural centres to present their own versions of their history, and set up their own displays, libraries and arts and crafts shops.

These centres are also a popular place on the reservations for tourism which Indian communities have utilised very effectively. One of the features of the centres is the Indian art and craft-work (silverware, jewellery, basketry, and beadwork) made on the reservation and sold by the centre. While we were at the Apache centre a group of young boys who were on school holidays were performing traditional dances, such as the 'Apache Crown Dance', as an added attraction for visitors.

The library sections of the centres, as mentioned in the Oral History section, store collections of written and oral material on Indian history. Oral history is used to its fullest extent in the centres by incorporating it with the displays and presentations. Quotes and extracts from Indian statements are used as background material to visual displays giving the Indian viewpoint on their history.

The Yakima Cultural Heritage Center is the most recent one. It was established in 1980 and is a magnificent centre, housing:

- a museum — an exhibition of the past, present and future of the Yakima Indian Nation and the American Indian;
- a library — an American Indian research library as well as a fully serviced public library;
- an arts and crafts centre — to include a crafts village where Indian artists and craftsmen can work, display and sell their wares;
- a media centre — which includes the media services of the Yakima Indian nation, the tribal newspaper and a commercial A.M. radio station; and
- other facilities, including a restaurant, theatre and a longhouse which houses an extension of exhibits and is the main meeting hall for conferences and general meetings.

The Center is a school for the general education and skill training of Indian people and the education of the general public.
The Yakima Nation Culture Center, on the Yakima Indian Reservation in Washington State, is a towering winter lodge which serves as a banquet and meeting hall. It is an adaptation of the traditional winter dwelling of the Yakimas.

We highly recommend these centres to Aboriginal overseas study awardees to include in their itineraries as they provide the whole background of Indian cultural heritage. The Indian people who work in these centres are also keen to meet Aboriginal people and share their knowledge and experiences.

**Analysis**

We saw these centres as a focal point of the reservation. They are the first stop for people entering the reservation, and are also education centres which are used by everyone. The co-operation of museums and other places containing Indian cultural materials, and their recognition of Indians as the appropriate authorities on their culture is a significant achievement in bridging the gap between American Indians and the wider community.

**Application to Australia**

The need for Aboriginal people to establish their own cultural heritage centres and become the real custodians of and authorities on their culture is something that has been widely discussed in Australia. The Aboriginal Arts Board sponsored a seminar in Adelaide in 1978, together with the Australian National Commission for Unesco, which brought together indigenous people from the Pacific, North America and South-East Asia for an exchange of knowledge on the theme 'Preserving indigenous cultures: a new role for museums'. A booklet edited by Robert Edwards and Jenny Stewart was published from this seminar by the Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, in 1980.

The seminar recognised the right of indigenous people to pursue their own traditional life-style by retaining and developing their own cultural tradition. The meeting came to the conclusion that museums should strongly reinforce the role of the custodians by
giving priority to those activities which enable them to practise and develop their own cultural traditions and heritage without restrictions or interference.

The recommendations of Unesco on the role of museums, together with the seminar recommendations (pp.9–17), were in strong support of the establishment of regional Aboriginal cultural centres run by Aboriginal people in co-operation with local and State museums.

**Recommendation from Adelaide seminar 1978**

*Theme: ‘Preserving indigenous cultures’ — p.15: Recommendation 2:*

That the Commonwealth Department of Education creates a minimum of five special Aboriginal overseas study awards specifically to enable representatives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities to visit cultural centres in the South Pacific and other areas to gain an insight into their establishment and operation.

The cultural centres discussed in Arizona (Apache, Hopi, Navajo) and Washington State (Yakima) would be excellent programs from which overseas study awardees could gain insight.
References


3. Indian lands and Canada's responsibility — the Saskatchewan position, Province of Saskatchewan, p.2.


5. Ibid., p.9.


10. Ibid., p.12.

11. Quote from British Columbia Provincial Museum, B.C., Canada.


15. Ibid., p.515.


17. Ibid., p.5.

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25. Krutz, G., An inventory of Indian programs, 1979–80, the Office of Indian Programs, Univ. of Arizona, Tucson.
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Summary of recommendations

Oral history programs
That the Commonwealth Department of Education, together with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, recognise the importance of community and school-based oral history projects, and establish oral history centres in each State from where oral history projects can be funded and co-ordinated.
That the National Aboriginal Education Committee lobby universities to introduce oral history programs along the lines of the Universities of Utah and South Dakota, in order to provide an alternative primary source of information on Aboriginal history and culture for students and researchers.

Tribal histories
That the Institute of Aboriginal Studies makes a fundamental shift in commitment towards the production of culturally relevant materials, including tribal and community histories written by and for the tribe or community.
That the Institute of Aboriginal Studies makes a commitment to reversing the trend whereby non-Aborignies become the authorities on Aboriginal issues and actively seek to ensure that Aboriginal communities become authorities on their own history and culture.
That the Institute of Aboriginal Studies develops new working arrangements in relation to the training of Aboriginal historians along the lines of the program run by the American West Center, University of Utah. That those arrangements should ensure the return of authority over cultural materials to Aboriginal communities and also ensure the publication of materials useful to them.

Aboriginal studies
That Australian universities commit themselves to establishing active recruitment and support systems for Aboriginal students, and Aboriginal studies degree courses, along the lines of the Universities of Arizona, Tucson, and Regina, Saskatchewan.
That the Commonwealth Department of Education explore the possibility of student exchange programs with the American Indian Studies Program, University of Arizona, and the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, Regina, Canada.
That Aboriginal studies curriculum developers recognise the importance of oral history collection as a basis for the production of materials about Aborigines today.

Cultural heritage centres
That five special Aboriginal overseas study awards be made to enable representatives of Aboriginal communities to visit cultural centres, and that the cultural centres in Arizona (Apache, Navajo, Hopi) and Washington State (Yakima) be considered for such visits.