



Wadja Wadja High School, Central Qld, Woorabinda

By Joel and Jennifer Rioux



Images of Woorie...

Melissa, a WWHS student, is walking beside a small joey¹, as though it was her pet. She is crossing the schoolyard while we are all playing soccer. Then, she picks him up and runs away. The superb seasonal rainbow bee-eaters (*Merops ornatus*) have arrived for summer at the waterhole. Their semi-circular flights are as spectacular as the colours on their backs. Small colourful kingfishers (*Todiramphus*) with their distinctive beaks are about also.

Capricornia Woorabinda Wadja

The Tropic of Capricorn is so named because about 2000 years ago the sun was entering the constellation Capricornus on the December solstice. In modern times the sun appears in the constellation Sagittarius during this time² (The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 2006). Woorabinda, meaning *kangaroo sits down*, and where we work, sits just below the Tropic of Capricorn, in the Central Highlands of Queensland. Rockhampton, a local provincial town, marks the southernmost point of the tropics.

Wadja Wadja High School (WWHS) is one of a handful of Independent Indigenous high schools in Queensland. There are only four: Shalom Christian College (Townsville), Djarragun College (Cairns), the Murri³ school (Brisbane) and WWHS (Woorabinda). All four have a 100% full Indigenous enrolment. The Wangetti Education Centre (north of Cairns) was another independent Indigenous high school but unfortunately, closed its doors recently. Glendyne Education Centre (Hervey Bay) as well as the Abergowrie College (a Catholic Boy's Secondary College situated in the Herbert River Valley, west of Ingham in North Queensland) have some Indigenous students. On Palm Island, there is an Indigenous Catholic Education primary school, St Michael's. This is the only independent Indigenous primary school in Qld.

News time

Firstly, I now have to proclaim: I am an *Australian citizen*. The paperwork, the ceremony and everything else was put to an end in May 2007. The coming of our daughter, Kalila Anne Rioux (Kali=energy in Sanskrit and lila=divine play in Sanskrit, Kalila=beloved darling in Arabic) was a blessing. She was born on **Friday the 13th** of October in 2006. In 2007, the Young Australian of the

¹ Young of wallabies and kangaroos

² This parallel marks the farthest point south at which the sun can be seen directly overhead at noon. The sun reaches its vertical position over the Tropic of Capricorn at about Dec. 22, the summer solstice for the Southern Hemisphere. The term Capricorn comes from the Latin words *caper* [goat] and *cornu* [horn] and is the name given to one of the 12 constellations in the zodiac. This line of latitude is a quarter of the way from the equator to the South Pole.

³ A Murri is an Aboriginal person from Queensland. A Koori comes from Victoria or New South Wales. Migalu/mighalu/mighaloo is one of the many Indigenous regionalisms used by Indigenous Australians when referring to non-Indigenous Australians, eg, markai (western Torres Strait), gadiya (Kimberley), balanda (Arnhem Land).

Year was a Queenslander. Tania Major is a 22 year old Kokobera woman from Kowanyama on Queensland's Cape York. Congratulations, Tania!

2007 was also NAIDOC's⁴ 50th anniversary and the 40th anniversary of the 1967 Referendum, through which Indigenous Australians gained the vote, as the Constitution of Australia had to be changed.

Other great news! For a whole week, in June 2007, Dr Jean Miller came to Woorabinda as a consultant. What a pedagogical treat! We learnt much about Montessori through healthy discussions until late at night. We are looking forward to her third visit in 2008. Hopefully, the Montessori Children Foundation (MCF) will sponsor her visit once more.

Last year, we were invited to an Indigenous wedding. It was the first one in six years within the community of Woorabinda. It was gorgeous to see the children in their tuxedos and the girls with flowers in their hair.

Next year in June/July 2008, I will be attending *The Montessori Orientation to Adolescent Studies* in Cleveland, Ohio offered by the North American Montessori Teachers Association (NAMTA). Thanks to the MCF, to David Khan and to WWHS for their support and sponsorships. Roelie Murphy, who replaced Jenny, has completed one year teaching at WWHS. We congratulate her for her successful endeavours. Unfortunately, during term #4 she commenced work somewhere else in Western Queensland.

I must refer to Woorabinda's 80th anniversary 1927-2007. As part of the celebrations, a successful bus trip to Taroom (2.5 hours south of Woorabinda) was organised to retrace the footsteps of many of Woorabinda's ancestors. Jenny, Kalila and I had the fortunate opportunity to participate in the four-day expedition. Sacred sites were visited and bush tucker (e.g. edible plants) was discussed. However, Uncle Wally Saunders, an accompanying Elder from Woorabinda, named the revisiting Taroom trip, *A Black Day/Week*. It is a sad story yet necessary to retell! Woorabinda was established in 1927 and used as a replacement for the Aboriginal reserve at Taroom. Uncle Bill Thaiday recalls that Aboriginal people from at least 17 different language groups and 52 clans were forcibly placed in the Woorabinda camp. They were under the control of the so-called *Chief Protector of Aborigines*. Aboriginal people refer to this time as *Living under the Act*! Please read more about Queensland's *contact history* and treatment of Aborigines. Kidd (2002) provides provoking reading + facts in her book entitled *Black Lives Government Lies*. Dr Rosalind Kidd writes:

The removal of thousands of Aboriginal children from their families, the incarceration of thousands of Aboriginal families in government institutions, is the biggest social experiment of our history. We know that most States followed Queensland's lead at the end of the nineteenth century and implemented laws taking complete control over Aboriginal lives-where you could live, where you worked, who you married, care of your children, what you could earn and what you could spend of your earnings...We know the results of this century of government controls: an appalling deficit on every social indicator: infant mortality, health, life expectancy, housing, education, employment, financial security (p.7).

EPIPHANIES

Over the last four years, we have had some moments of tranquillity where we could just discuss where we are going, what we are doing and how we can serve better. **We had 8 epiphanies.**

⁴ National Aboriginal and Islander Day of Ceremony.



1. Classroom challenges when working within an Indigenous community of Central Qld

The following issues have affected the overall academic performance of our students. The students begin their high school education with low literacy and numeracy levels. This is disheartening for the students.

Barriers to learning and education⁵ that we see:

A) Students miss a lot of school. The high school students at WWHS have missed a lot of primary/secondary schooling over the years due perhaps to instability within the home, transient lifestyle, changing schools, or simple truancy. The prepared teacher is challenged by regular absenteeism and late arrivals. Students at WWHS will miss school for many reasons. They may have to help a relative go to hospital or travel to Rockhampton or it may be parents' social security payday. There may be chores to do around the community or the house to clean. Younger siblings may need babysitting or the student may simply be sleeping in because of late nights. Understanding and tolerating such cross-cultural differences are necessary characteristics of the prepared adult.

B) Most teachers only stay for short periods in Woorabinda. Due to the Government transfer system, primary teachers are often transferred to indigenous communities for a maximum period of two years. Teachers amass x many points to be able to move on to a mainstream school, in a place of their choice, after they've 'done their time', e.g.: Gold Coast). Few appear to make teaching in Indigenous education their careers.

C) Language is also a barrier. The students in Woorie speak Aboriginal English and/or Woorabinda Kriol whereas the teachers speak Standard Australian English (SAE). Differences in vocabulary, grammatical structure and rates of delivery between the languages can have a negative effect on the student's outcomes in learning, especially if the teacher is not sensitive to this issue and responds appropriately.

D) Lessons/curricula need to be adapted to the needs of Aboriginal learners. Generally, curricula/books are more suited to non-Indigenous students than for Indigenous remote/rural community students. We feel the curriculum/books does not take into consideration the language and the cultural differences of the students. Some of the topics that teachers are expected to cover in schools are so far removed from the reality of Indigenous community life, that they seem irrelevant, inappropriate and basically far from the reality of daily life experiences of a rural/remote *Murri* student living out bush!

E) Isolation due to being in a remote/rural community. The isolation of the students from mainstream society, obviously affects their overall life and learning experiences too. We feel these aspects play a huge role in the Aboriginal child's day-to-day living.

F) Hearing and vision concerns. Often, Aboriginal students have hearing and vision issues. One of these illnesses is called *otitis media*. These aspects hinder Aboriginal children's ability to learn to their full potential and affect them for the rest of their life.

G) Daily diet. The students' dietary intake is high in fats and sugars and low in nutrients. The diet often consists of processed food from the town's take-away shop. Take-a-ways are often consumed for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks, thus resulting in poor concentration, truancy or lethargy in class. At times, the students are simply hungry and in a nation that exports food to the world, we allow some of our children to go hungry. Why? American scholar Paul E. Barton (2003) found that hunger, poor nutrition and dangerously low birth weight are important contributors to what can be lifelong under-achievement (Educational Testing Service). Long-term poor nutrition has severe negative effects upon growing children's physical and mental development.

H) Large class sizes in primary schools. Because of the above-mentioned barriers to learning, class sizes in any Aboriginal community should be smaller, to cater for the disadvantages Aboriginal children face on a daily basis. Teacher-student ratios need to be no more than 10 or 12 students per teacher.

I) Alcohol + drugs. In some families, adults become emotionally and physically abusive towards their children because of alcohol/drugs abuse. Being the victims of abuse, sleep deprivation, hunger,

⁵ In addition to students' homes and families, there are three identifiable institutions of learning in Woorabinda: Undoonoo Childcare Centre (UCC), Woorabinda State Primary School (WSPS) and Wadja Wadja High School (WWHS). WSPS is staffed and run by the Queensland Department of Education, Training & Arts (QDETA) while UCC and WWHS are administered independently by separate Aboriginal Corporations.



experiencing mental and physical pain affects the children's ability to learn and stay focussed in the classroom as well. Unfortunately, some children consume alcohol/abuse drugs and its effects are harmful too.

J) Petrol. Another substance abuse is causing further harm to the young children of the community. Children as young as eight years old are joining the adolescents in the nightly binges sniffing petrol. A bottle to their noses and many friends around to laugh with is their reality. We sometimes watch as they lose their minds to the most harmful chemical of all. The effects petrol has on the students' brains can be immediately seen in class: forgetfulness, tiredness, sleeping on the floor in class and anxiety. The students seem to lose their inner drive, become restless and not themselves.

To overcome the first barrier to learning and education, teachers first have to be convinced that these children can become literate. The children must also believe that they have the ability to learn. This is a truly positive experience for any teacher in a small Indigenous community.

There seems to be a pattern followed by visitors like us. On the first day, we are excited. On the second day, we ask questions like: "Why don't people tidy up the litter?" "Why do some live like this?" "Why don't the students go to school?" "Why the gambling and cards?" On the third day, we are angry and we wonder why things can't be fixed. On the fourth day, we have tears rolling down and on the fifth day, we are quieter, doing lots of listening, more questioning and reading the *contact history* to try to understand the present and perhaps help the future. It reminds us of a Buddhist metaphor. In muddy waters of the small Woorie pond, grow beautiful water lilies. Out of our daily life difficulties, beautiful moments can come.

2. Away from the community "crowd", the little daily classroom tasks completed are valued by the students.

The tasks achieved to the best of our capabilities make student's life a bit easier and this is positive. The little joys we get everyday in class, the small behaviour improvements, the smiles, the confessions are all the little things we daily collect to make students' life calmer, safer, happier and healthier. The students' pain has the potential to leave you numb. We found that one of the best ways to help students develop their potential, was to try and make small improvements within the confinement of our own classrooms. These improvements based on the three components of the Montessori system are explained below in Table 1.

3. The prepared adult plays a vital role in an Indigenous independent high school. Dodecalogue!

We found eleven universal principles for success with these beautiful students:

1. Be compassionate to their emotional needs and humble.
2. Treat them with respect, care and kindness at all times no matter how difficult a situation may be.
3. Listen to students and try to understand them more.
4. Be with them, not above/below them, but more as a friend and mentor.
5. Be flexible; follow their needs, even if they do not match expectations at the time.
6. Protect and be mindful of their self esteem.
7. Stand back and be an observer; to get to know the child better.
8. Leave egos in the confinement of your own flat. Don't let it get in the way of the students' educational experiences.
9. Start first with simple concepts, what the students know and slowly build on that. Increasing the difficulty gradually as they become more confident in their abilities and as they trust you more and more.
10. Use few words to explain new concepts. Keep it simple and to the point.
11. Love the students unconditionally and show them that they are trusted and valued as human beings, no matter what they have done in the past.
12. Include altruism as a way of living.

We rediscovered that these could be applied to any Montessori class anywhere! So basically, we haven't discovered anything! As prepared adults, we have come full circle.

Within the school, it is necessary to redefine and adapt some of the Montessori universal principles and the definition of the prepared adult. For example, the principle of *concentration* has to be modified to the students' abilities. Teacher's expectations must be modified to suit each individual child. Montessori teachers at WWHS are constantly redefining and adapting their training and knowledge to transfer it into practical daily interactions with the students to suit the local, immediate and unpredictable needs.

4. Normalisation can occur at high school level. Montessorians say it is the adolescent's last chance. Deviations can vanish with the support of the prepared adult, with the materials and the prepared environment i.e., the three Montessori components on which the system rests (see Table 1). We have seen some students come to class with deviations and after spending a few weeks in the Montessori environment, we see them becoming calmer and happier than before.

5-Wealth of available/accessible knowledge from Q.U.T.

I came to realise that, at my fingertips, a wealth of dissertations, theses, electronic articles and scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles are available from the Qld University Technology (QUT) databases to read on a variety of Indigenous science and Montessori topics. I wonder what Maria Montessori would have done with her thesis in early 1900's entitled *Hallucinations; Hearing Voices in Conflict*, with access to this kind of knowledge...

My study is concerned with two sections of the Montessori zoology curriculum called *First Knowledge (non-scientific activities)* and the vertebrate classification materials entitled *First Classification of Animal Kingdom (scientific activities)*. The Indigenous people from Central Qld call the Montessori zoology curriculum, the **Migalu** curriculum. In my study, the local Indigenous vertebrate stories from their Traditional Indigenous Knowledge (TIK) are recognised and called **Murri** science, as they say. See figure 1 below for a visual interpretation of the current study.

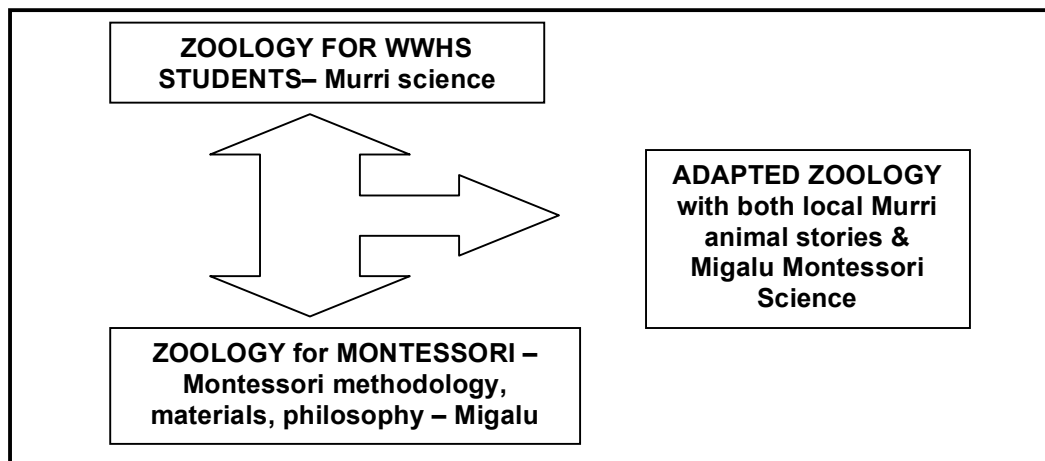


Figure 1-Migalu and Murri zoology in Woorie study.

The good news is that my Woorabinda QUT animal classification study has been officially upgraded last August 2007 to a PhD level. It is a very appropriate study because in 2007, it is the "Linnaeus tercentenary", honouring the plant and animal classification champion! Taxonomy is the discovery, description, identification, and classification of organisms. This year is the 250th anniversary of the taxonomic discipline. Swedish biologist Carolus Linnaeus invented this most powerful predictive science. It is a fundamental science that underpins so much of the life sciences. Captain James Cook's epic voyage of discovery reached the east coast of Australia in 1770. At Cook's side were two of England's greatest naturalists (Sir Joseph Banks and Dr Daniel Solander). Dr Solander was a Swede that had just received his doctoral studies under the tutelage of the renowned Carl von Linnaeus. For more information about the master, go to

<http://www.linnaeus2007.se/schoolactivities/linnaeuscompetition> .

We strongly encourage anyone to pursue research work not only because Montessori needs studies in and about Australia, but also because it is very informative and also a revelation on the academic world. And I thought the Bergamo Montessori 6-12 year-old training was a big challenge! We also strongly recommend, for those of you with a keen interest in Indigenous education, to subscribe to two amazing journals. The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education is a peer-reviewed journal produced by the University of Queensland and is the only scholarly journal for educators devoted specifically to issues of practice, pedagogy and policy in Indigenous education in Australia. More details are at <http://www.atsis.uq.edu.au/ajie/> . The second journal to which I subscribe is the Journal of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/rsrch/aas_jrn/journal.htm

6. The Micro-model & the Mega-model!

I have broken down this section into 2 parts:

Part A) The Micro-model; the short term Montessori positives in the last four years.

Part B) The Mega-model; the future, Montessori life after four years... Long term future for Montessori; axis #1 and axis#2

A) Micro model; so far in four years. Short term positives.

In four years, the WWHS board and the school administration have always been receptive toward Montessori but now Wadja-Montessori is gaining more value inside the community itself. Table 1 shows the 3 main positive aspects of the Wadja Montessori Project.

MONTESSORI AT WOORIE: Jan.2004-Dec.2007

Montessori material	Prepared environment	Prepared adult
Two classrooms have been equipped with Nienhuis apparatus. One of these two classes has all necessary materials it needs at present. WWHS also received donations from schools around Australia and even one school from Washington DC (USA). The continual support of the MCF is definitely a positive attribute of the project.	We spent time and energy establishing the physical environment of classrooms.	We might not fully understand what the students are going through in their lives but we can listen. We had a look at the Montessori principles and adapted some of them to the best of our knowledge. We can say confidently we had many successes with many students in terms of behaviours, attitudes to work, concentration, development of the will, respecting the environment, etc.

Table 1- The three components of the Montessori Method of Education

B) Mega-model-after four years. Axis #1: Gather literature and Axis #2: Possible Curriculum for WADJA Montessori Jan 2008-Dec 2010. Long term future for Montessori.

Axis #1-Gather literature:

1. about Australian Indigenous adolescent; characteristics of 12-15 year-olds.
2. about the masters' work with High School Montessori projects worldwide.
3. about past Queensland government policies (contact history) e.g.: Kidd, R. (2005), The Way We Civilise. Her PhD thesis was based on an unprecedented investigation into the files of Queensland's Aboriginal Department, and provided the groundwork for this book.
4. about the history of this community (e.g., Woorabinda thesis by Therese Forde (1990) Confinement and control 1927-1990, University of Qld.

5. about teaching strategies/practices appropriate for Indigenous students, e.g.: What Works
6. about Montessori Indigenous students to support our work at WWHS. What has been done before in Montessori-Indigenous context? See Table 2 below.

Current Montessori projects involving Indigenous people	
Australia	Overseas
1-Cairns West	1-Mexico
2-Armidale	2-Tibet
3-Redfern	3-Philippines
4-WWHS project in Woorabinda	4-South Africa
5-	5-Bhutan
	6-"Sitting Bull School" South Dakota, USA
Past Montessori projects:	
The Strelley Mob in the Pilbara, W.A.	Kenya (Muriel Dwyer-1964)
(if you have any information, please contact me)	
Future Montessori projects?	
Mapoon, Cape York Peninsula ?	
South Australia (Kurna Plains) ?	

Table 2: Montessori Indigenous context in Australia and worldwide (3-6, 6-12 and adolescents 12-15y.o.)

Axis #2-Plan of action. Simple blue print; Montessori vision.

1-Adapt Montessori high school work with Woorabinda and Indigenous Australians adolescents.

2-Create a model and adapt the Wadja project to local resources. We need to harness this energy for potential economic independence.

3-Extension of the classroom's physical environment: Let's think the Woorabinda Shire has 52 000 acres of land. The Wadja Montessori students can grow vegetables around Wadja like the inhabitants used to, many years ago. Other examples of work could include pond work, the use of manual arts room, the donga/demountable as a mini-hotel where the students would be in charge of cleaning/marketing/administering. Simply offer visitors an experience in echidna (porky) hunting during cold morning winter or best, at night with dogs. First gathering the equipment needed and displaying the skills required to visitors... In this way, by publicising the work done in Woorabinda, we give racism, prejudice and negativity a chance to evade provincial cities like Rockhampton. What about showing visitors bush tucker plants such as prickly pears, bush cucumbers, black berries, bush mangoes, bush tomatoes, bush lemons, bush bananas, bush honey (sugar bags), boondoomas (small fruits), Buduma (black currants) and bush berries? What about horse care? Brahman and kangaroos lessons?

What about Woorie's useful trees (see Table 3)? Valorising the Woorie bushland and showing interested visiting parties, the steps to make a didgeridoo from scratch with the local *yellow box* trees or making clap sticks with a hardwood called *rosewood*. The easily recognisable *bloodwood* tree with the red sap bleeding from its stem could be used with visitors for making tables or benches.

Useful trees of Woorabinda	Uses
lancewood	Spears, bull roarer
rosewood	club stick or nulla nulla, clap sticks, boomerang, bull roarer
bloodwood	bull roarer, didgeridoo, furniture (tables, benches). Also coolamon (an elliptical plate used for digging, for carrying berries, for collecting wattle seeds crushed into flour...)
iron bark	bull roarer, shield, didgeridoo, furniture (tables-benches)
yellow box tree	didgeridoo, emu caller, bull roarer
stringy bark tree (<i>budjuru</i>)	furniture (table, bench), bull roarer
eucalyptus trees (ghost gum, river gum, spotted gum, blue gum, red gum)	furniture (table-bench), bull roarer
acacia or wattle tree	spears, boomerang, bull roarer
Queensland bottle tree/boab tree	source of water
grass tree/black boy tree	spears, sap for smoking ceremonies, and food
sandalwood trees (narrow and broad leaves)	for smoking ceremonies
fern leaves wattle/acacia	sap used as chewing gum
wait-a-while bush	splitjack fruit like a passion fruit
gumbi gumbi	medicine: stomach ulcers, and even curing cancer, drink 100ml everyday for general health, or have a bath with it to clean your skin.

Table 3: Useful trees of Woorabinda (medicine, tools, weapons, furniture)

7. After four years, our Migalu Montessori program is spreading its wings far deeper than we first expected.

Figure 2 below shows how we experimented with the Montessori curriculum integrated with local needs.

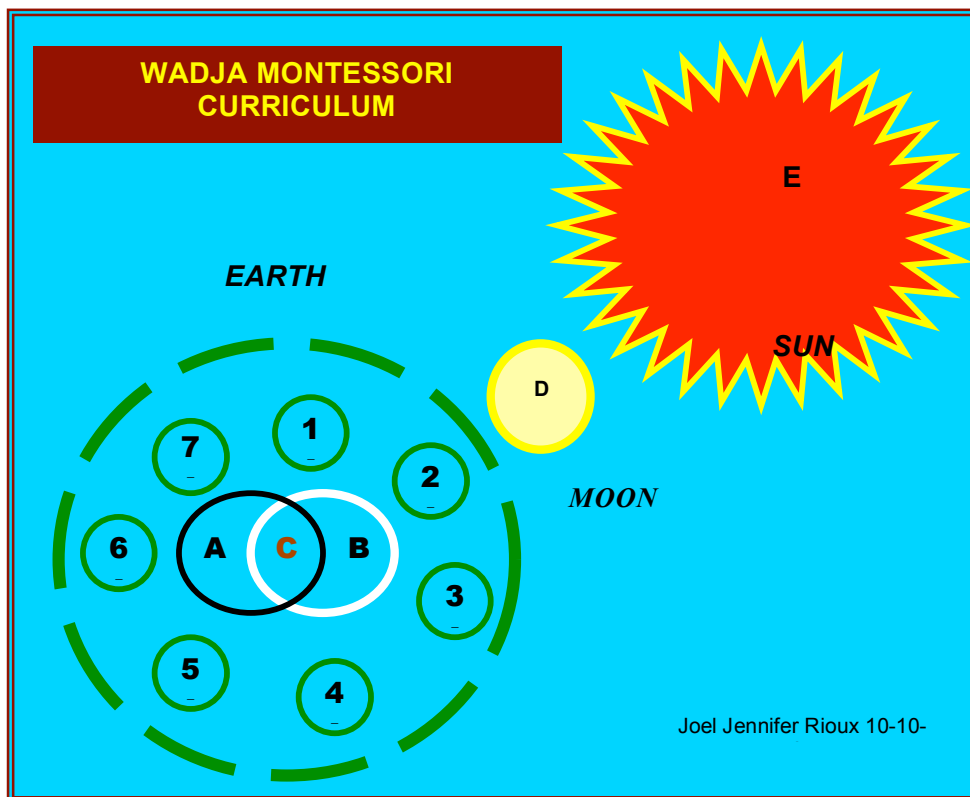




Figure 2: WWHS Curriculum Spectrum, Jan 2004-Dec 2007

Legend

A- Earth represents « Murri curriculum/Indigenous »
Black circle: (Indigenous culture). 

B- Earth represents « Migalu curriculum/non-Indigenous/and Montessori curriculum».
White circle: (non-Indigenous culture). 

C- Earth represents « Murri and Migalu » curriculum.

D- Moon represents the « Australian » curriculum (further away from the students)

E- Sun represents the « World » curriculum (furtherest away from the students)

Satellite lessons-cluster lessons orbiting the 7 agents of the Earth

- 1- Future jobs for WWHS students
- 2- Useful lessons for WWHS students
- 3- Local Woorabinda cultural lessons of interest
- 4- Nineteen Indigenous Queensland communities awareness
- 5- Class activities supporting local health awareness
- 6- Learning about communities/around Woorabinda and beyond
- 7- Hidden Curriculum: what students learn from a teacher which is not part of the stated curriculum.

Unstated Curriculum-to be discovered.

Earth A, B, C : Murri and Migalu curriculum

<A> for Autochthones⁶/First Nations/Purely Indigenous curriculum:

Woorabinda stories about plants and animals. Woorabinda history, Dreamtime, awareness of other Indigenous Queensland communities. "Mundagara" dreamtime/rainbow serpent creation, etc

 for Battalion of Migalu lessons: i.e. Montessori curriculum. The seven agents at work for the maintenance of the environment on Earth: Sun, water, air, land, animals, plants, and human beings.

<C> for Curricula. Lessons pertaining to both curricula (either paradigms or knowledge Systems). Take for example Science: Local Murri zoology knowledge, such as Elders' animal stories mingled with zoology knowledge from the non-Indigenous (Migalu Montessori scientific classification of animal kingdom: vertebrate classification).

Moon - D

<D> for "**Deadly**" Australian events. For example: Study of child's own Nation work/the black folder, geography work such as mapping Australian natural resources, train lines, National Parks, mountain chains, river systems, etc. Awareness of other Indigenous communities in Australia, outside Queensland. Past and present government policies affecting Australian Indigenous communities.

Sun - E

<E> for **Events** distant from Woorabinda. World scene activities including Murri world and Migalu world events. The sun is a million times bigger than the Earth. The sun "E" and the world scene events are not necessarily more important than Earth "A, B, C". Still the "Sun" is an important part of the curriculum for the Aboriginal community of Woorabinda: Events outside Australia could include the U.N. organisation, the Olympics. Note: Over the last four years, we realised we tend to neglect the lessons at the other end of the spectrum (E-Sun) and focus more on Earth curriculum.

Satellite/cluster lessons-orbiting the 7 agents on Earth

The following list is not exhaustive. Here are a few successful lessons we've done so far.

1- Future jobs for WWHS students

Coal mining in Baralaba, Moura and Blackwater (towns close to Woorie), looking at job opportunities in nearby towns, TAFE read/analyse schedule.

2- Useful lessons for WWHS students

Budget, resume writing and covering letter writing, respond to job advertisements, pregnancy chart stages, road signs in preparation for drivers licence. Local Yellow pages book PDC: find local businesses, reading food labels, read instructions, cleaning materials warning/symbols/poison labels. By-laws in Woorie (crime, laws, alcohol, smoking, graffiti) and water lessons (bottled water, tap water, minerals). Read medication labels.

3- Local Woorabinda cultural lessons of interest

External and internal parts of crawchie/yabbies. Looking at different species of crawchie and fishing local crawchie. Useful trees and fruit trees around Woorie, useful animals around Woorie, famous local Aborigines fact cards/reading.

4- Nineteen Indigenous Queensland communities awareness

Stories about other Queensland Indigenous communities, mapping other communities, visitors discussing their communities, and natural resources around these communities.

5- Class activities supporting local health awareness

Collective lessons and discussions: Strongyloides and Rotavirus (gastro-intestinal) are common in Indigenous communities above the tropics. Skin infections, hearing lessons, brain lessons, otitis

⁶ Autochthones is a term used by historians to pigeon-hole the origin of any people whose ancestry cannot be traced, but can also mean the Indigenous or Aboriginal people.



media (sticky-ear, ear infection), positive and negative relationships, addiction lesson (money hole gambling, machines, alcohol, petrol sniffing and the effects on the brain), new smoking laws, food pyramid poster, food labels, domestic violence, scabies/clean bodies/skin infections; personal hygiene.

6- Learning about communities/around Woorbinda and beyond

Mining at Blackwater, Moura or Baralaba. Emerald citrus fruits, sunflower, cotton fields, peanut farms, gemfields at Sapphire, cane sugar fields along the east coast of Qld, chick peas, sorghum, millet, banana farms, Western Qld outback towns, salt works Qld (Port Alma, Bowen), John Flynn history (Royal Flying Doctors), Mount Isa mines (Cooper, Lead, Zinc, Silver) + (Riversleigh/dinosaurs), Longreach (Stockman's Hall of Fame), Winton (opal, dinosaur tracks).

7-The hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum is that which is imparted to students through the school experience, although it may not be deliberately taught. It includes values, priorities, attitudes and what is regarded as normal.

8-A new Political will-The National Agenda (up there with challenges like water and climate change...)

The sheer inequity in a country as rich as ours makes no sense! Political will on a grand scale is what is required. Jeff McMullen (2006) suggests that "from Cape York to the Kimberley, in Central Australia and western NSW, this lack of education among Indigenous children stands in marked contrast to the high literacy and long life expectancy of other Australian children". Further down in his article, he continues:

If you can't read, you won't understand the label on a bottle of medicine, you will be lucky to get a driver's licence. It is likely you will be trapped in a maze of poverty resulting from having only low-paying work or being unemployed and dependent on welfare, feeling life-threatening powerlessness and having wretched health. You are also more likely to have children who will inherit these disadvantages unless, through literacy and opportunity, they can step through the right door to a brighter future.

McMullen (2006) likes to talk about silent apartheid that has long been part of Australian society. The apartheid keeps rural and remote communities separated, isolated and impoverished. It reinforces a widespread Aboriginal view that education is "a white thing". We have no choice but to demystify school for Aboriginal children and improve understanding in the classroom of how learning is a two-way pact.

Where is the blue print? How are we going to enter the Aboriginal Matrix (Greek for mother)? Is it through a Mother Land Program? Where is the Holy Grail for Australia's forgotten children? Is discovering the power of literacy enough? How do we change the structures of disadvantage?

McMullen (2005) claims the media have not been able to convey the gathering momentum of this tragedy. Furthermore, we all live in a Matrix of Self-Interest and we retrieve comfortably in television gardening shows. Life is good for most Australians and too often, we like to retreat into the Matrix and remain comfortably numb.

On a full page inside the daily newspaper *The Australian* (p.5) of Thursday April 13 2006, we could read "Tropical Cyclone Larry Relief Appeal; Please give generously". Then further down "... only a national effort can rebuild the damage inflicted by Cyclone Larry. Far North Queensland needs your help". The appeal was signed by The Hon John Howard and Hon Peter Beattie, ex-Premier of Qld. It was wonderful to help our FNQ brothers/sisters. McMullen (2005) asks: why aren't we marshalling the same determined nation-wide response in regard to preventable and treatable illnesses? Why aren't we marshalling the same energy and resources we have shown towards our Asian neighbours

when the Tsunami arrived? Isn't this a legitimate question for the media and for the governments? We cannot just raise the point on the eve of election?

World Vision Australia chief executive Tim Costello compared the Indigenous community of Epenarra (NT) to Africa in *The Australian* of Friday October 26 2007, p6. World Vision has been working there for five years now and this is what he said: "There is no question that the slogan Third World applies to conditions in Indigenous Australia. When you look at so many measures-life expectancy, levels of literacy, levels of health, diabetes and other illnesses-these are clearly Third World conditions".

By 2067, when I am 102 years old, Kalila might look back and say to me: "Do you remember, Dad, when the oldest continuous culture on Earth was so sick at heart and then there was a change! We had all the resources and talent needed to offer an equal opportunity for health and education. The Government of the time made it a first priority. Newspapers started to write a different story on the front pages, about how Australia defeated the plague within our borders". McMullen (2005) says we must listen to Indigenous voices if we are to overcome an Indigenous Crisis. This story is about the future of our children, not us and them.

Joel and Jennifer Rioux

Thank you kindly to all schools that made donations to WWHS

Dorothy at the refresher course in Sydney June 2006

La Casa dei Bambini p/group Swanbourne, WA (Jemma Doak)

Old Town Montessori School (Alexandria, VA, USA) Ann McCracken
Cottesloe, WA

Beechworth Montessori Kindergarden, Victoria (Lizette Webb)

Harmony Montessori Buderim (Vicki Nissen, principal)

Barrenjoey Montessori school, Avalon NSW (Glynis Lance)

Inner city Montessori School, Balmain, NSW

Blue Gum Montessori Children's House, Blackheath, NSW (Blue Mountains Montessori School) Lana
Tut

Indooroopilly Montessori preschool Centre, Qld (Carmel Ellis)

The Beehive Montessori School Inc. WA (Deanne Keene)

Yass Montessori pre-school Inc., Yass, NSW (Lynn McGrath)

Nienhuis Holland

The Montessori School, Kingsley-WA

Cockatoo Montessori School, Victoria (Karen Bennetts)

Southern Montessori Education Centre Inc., SA

The MCF (Montessori Children Foundation) supporting Indigenous projects in Australia

The students of the 6 to 12 elementary course at the Montessori Institute of North Dallas for the 100
charts for the classroom.

Sorry if I forgot anyone...

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