



North Ainslie Primary School Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reconciliation Action Plan (2009)

CONTEXT:

North Ainslie Primary School (NAPS) is situated in an inner northern suburb of Canberra in the Australian Capital Territory. It is a culturally and linguistically diverse school. Our school provides education for approximately five hundred students in a variety of settings. We are an International Baccalaureate School offering the Primary Years Program and we strive to be:

“a centre of learning where effort and achievement are celebrated, and diversity is embraced within a restorative, respectful environment”

(source: NAPS Mission Statement).

The historic occasion, 13 February 2008, when the Prime Minister Mr Kevin Rudd spoke the memorable words of the National Apology to Australians and the World Community, had a profound effect on our school community. There were many spontaneous expressions of sorrow and regret, but, more importantly, a heartfelt resolution to work toward reconciliation by building good relationships between non-Aboriginal, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. This singular event generated drive, energy and goodwill amongst our school community and a desire to achieve a harmonious, mutually respectful society.

The NAPS community recognise the amazing survival of people who have suffered injustice, culture shock and the removal of their autonomy. Accurate knowledge of these negative factors is essential to reaching a new understanding inspired by the National Apology. In this era of review and reflection, our school is developing a pro-active Reconciliation Action Plan to contribute to the long-term development of school and community partnerships. These partnerships will respect the needs and aspirations of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders as a valued and respected part of our school

community. NAPS has a history of inclusiveness and participation, and this Reconciliation Action Plan will further build on the vision of the founders of our school.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to identify formal and informal educational initiatives in our curriculum directed towards raising awareness amongst our staff, students and community, and act on reconciliation. It is important that 'conversations' continue to underpin the everyday curriculum, as well as consciously including more formal and far reaching inquiries in the Primary Years Program. It is essential that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of our school and wider community participate in significant ways, for example, in building a substantial foundation for actions, events and deeper understanding. In late 2009/early 2010 provision will be made for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation in school curriculum and facilities decision making processes, so that these components reflect the needs of all our school members in an inclusive way. This will include participation in school decision-making processes as members of the School Board, Parent and Citizen Committees and groups with special intentions for school improvement.

The Reconciliation Action Plan will include a time line for identified goals as well as identification of possible roles and responsibilities, for example students, Principal, Staff Members. Elders, Community Leaders and mentors will be influential in implementing initiatives. The Reconciliation Action Plan will be informed by existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and inclusiveness policies, as well as ongoing communication with the students, parents, carers and Elders who are part of our school. It is hoped that a Primary Year Program that respects and responds to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders will build capacity within our students to set the tone for a continuum of shared heritage and participation in modern Australia.

STRATEGIES/CURRICULUM

- NAPS will work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of the school community to encourage their involvement in formal decision making processes, as well as contributing to the broader 'life' of the school through community events and celebrations.

- NAPS will continue to develop ways in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture and achievement can be experienced through the Primary Year Program Inquiries. This will ensure that there is scope for a continuum of ‘conversations’ and personal student inquiries. Examples in the current biennial program can be identified in the following units: “On the Move”, “From Here to There”.
- NAPS will invest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resources so that they can be used in regular reading programs and International Baccalaureate studies. Whole class sets will be made available, as well as information about websites and interactive activities students may be interested in exploring.
- NAPS will feature Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander luminaries in all fields of life, to talk about their life, their culture, their experiences, and break down stereotyped ideas of the life-styles and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families will continue to be invited to contribute to and manage the display board which features current issues and personalities. The display is regularly renewed to keep it interesting and up to date.
- NAPS will fly and display the Aboriginal and Torres Strait flags with the flag of Australia at the front of the school. A ceremony will be held in Term 4, 2009 for this occasion.
- NAPS will continue to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land at Assemblies and all formal occasions.
- Acknowledgement of the original custodians of the land will continue to be included on all public documents.
- When required, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contact officers are consulted to assist with provision of appropriate resources and expertise, and to make sure that special needs are met.
- With guidance from local Elders, NAPS will incorporate into the Primary Years Program of the International Baccalaureate, opportunities to research and explore evidence of early Aboriginal people in our immediate area. For example, a Heritage walk with Elders or a ranger could include Mount Ainslie, Dickson, and other places of cultural significance in the area. These experiential opportunities enable students and teachers to gain an increased awareness and understanding of past inhabitants.

- NAPS will respect issues relating to grief and loss in the school community by acknowledging the particular needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. Publication of pictures of deceased persons will be avoided.
- An annual calendar showing significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events and celebrations will be developed so that these events can be planned and incorporated into the curriculum. For example, NAIDOC Week and National Sorry Day. These events become part of our enrichment multi age groups of students.

STRATEGIES/PARTNERSHIPS

STRATEGIES/MANAGEMENT

1. Staff undertake additional Professional Development to reach a better understanding of cultural issues, Aboriginal language conventions and family structures.
2. Student management programs such as Restorative Practices and Circle Time continue with reference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander custom.
3. Teachers ensure that they are aware of students of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds and are sensitive to children and their family's needs.
4. Personal Learning Programs are prepared for each student to set goals and meet specific learning needs so that skill decline or development is monitored
5. Supportive transition programs for each stage of education are provided.
6. Registration will be made through Reconciliation Australia for our Reconciliation Action Plan 2009.

RESOURCES.

- A list of current Library collection is available.
- Institutions such as Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands Studies(IATSI)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Centre,
- Circle Justice Sentencing Court ACT,
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body ACT.
- National Botanic Gardens, Canberra, ACT.