Australian Aboriginal People and Year 2 Boys Bring Storytelling to Life: Implementing Traditional Storytelling Methods For Greater Understanding

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The Research Question
How does the use of indigenous storytelling methods deepen Year 2 boys' understanding of implicit messages in stories?

Research Context and Participants
Over a period of 6 weeks, 15 Year 2 boys participated in a project aimed to deepen their understanding of the implicit messages told within a story.

The Research Action
Each lesson began with a yarn, an Aboriginal approach to beginning a shared story. The boys and teacher sat in a large circle and respect was given to every student. Each lesson boys would learn a story using a different story telling approach. Some approaches included:

- Traditional finger painting
- Chanting
- Movement with tradition instruments
- Sand painting
- Yarning
- Passing the story on

Data Collection and Analysis
The data collected were predominantly qualitative. The qualitative techniques used included:

- Interviews with participants (individuals);
- Researcher observations (video-recorded); and
- Participant work samples and photos.

Two samples collected were quantitative:

- Self-assessment; and
- A rubric used to mark a reflection piece.

Key Findings and Discussion
- Increased engagement with literacy;
- Deeper connectivity by learning family beliefs and values;
- A boost in positive behaviour in and out of the classroom;
- Greater cultural awareness of Aboriginal Australians.

Conclusions
This action research was successful. Although boys did gain a deeper understanding of the stories told, it is important to note that this deeper meaning was generated by increased engagement and the positivity it aroused in the boys.

“Stories take you up, then down, leaving you in a place that is higher than before. It runs through everything in land, body, mind and spirit, tying together the shape of learning for all people.” (Yunkaporta, 2009, p.1).

International Boys' Schools Coalition Action Research Program 2018 - 2019
Boys and Stories: Pathways to Learning