



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

Bonnie Wansley and Campbell Madden
Trinity Grammar School, Melbourne

Further Information

This poster and further information is available at <http://www.theibsc.org/>

Researcher's Email: wansleyb@trinity.vic.edu.au
maddenc@trinity.vic.edu.au

The Research Question

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

"When my Dad tells me a story at bedtime, we act out the characters with funny voices now or Mum will sing to me and when I join in, I remember the story better."

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



Introduction

We embarked to engage in an Australian Aboriginal theme for several reasons; firstly because **storytelling** aligns itself succinctly with the **Aboriginal Dreaming**. Secondly, as Australian teachers, we are fearful of teaching about Indigenous Australians. Teachers are concerned about offending Aboriginal elders or inappropriately teaching their cultural values and morals.



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**



"Listening to Corey play the didgeridoo made me feel like I was part of the story and Tiddalik the Frog came to life. I laughed so hard when the eel tied himself in knots!"

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.

Key Readings

Bessarab, D., & Ng'andu, B. (2010). Yarning about yarning as a legitimate method in indigenous research. *International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies*, 3(1), 37–50.
Black, S. (2008). Literature based storytelling: Read one, tell one. Retrieved from www.ala.org/booklinks
Hughes, P., & Moore, A. J. (1997). Aboriginal ways of learning and learning styles. Paper presented to Annual Conference of AARE, December 1997, Brisbane.

"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).

