

Charter of the CSE Indigenous Education Focus Group

Purpose

The purpose of the Charter of the CSE Indigenous Education Focus Group (IEFG) is to provide a mechanism through which we are able to:

- Understand Australian Indigenous cultures, protocols and attachment to land
- Share stories which relate to these cultures
- Gather and disseminate curriculum materials which enhance intercultural understanding
- Learn from the traditions and teaching of identified Australian Indigenous communities
- Promote reconciliation, access and equity, as key tenets of involvement with Indigenous Australians
- Support research projects and initiate publications

Context

The membership of IEFG includes representatives from government, non-government, primary, secondary and tertiary educational sectors. Each member is extensively involved in work with Indigenous communities and education organisations, dedicated to further understanding of Indigenous peoples and cultures amongst those involved as practitioners or policy makers in the teaching profession, so that students of all ages can develop understanding of knowledge of and empathy towards Australian Indigenous communities, both past and present.

Membership of IEFG

IEFG was initiated in February 2004, with the specific purpose of promoting understanding of, and educational resources relating to, Australian Indigenous people and their culture. The Focus Group is committed to leadership in fostering educational programs to develop inter-cultural knowledge and empathy. Its emphasis is not to assume any particular expertise in this area, but to give its energies to learning and communicating.

Vision

That the development of knowledge, understanding and valuing of Australian Indigenous communities and issues, becomes a reality in the daily life of all Australian educational institutions, thereby preparing citizens to further build an Australian society which embraces and promotes Indigenous cultures.

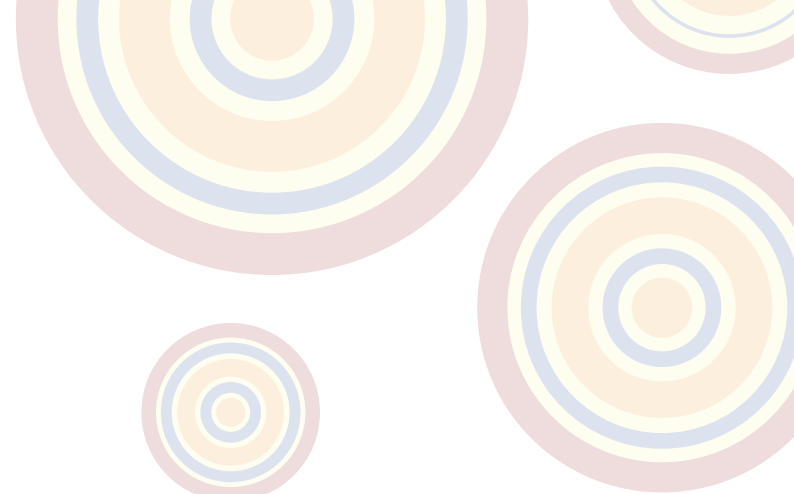
Introduction

Up until the 1990's the awareness of the importance of including studies relating to Australian Indigenous communities was given minor emphasis in many schools. With the development of a number of government initiatives to bring about reconciliation between traditional land occupants and more recent occupants of the Australian continent, further emphasis on effective independent management within Indigenous communities, a heightened awareness of injustices and short comings associated with knowledge about "the stolen generation," and the issue of land ownership, educational programs relating to Indigenous Australia have been given ever increasing priority.

The challenge for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians is to develop practices leading to greater inter-cultural understanding. The great challenge for non-Indigenous Australian is to fully understand and value to tremendous richness of the many facets of the cultures of Indigenous Australians. Traditions encompassing family relationships, hunting, cooking and other domestic skills, painting and cyclic land management draw increasing admiration for those who take time and effort to be receptive and to learn. Equally, challenges exist for Indigenous Australians as they are progressively enmeshed within "modern culture".

As this inevitably occurs, it is essential that the wonderful traditions of those who have occupied Australia for over forty thousand years, are neither lost nor diluted, but they are preserved and promoted with an increasing value and recognition. Furthermore, emphasis should be given to employment pathways, and empowerment within negotiation and communication.

These challenges, which are complex and significant, can be carried forward by the young who are the seeds of future generations. As our present generation of children gain knowledge and develop understanding and empathy, so they will be better equipped to deal successfully with the support and promotion of Indigenous members of our community, and for Indigenous people to maintain a position of value and recognition in a busy and ever demanding world of diminishing sensitivity.



The work of the IEFG will address five significant questions:

- 1 What should young people in Victorian Schools know about Australian Indigenous culture, history and contemporary issues?
- 2 How can educational programs be shaped so that the understanding of Australian Indigenous culture, history and experiences become an integral part of every young person's thinking?
- 3 In what ways can approaches to reconciliation be tackled in a meaningful manner within school programs?
- 4 How can young people be shown ways work harmoniously with Indigenous colleagues in order to bring improvement in all Australians' lives?
- 5 In what ways can Indigenous Australians enrich and add to the culture and understandings of non-Indigenous Australians.

To achieve its vision and to address these questions, the IEFG has developed five goals:

Goals

The IEFG goals are to:

- 1 Identify and disseminate information relating to developing understanding of Australian Indigenous communities, including their culture, values, history and contemporary issues.
- 2 Explore ways in which a climate of reconciliation in relation to Indigenous Australians can be fostered amongst all young people.
- 3 Profile and support research opportunities centred on understanding Indigenous Australians and how to improve education about Indigenous Australians and to liaise with organisations who can assist in dealing with these.
- 4 Promote educational publications and conference initiatives which have relevance to furthering the educational experience of non-Indigenous Australians in relation to our Indigenous past, present and future.
- 5 Foster two way understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

The following organisations participate in the CSE Indigenous Education Focus Group (IEFG).

