



AAPAE NEWSLETTER No 4 15th November 2003

Members & Friends at **the AAPAE 3rd ANNUAL CONFERENCE**
held at Pine Community School in Brisbane 2nd-4th October 2003

The presentations of the students from Pine Community School, Blacktown Youth College and The Booroobin Sudbury School were a special part of our time together and I hope made real our claims that they are central and equal in all that is of interest and substance for the members of the association. From now on AAPAE members have chosen to be either **Subjects of the Matriarchal Monarch, Queen Gab** or **Members of the Society of FUNF!** And you all thought that we were at a boring old conference!!!! Our theme for the conference was Creating Communities Through Education and the students from our host school Pine Community, Jesse, Ella and Demmi, led us in a fun and very enlightening process of creating a community from the very beginnings. Some of us chose a benign monarchy and others chose anarchy!!

The Matriarchal Monarchy

The Form of Government is

Queen Gab

ACouncil of Elders – 3 women,

The Scribe, (Caryl) The Healer, (Wendy) The Cultivator (Heather).

The Roles in the Community

Music Maker (Tim), Cook (Kirsty), Midwife (Helen), Sorceress/princess (Robyn), Doorman (Hugh).

The Creation Myth is that originally we came from the sea and once were fish. Heaven and the Goddess we worship are deep under water. The Island was created by a volcano –risen to meet the challenge. Web feet and gills are common, water births are favoured and there is much bounty from the ocean – food ornamentation, healing agents.

The greeting is **GUHOWITEC** which means 'hullo' and 'a lot'!

CETIWOHUG means 'goodbye' and we have a 3 finger wave and bow.

We live in treehouse/hut and trade and barter and exchange with other village.

The number system is comprised of visual signs 1-10 multiples of 10 and GUHOWITEC –a lot! Food is fish, seaweed, oysters, lobster and anything else from the sea.

The main festival is held on the full moon closest to Queen Gab's birthday and the Sorceress's festival 6 months later. Clothing is fake leopard skin. At the festival we have a special ritual based on the legend of Esther Williams from whom Queen Gab is descended and we engage in a synchronised swimming routine (which is quite a sight to behold!!) this has significance for all aspects of life including attracting fish and other species!! When the Board of Studies waged their aggressive, patriarchal, war against the island Queen Gab led the defence!!!!

In the Land of **F** reedom

U norganised

N on-conformity

F ireplace

Each member is personally and voluntarily responsible for themselves and for the community. Our charter states that we would care and trust that each individual would work with every other individual to solve any problems which may arise. If the problem became so large then the communal fire was the gathering place where all who were concerned about the matter could continue discussing until the issue was solved.

Funf (means five in German and was originally the name of a cartoon anarchist character)) so our greeting was the five finger salute and our national anthem was any song we liked to sing all sung at the same time! Decorations, food etc were often in clusters of five but if any individual wanted to change this and it did not bother anyone else this could happen.

Olivia and Natalie gave us a clear picture of the difference that Blacktown Youth College has made to their lives and their learning and attitudes to schools. Being treated with respect and expectations of accepting personal responsibility,

chances to follow personal interests and make choices and have very supportive and caring adults can make fundamental changes and enable the individual to feel strong enough to again participate in the 'mainstream' process if that is their choice. Listening to Natalie sing was a special moment for all of us at the conference.

The Booroobin Sudbury School community invited the conference to visit their school and so we spent a very enjoyable time in their beautiful country. It becomes even clearer how important are the opportunities to be physically present when we communicate and to be able to

spend time in each others' spaces adds a different dimension to our interactions. Thanks to Ben, Benjy, Michelle, Regina, Tilly and Julian for making very real from the students perspective, the ideas we all discussed about democratic education as you practice them.

We were especially pleased and honoured to have Yoshiyuki Nagata with us for the conference and want to thank him for his enlightened contributions and "little bit of handy research" which he so generously shared with us.

The following are some notes compiled by Chris Price on Yoshi's work which he hopes to publish in English very soon.

Very special thanks to all at Pine Community for welcoming us into their place and providing a wonderful environment and delicious food to nourish our 3rd gathering. Thank you to ALL who presented, co-ordinated and participated with enthusiastic and thoughtful contributions and especially to Cathy Wilton and Russell for all they did to enable the conference to happen.

IDEC 2006 in AUSTRALIA?

One of the positive results from Yaacov Hecht's successful visit to Australia in September was that AAPAE is now seriously thinking about and working on a proposal to host IDEC in Australia in 2006. At the conference there was strong interest and support for us to proceed with working on forming a proposal, to seek federal and state government support, sponsorship and funding and to make our intentions known to the IDEC elist. We began the process of a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats) We also called for Expressions of Interest in forming a **Working Party** to begin to put the process in motion. We happily had a strong and representative show of interest as the following list shows: Ben & Derek Sheppard, Drew Jones (QLD), Helen Nippard, Andrew Cathcart, Juli Gassner-Gering, Cathy Wilton, Chris Price (NSW) Kirsty Dodd, (SA) Cecelia Bradley, (ACT), & Yoshi Nagata as a consultant. This is open to any one else at this stage and we particularly want to encourage and facilitate the involvement of students. If you are interested in being involved please get in touch.

REPORT on AAPAE MEETING with ALAN TUDGE (Senior Schools Advisor to Dr Brendan Nelson Federal Minister for Education) Wednesday 29th October 2003 at Parliament House Canberra.

This was the follow-up meeting to the initial one held in September with advisors of Dr Nelson, Yaron Finkelstein and Dr Thomas Barlow, AAPAE and Yaacov Hecht. Thanks to Juli and Derek for once again being clear thinking, articulate colleagues at our meeting. The general tenor of the meeting was respectful and friendly, with a direct, blunt and practical edge! Alan's initial response to our testing submission, with appropriate body language, was that "testing was rock solid...everyone liked it...even aboriginal parents are telling us they like it...all the state ministers...the minister budge on this" etc and it would be highly unlikely to get a whole

school exemption." He seemed to focus initially on the fact that we might be trying to avoid administrative work!!! We assured him that this was not the problem and after considerable talk about some of the developments in other countries and the effect on the kids and the schools he agreed that they would give it serious consideration and agreed that we add into the submission, our suggestion that when parents enrol they could sign an exemption form which covered the whole of the student's time of enrolment of the school. The amended submission has been sent to the minister and we await his response. Anyone who has research info re testing

particularly showing that not all parents think this way, please let us know.

It seems essential now that parents need to contact the minister and counterbalance this belief that they are all happy with the testing process.

Alan's response to IDEC2006 was that they would need more information especially about dollars and evidence of partnerships and/or sponsorships of other groups. So we need to do some work in this area.

We did not get much further with the National Curriculum except that their terminology has shifted to "national consistency" and the first steps are about school starting ages and

numbers of grades in primary & secondary and the timeframe for both of these is quite long. We really need to link in with the state ministers and departments to get anywhere with this and to make submissions.

For Values and Democracy in education he directed us to the website for ways to participate

His response to schools of special character was initially to put it back to the states but then as we talked further could see the possible role of federal government but I would have to say there is not much enthusiasm for the idea at this stage!!

Proposed action as a result of the meeting

- . AAPAE to include a 3rd proposal in submission re testing and then send to Dr Nelson.
- . AAPAE to collect more information, costing, support etc for IDEC2006 in Australia and forward this to the Minister.
- . AAPAE Schools to invite Dr Nelson to visit.
- . Alan will organise a formal response to our letter to the Minister re IDEC 2006 as a starting point.
- . Alan will remind Yaron to send further information to AAPAE re National Curriculum
- . Alan will present our views to the minister re the submission on exemptions from testing and ensure AAPAE has a formal response.
- . Alan was unaware of a possible visit to Israel but will follow up the invitation to visit Yaacov Hecht
- . To arrange visits by the minister send in invitations from the schools.

The Annual General Meeting of AAPAE was held at the conference in Brisbane on Saturday 4th October, 2003.

It was encouraging to see that more people were interested in being on the committee and the members for this year are,

Kirsty Dodd (Marbury SA),

Juli Gassner-Gering(Kinma NSW),

Chris Price (Currumbena NSW) Asst Sec,

Andy Cathcart(Currumbena NSW) Secretary,

Ian Dodd (Marbury SA) Treasurer,

Cecelia Bradley (ACT) President

AAPAE PRESIDENT'S REPORT for Annual General Meeting 4th October, 2003

(Written by Cecelia Bradley)

Easter 2002, at Marbury School, Adelaide

many of us were attending our

2nd AAPAE conference and though we were small in numbers it was a significant event in

the building of connections and the development of the association. I would like to thank Adrienne, Ian, Kirsty, Duncan, Ian, Craig, the kids and all at Marbury who

welcomed us and made it possible to meet and continue this process. Thanks to all who presented at this event and special thanks to David Cohen who presented a delightful, cautionary tale and thoughtful critique of standardised testing and its effect on education and inspired many of us to renew our efforts to free our schools from the pressures of the testing times. (I want to return to David at the end of this report)

It was suggested, in their absence, that Cathy Wilton and Pine Community School might be interested in hosting the 2003 conference and here we are 18 months later.

In the intervening months much has been happening.

Some statistics to set the scene!

We have 37 schools and 21 individuals, on our mailing list. Financial Membership of AAPAE now stands at 8/10 Schools and 17 Individuals.

So there is room to work on increasing our financial membership and building our 'human capital' as well as our kitty!

Communications

Our **ausschools elist** continues to be the main means of communication. We have about 10 regular contributors and occasionally others join in when the topic grabs their interest.

I have put together and Chris has distributed, 3 Newsletters, to ensure that those who do not join in the cyber chat can be informed and

present with us at our conference, Yoshi Nagata, Senior Researcher at the National Institute for Educational Research in Japan.

I will return to Yaacov and Yoshi later.

This year, Tim, Andy, Ben, Adrienne, Juli and people from New Zealand were able to attend

IDEC2003 hosted by the Free School, Albany, New York and we have enjoyed reading and hearing the reports of the proceedings during the conference and in the newsletter. I am sure that the connections and ideas floated there will inform and add to our experience. Those of us who follow the discussions on the IDEC elist are aware of the diversity of views and expressions of passion that are part of our exchanges!!!! I hope we are all saving for IDEC2004 in INDIA! I have put together the papers and photos of AAPAE

take part, if they choose, in the discussions and communications and decisions.

The **AAPAE website** has not had as much attention as I would wish, but a few changes have occurred and it is presently being updated Thank you to Craig from Marbury who is doing this voluntarily. Marbury continues to host our site without charge and we thank them for this contribution. I know many of you have advanced computer knowledge and skills and I am sure that Craig is available for discussion and contributions re layout and contents.

Chris, Wendy, Helen, Derek, Janelle, Ben, Macca, Adrienne and I and all the NZ members of AAPAE, were very pleased to be able to attend **IDEC2002** which was hosted by Tamariki School in Christchurch, New Zealand. Reports about this event have been written previously and are available if you have not seen them. This was the first time IDEC had been held in our southern hemisphere and we also linked up with Andy and Geordie from Sherbrooke in Victoria, the community from Mountain Valley school in New Zealand and of course many people from around the world. We have been very pleased to renew some of these significant contacts this year with the visit to Australia in September of Yaacov Hecht, President of the Institute of Democratic Education in Israel and now

conferences and IDEC2002 and these are available for sale.

While we were at IDEC 2002, with a substantial numbers of AAPAE members present, we had a productive meeting and planned the next stage in the development of the Association.

One of the visual results was that the students from Booroobin Sudbury School designed our logo and we thank them for this contribution. A key strategy agreed, was to begin making **contacts with politicians** around the country and to make ourselves known to peak bodies and to the **media**.

This is a summary of what we have achieved. Letters (Copies and responses are available for people to read in the folder) have been sent to

Dr Brendan Nelson Federal Minister for Education Science & Training,
Jenny Macklin, Federal Shadow Minister for Education,

All Education Ministers in all States and Territories.

Grimshaw Review of Non Government Schools in NSW

Qld Non State School Accreditation Board
Association of Independent Schools(NSW)
2 key happenings occurred.

As a result of the combined work between Currumbena, Kinma and AAPAE setting up a working party to plan and take action re BST and Benchmarking we became aware of the potential threats posed by the Grimshaw Review of Non Government Schools in NSW. Time imperatives suggested the need to focus attention on this and after much contact and lobbying, AAPAE had a very productive meeting in Sydney with the Working Party charged with the Implementation of the Consultation Paper. As a result AAPAE is now known as a peak body to be included in consultations and we have forwarded a submission to the Review Committee. There is a copy of this available for people to read in full. We were reassured that the NSW government was not intent on making testing mandatory or linked to funding and there were still provisions for choice about curriculum matters. We await the next step in the process and keep our hopes that they will include our proposals to articulate clearly, alternatives and exemptions.

We need to continue to keep the lines of communication between ourselves and those taking these actions, open and effective.

Once we had taken steps about the state issues, we turned our attention back to the federal government and serendipitously, Yaacov Hecht's visit to NZ & Australia coincided. Thank you to Currumbena and Kinma for sponsoring this visit financially. Dr Nelson's office responded, as did most of the state ministers and Jenny Macklin, to our invitation to attend the public lecture by Yaacov and to meet with him and AAPAE members with apologies. However they were willing for us to set up a meeting with the

Simultaneously, The Booroobin Sudbury School was experiencing the full force of very similar legislation which was implemented in 2001 in Queensland, when it was given a Show Cause Notice. Subsequently, despite a 300 page submission, they are now in the middle of an appeal process against the withdrawal of accreditation. In support of Booroobin's, fight, AAPAE contacted Anna Bligh, the Qld Minister for Education, the Chair of the Qld Non State Schools Accreditation Board, Peter Beattie Premier of Qld and all the appropriate media outlets, a number of times. Unfortunately I cannot claim that we have made a difference but I hope that the groundswell of opinion from all quarters will have some impact. We were pleased that the Qld government was willing to send a representative from the Dept of Education to our conference to spend time with us and listen to our points of view of the education world. We were disappointed that at the last moment this became an impossibility. We will be approaching the government to ask for an explanation as to the change of mind!. I would like personally and on behalf of the association to express our care and sympathy for the struggle that the Booroobin community are experiencing and to assure them of our support. As we have heard during the conference there is a need to be vigilant both federally and around the states and territories about education plans, policies, strategies, reviews, legislations, changes to regulations etc which may have an impact on our schools. Minister's Senior Advisors. We had this meeting on 19th Sept and some very positive connections and strategies have resulted. A full report is available for those interested. A follow up meeting is being planned and AAPAE will write a new submission to present to the Minister re testing and whole school exemptions and related matters. Yaacov's experience with working with governments and bureaucracies inspired us to propose requesting the government to sponsor and support an AAPAE proposal to host IDEC2006 in Australia and we hope to continue to work on the plans and discussions about this that we have had at this conference. As to the **Media**?

Derek and Booroobin well done – National coverage on 7.30 Report, various newspaper articles, radio interviews etc.
AAPAE has sent 2 main media releases to all major newspapers around Australia and letters

to editors and various education writers, the ABC and Independent Education in NSW and Qld. So far there has been little response apart from a brief sniff from the Greatest Gladdie of them all (Phillip Adams)!!!!

Where to from now?

- *Nominations for 2003/04 Committee members?
- *Are Model Rules a suitable Constitution for AAPAE?
- *Public Liability insurance for 2004/05 and beyond?
- *Host for AAPAE 2004 Conference? Can we sustain an annual conference?
- *Establishment of Working Party for IDEC2006?
- *AAPAE Submission to Federal Government
 - Reconsider the educational place and value of testing
 - Whole School exemptions from testing
 - National Curriculum
 - Lighthouse Schools for Democratic and Values Education
 - AAPAE schools to seek a category of Schools of Special Character receiving government funding
- *How to involve students more in AAPAE
- *Keep watching briefs on State & Federal legislative proposals
- *Increase our financial membership of the association through making personal contact with other schools and interested individuals
- *Support those of us under threat from without and within

THANKS!

I recognise the dangers of mentioning and thanking specific people, but I hope that you all recognise it as my attempt to honour the efforts of individuals. If I omit anyone you think needs to be included please chip in and add them to my list.

Chris Price has been a staunch, responsive, responsible colleague and consistently reliable partner in carrying out the difficult practicalities of this long distance communications.

Chris, Wendy, Tim, Eran, Stephen and all other Currumbena Members for work on the BST Working Party and as organisers of Yaacov's visit

Juli, Helen, Ginny, Susie and all other Kinma Members for work on the the BST Working Party and as organisers of Yaacov's visit

Chris and Ginny for being direct and considered advocates with me at the Grimshaw meeting
Derek, Juli and Yaacov for being thoughtful, articulate representatives with me at the Nelson meeting.

Booroobin Students for our logo

Craig for maintaining the website

Cathy Wilton and Ella, Demmi, Jesse, Caryl, Patty, Kim, Liisa, Heather, Drew, Bruce, Bettina, Dan, Maris and all at Pine Community School, for organising this year's conference and welcoming us into their country and providing for our needs.

In conclusion I want to mention two very special people who could not be with us during these few days because of illness, David Cohen and Jen Burnley. David was one of the key group of founders of alternative schools in Sydney in the sixties and Jen was a key person at the International School, (the only alternative high school in Sydney), and initiator and practitioner of an innovative global education curriculum. Both of them have maintained the flames of passion about education which honours the uniqueness of the learner and the value of as full participation as possible in the choices and decision making about that learning and life. As they have moved in the wider circles of academia, bureaucracies and communities of all kinds they have kept alive this core belief and maintained contacts with those at the 'kidface'. Among many other activities, for years, David

published a magazine in alternative education and Jen annually brought mainstream students to visit, observe and when possible practice in alternative schools. So it was an almost automatic process for them to value and support the development of AAPAE. I consider them as our honoured elders and I feel very sad that they are experiencing the difficult times of illness again. If any of you know the book Tuesdays with Morrie, (which was given to me by one of my feisty wonderful ex-students), you will understand that I wish we had the chance to visit with both of these people every week and to have discourses with them about life and learning and love. I would like to send them a message of love and care from us all here today. I want to thank them both for all they have given us. I think that we need to begin some alternative process of recognition, and I want to nominate them both to be our first recipients.

My love and thanks to all, Cecelia

Our immediate tasks are

to personally contact people from other schools and states to

- a) spread the word about the association and increase membership
- b) find a host school for AAPAE conference 2004
- c) begin the preparations for the Proposal for IDEC2006

CONFERENCE NEWS!!!

AAPAE needs a volunteer school to host the 2004 Annual Conference. Discussions are happening with New Zealand but we are open to all offers! Please contact Cec, Andy or Chris. (See Contact details below)

Yaacov Hecht from Institute of Democratic Education Israel has offered to hold a follow up visit and present a workshop and public lecture in Australia in April 2004. AAPAE needs to have expressions of interest asap for this event from all those interested. Please contact Cec, Andy or Chris (See contacts below)

World Council of Curriculum and Instruction (WCCI) 11th Triennial World Conference is being held in Australia July 5-9 2004 in Wollongong.

The theme is "Education for a World View: Focus on Globalising Curriculum and Instruction".

Some of the sub themes include global citizenship, cross cultural studies and communication, globalising education for all, humanising global technology and the media, equitable sharing of world's resources, inclusion of oppressed and indigenous populations, arts in global education, multiculturalism and human rights.

A special feature will be the offer of a week of hosting/billeting of WCCI delegates by local families prior to the conference so that there can be a mutual sharing of educational happenings such as school visits lectures at unis etc and experience of the 'australian way of life'.

There is a call for papers workshops panels etc by 30th Nov 2003

Jen Burnley has been one of the main organisers and has expressed the hope that people in AAPAE may be interested in attending and /or presenting at this unique event.

WCCI is committed to advancing the achievement of a just and peaceful world community through "collaboration in curriculum and instruction projects, dialogue on educational and social issues of a global nature...it is a NGO of the UN in consultative status with UNESCO and Economic & Social Council"

Website is www.conferenceimages.com.au

Jen who is the International Conference Director and Conference Chair is currently on sick leave and we wish her a speedy recovery so please for more information contact Christine Fox at cfox@uow.edu.au

**Please pass on AAPAE news and information to anyone interested.
I encourage you to join the association as individuals and or school members.**

Contact Details

For further information or to join the association contact

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