

Koorie Cultural Regeneration Project in partnership with Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation 2002

This project received an award for innovation and excellence in primary health care which was presented at the Second International Primary Health Care Conference held in Melbourne in April 2000.

The Koorie Cultural Regeneration Project started in January 1998, with Leonie McIntosh as Project Worker. This project run in conjunction with Women's Health Goulburn North East (formerly NEWomen), VicHealth and Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation.

The main aims and objectives of this project were:

- To strengthen the community in terms of its Aboriginal Identity
- Increase understanding and foster pride in our Aboriginal Heritage
- To ensure that younger Aboriginal people have the opportunity to learn beliefs, traditions and skills of the Koori people
- To enable Elders in the community to pass on knowledge, stories, beliefs and to teach traditional dances and other forms of cultural expression
- To establish ways for Aboriginal people of this community to share traditional knowledge, beliefs and skills
- To build on existing links with community education providers in the development of support for the Koorie community in exploring, teaching and learning about cultural traditions.

Since starting this project Leonie has helped run and develop a number of courses and events. 'The project is very exciting to work on from a worker's point of view. It's not every day one can dance around like an Emu in the name of work, or make Jonny cakes and Wattle seed dampers!'

Some of the activities of the Project included:

- Koorie Cultural Awareness Sessions
- Flag raising ceremony for National Sorry Day
- Talks in many schools on Koorie culture
- Talks to teachers and principals of schools
- Story Day (sharing of traditional, contemporary and personal stories)
- Koorie Child care days
- Teaching Dance at schools
- Talking about traditional artifacts at schools and other organisations

Wodonga & District Koori Well Women's Project 1995 \$25

(A 17 minute video which tells the story of how a Women's Health Service in rural Victoria worked in partnership with local Aboriginal women to develop a Koorie Women's Health program)

Who Am I?...What Makes Me?

by Leonie McIntosh

Aboriginal identity, my identity, who I am, what makes me ... These are the questions that have been going around in my mind since being asked to submit this piece. I would like to talk a bit about my own Aboriginality and my own identity then I would like to share a few of our community members' stories around identity.

I am a Koori person from the Wiradjuri nation. My people come from Narrandera. But this is not what makes me Aboriginal. My Aboriginal identity is my spirit within. That's the only way I can describe that. A lot from my culture has been lost or destroyed due to the colonisation of this land, this upsets me a lot. I, as an Aboriginal person, was never given the opportunity to live like my people did before contact. This is the hardest part of my identity to deal with as there is nothing I can do. But what is important to me is preserving what traditional aspects of culture that we have left. I am very proud to call myself Aboriginal. I am proud of my beautiful culture. I learn from our spirits and I respect this land. That is what being Aboriginal means to me.

I interviewed my grandmother, Nancy Rooke, (whom I will refer to as Nan). Nancy is a Wiradjuri woman, but she is also an Elder of the community. Nancy said she would like to see many Aboriginal people educated so they can take their stand beside everyone else, to stand up and be counted. Nancy is very proud of her Aboriginal Identity and she said to me to be proud of who you are, do not let any one else tell you differently because in the old days my mother was afraid to identify until very late in her life. (This was due to the government policy of the day - White Australia Policy and the Assimilation policies.)

Nancy was talking about how all Aboriginal people were given a spirit guide at birth.

This spirit guide is with you for the rest of your life. They are there to talk to, to seek guidance from and also help keep you motivated, Spiritually & Culturally. Aboriginal people will continue to survive. Through education our people will grow, through spirituality our people will grow, and through the culture our people will continue to grow strong and proud.

Carmen Denniss, Chairperson of Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation, spoke about the spirit within and her connection to the land. 'The land and Aboriginal Spirituality is very important to me because it is very strong in my heart. I feel a strong bond with other Aboriginal people and I feel it is easier to communicate with my people because of this bond. I believe our culture needs to be passed on from those who know. As our culture is fragmented it is now very important, if not urgent, to have our culture passed down from our Elders and holders of knowledge. I am very proud to identify as an Aboriginal Woman.'