



OMEP AUSTRALIA

World organisation for Early Childhood Education

Organisation Mondiale pour l'Éducation Préscolaire
World Organisation for Early Childhood Education
Organización Mundial para la Educación Preescolar

National Newsletter

December 2008

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PRESIDENT'S GREETINGS

TREVOR FEDER

Presidents Report: December 2008

This is the last newsletter for 2008 which saw the 60th anniversary of OMEP International following its inception in 1948. This is a major milestone for an international non-government organisation which is currently active in 70 countries of the world and cooperates with other international organizations with similar aims. The daily media provides a timely reminder of the continuing need for improving the education and care of young children within Australia and throughout the world.

2008 has been a productive year with much activity taking place at the Chapter level; I thank all members in each Chapter for their diverse contributions which together make the Chapters the powerhouse of the organisation. At the National level most activity revolved around the development of the proposed new constitution on which members voted at the annual general meeting held in late October. A vote of 67% for and 33% against did not reach the 75% requirement to adopt the proposed constitution. Therefore OMEP Australia will continue to function under the current constitution. I would like to thank those who attended the meeting and also those who forwarded their proxy votes. Thanks also to the School of Education, University of South Australia for their support in providing the venue and light refreshments for the meeting.

Overall it is pleasing to see the number of membership renewals however there has been some individual membership loss. The overall increase in membership augers well for the future; going forward we hope to see a further increase in membership. I thank those who have been proactive in promoting the organisation and encouraging new members to join; it is particularly pleasing to see that NSW now has 20 members. As we move into 2009 new members help to assure the viability of the organisation and I know each Chapter is cognisant that a drive for new members must be maintained and that this is best done by each individual Chapter.

I would like to thank Dawn Butterworth the Director for WA for her hard work and efforts during the past 12 months. She tendered her resignation to the board and this was accepted at the board meeting on Monday 24 November. Currently there is no representative from WA on the Board however we hope the position will be filled in early 2009.

Following the annual general meeting we were fortunate to have a presentation from Gavin Khan from the University of Adelaide. The presentation focused around indigenous issues outlining the need for quality education and capacity building for indigenous communities. The presentation provided information and impetus for the board's consideration of an indigenous focused national project in the future. Notes relating to Gavin's presentation are included within this newsletter.

In conclusion I would like to wish all members and their families compliments of the season and best wishes for the new year. May you have a happy and safe journey into 2009.

Trevor Feder

WORKING FOR THE CHILDREN OF THE WORLD

NEW SOUTH WALES NEWS

NSW CHAPTER REPORT NOVEMBER 2008

On 17 November 2008 OMEP members and invited early childhood educators had a lovely gathering with Louise Derman-Sparks, an early and continuing pioneer in anti bias and the social justice movement in the United States. After inviting the diverse OMEP membership, Betty Hopson and Diane expanded the invitations to offer this great opportunity to a wide group of ECE professionals from all over Sydney.

Many hands contributed to making this dinner a comfortable and enticing experience. Betty Hopson supported Louise and Bill's personal needs while here in Sydney. BD's Foodhall provided the catering which was a fine presentation of diverse healthy foods. Nina Kyte went shopping for delicious halal chicken. Nicole Tytherleigh, SDN Riverwood Child & Family Learning Centre, graciously provided a delightful setting where we could all experience exemplary early childhood environments that connect with families and their community. We all benefited from their substantial contribution of coffee, tea, and drinks, plus plates, silverware and adult-sized chairs! There were helpers everywhere: Fran Bastion, Karen Pugsley, Nina and Diane — everywhere people were offering to help.

We collected \$150 which will be sent to the Butucarbin Aboriginal Corporation. This group works diligently in the Mt. Druitt area, an area of significant poverty in the Sydney suburbs. Jenny Beale, of their staff was very appreciative to have our donation which will be used to put on their Fashion Parade and Carols plus a meal, singing and a Santa for neighbourhood children and families.

We are talking about other events and directions to revitalise OMEP NSW. Numbers are growing. Bravo!

Diane Duvall Director

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<p>Please Note Both the State Chapter reports and individual contributions to the Back Pages section of the Newsletter reflect the diversity of events and concerns across Australia. It is recognised that the views these represent are not necessarily shared by all OMEP members; they are included in the spirit of mutual respect</p>
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NEWS FROM SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Chapter AGM and Annual Dinner, 23rd September.

Committee members, Angela Norris (president), Trevor Feder (national president, ex officio), Yvonne Boers, Anne Carrington, Bev Hall, Elizabeth Mitchell and Marilyn Webb were re-elected. Notes from Jeff Meiners' excellent address will be included in the March 2009 Newsletter.

Dinner Friday 24th October to welcome interstate OMEP members.

We were grateful to all who came to share a warm and pleasant evening with Victorian and New South Wales members.

National AGM and Chapter Seminar 25th October.

OMEP SA was pleased to host the OMEP Annual Meeting for the first time. The generosity of the School of Education at the Magill Campus of the University of South Australia, in providing lunch and a venue without charge, is acknowledged.

The chapter arranged a seminar to follow the meeting. Notes from Gavin Khan's careful analysis of the situation and needs of Aboriginal children are included on page 7.

SA member Bev Hall has some powerful ideas for an Aboriginal Project through direct contact with a friend and colleague in NT. Further information when this is to hand.

Children's Week Events 15th-25th October.

OMEP members were well represented at lectures and other events, including:

de Lissa Oration at Uni SA. Dr Peter Mertin, "Young Children's Brain Development and the Impact of Toxic Stress",

Network SA. Dr Tim Gill, UK thinker on childhood and play. "Growing Up in a Risk Averse Society".

"Save the Children" invitation to children to express their views on rewriting the future for children in Australia and around the world. Wishes were hung on a wishing tree.

Presentation ceremonies for Ministers', Play and Children's Week Awards.

Notable recipients were the 38 children from the Anglicare Star Bear Programme, who participated in the development of 3 books entitled "Remembering", which through the children's own written and illustrated memories of personal grief, are designed to help children in the 5—8, 8—12 and 13—18 years age groups, deal with grief in healthy and resilient ways. The books are available from Anglicare SA. The wonderful contribution to children, families and the community of our president, Angela Norris, was recognised through a Children's Week award.

Chapter Project. Clean Water for the Children of Cambodia.

Schools, Children's Centres, Kindergartens and all who work with young children, were invited, via the Children's Week Programme Book and by email with the help of various early childhood networks, to fundraise in and around universal children's day, for the purchase of wells through Ox-fam community projects, for clean water for the children of Cambodia. The response from teachers and carers has been heart warming. Children have been engaged in wonderfully imaginative activities in a multitude of different ways, always with the focus on the need of all for clean water, but also exploring aspects of language and culture, water conservation, personal hygiene and sanitation and of-course, the importance of caring for others. Several team leaders have generously thanked OMEP for the opportunity to participate! Centre and individual donations to date have enabled the purchase of 25 wells. All participating groups receive a laminated certificate of appreciation..

A Family and Friends Festive Feast on Wednesday 26th November allowed a wind down and easy chat about plans for the future. Members send good wishes to all for Christmas and a lively OMEP programme for 2009.

Marilyn Webb. Director

NEWS FROM VICTORIA

The Chapter had a very successful night at the Nancy Bastow dinner. The guest speaker Jo Onus a kindergarten teacher with City of Knox who married Lin Onus a well known Aboriginal artist gave us a very heart warming insight into how it is for aboriginal children in our world. A précis of her talk appears on page 8 of this newsletter. The talk is very relevant to OMEP as we consider the possibility of a national project working with and for the aboriginal community. Much of what Jo had to share was very similar to the story Gavin Khan told the OMEP Australia AGM late in October.

Little Green Steps was a very interesting forum and a topic OMEP needs to take seriously as an advocate for sustainable living for children and families. The project began in Northern NSW in the Councils of Wyong and Gosford. The manual gives practical and multi faceted approaches for early childhood educators to promote sustainability education. Sustainability is also a topic very dear to Ingrid Pramling Samuelsson and OMEP International. A publication from UNESCO titled the contribution of early childhood education to a sustainable society written by Ingrid demonstrates very clearly her stance on this vital issue.

The Chapter will be holding its AGM in late November and finishing the year with a Christmas afternoon tea at one of Melbourne's well known garden tea rooms.

The Care bags project will continue with early in 2009 supporting the foster care group from the Uniting Church in Horsham.

Season's greetings to all OMEP members and may 2009 be the year that OMEP can become united in its work for children throughout Australia and the World as well as united within itself throughout Australia.



OMEP members and former colleagues of the late Nancy Bastow at the dinner.

NEWS FROM WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Children's Week Celebrations

On Sunday 19th October, OMEP WA joined with AWCH WA to provide hospital play activities at the Children's Week Expo at Whiteman Park. Hundreds of children visited the OMEP/AWCH pavilion to role play basic medical procedures such as injections, intravenous drips and bandaging on large persona dolls. Dressed as doctors, nurses or ambulance workers, they tried out basic medical equipment such as crutches, wheelchairs, stethoscopes, thermometers, and so on. Others spent time making and dressing with collage materials, cut-out dolls. All were given a first-aid play kit to take home as well as information about OMEP, AWCH and the therapeutic value of hospital play.

Cyber-safety Session

Wednesday 19th November has been declared *World Child Protection Day*. To draw attention to the vitally important role of protecting our children, OMEP WA held a session on cyber-safety at St Hilda's Girls' School. Thirty parents/teachers learned about the dangers to which children are exposed on the internet such as cyber-bullying and paedophilia and strategies that may be used to protect our children from such risks. This very successful, interactive seminar was taken by Antonietta Faulkner who is the internet project officer for the Department of Education and Training. As a result of this contact, links have been established with the Department with a view to involving 14 – 17 year-old students in projects as part of their community service.

School Starter Kits

Application forms are streaming in from all over our vast State for school starter kits for needy children for the commencement of 2009. Wooldridges, who are now under new ownership, have pledged to continue supplying the school materials. The Swan River Trust has agreed to donate 300 library bags, environmental stickers and pens and the Education Department has agreed to post the kits to rural and remote areas. OMEP WA members will package all materials and personally deliver kits to metropolitan schools in January, ready for the new school year.

Tjurkurla Community

20 sleeping bags and pillows were provided for the children of the remote Tjurkurla Aboriginal community in the Gibson Desert to use for a school camp in Perth. President Dawn and her OMEP member husband Bryce, attended an evening barbecue with the children.

Refugee Welcoming Kits

12 more kits have been prepared for distribution through the Princess Margaret Hospital clinic.

Gifts for Uganda and Papua New- Guinea

A truck load of new babies' clothing and soft toys were given to a couple setting up a birthing clinic in Uganda. A contact was closing down his factory and he kindly donated the materials. Some thongs and light children's clothing were kept for PNG.

AGM and Christmas Party

This is scheduled to take place at the Perth Flying Squadron Yacht Club on Monday, December 1st. A light meal will be served and a classical guitar recital will be provided by OMEP WA member, Jerome Toonen.

Dr Dawn Butterworth, President, OMEP WA.

Welcome to Gothenburg

In August 2010, OMEP welcomes people from around the world to its 26th World Congress. Sweden is the hosting nation for the first time since 1964. Teachers, researchers and other participants will have the opportunity to learn and share experiences. The three day event offers lectures, workshops, seminars, visits to pre-schools and primary schools and social activities. What unites the participants is an interest in children's rights and education for suitable development in a local and global context.

The theme of the congress is "Children—citizens in a challenged world". The foundation for the event rests on UN Convention on the Rights of the child, and the millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs aim, among other things to give all children the right to be in school by 2015, to improve women's situation and to ensure gender equity. The congress provides all participants the unique opportunity to work together on these important issues.

We are very proud to host the congress in Goteburg. The city is an inspiring meeting place that prioritises environmental issues and sustainability. All congress venues and many sights are within walking distance or easily accessible by public transportation. The surroundings, with the sea and its archipelago, offer spectacular sceneries, and the city's Botanical Garden is considered among the most beautiful in the world.

See you in Goteborg

Jan Mellgren

Director

The Center for School Development

Ingrid Pramling Samuelsson

World President

OMEP

Ingrid Engdahl

President

OMEP Sweden

Children— Citizens in a challenged world

Today, children of the world have a stronger position than before. Children have the right to express their opinions and influence decisions that affect them. How can we work for a better future, individually and collectively, with and for all children? How can we work together to develop cultural identities within a social and ecological 'everyday life' -context? How can we support culture focusing on a democratic and sustainable society?

Different childhoods

Childhood conditions vary greatly within and between the nations of the world. And, childhood is shaped within cultural and social traditions. How can we improve the conditions and thereby contribute to the realisation of the UN Millennium Development Goals by 2015?

Education for Sustainable Development

How do we build purposeful and professional learning structures that incorporate the social, economic and ecological aspects of education for sustainable development? How can organisations that work with children affect behaviour patterns that contribute to sustainable societies?

Gender equity and equal rights

As boys and girls grow up they are greatly affected by social and cultural conventions, that are steered by traditional gender roles and gender patterns. How can we consciously practise gender education and give boys and girls equal opportunities to develop and test different identities?

Gavin Khan is currently a lecturer in the School of Education at University of Adelaide and has a background in classroom teaching in a variety of schools and settings throughout South Australia. He is a passionate advocate and leader for the improvement of educational outcomes of Aboriginal children and students, building capacity and creating opportunities for Aboriginal teachers to move into leadership roles. He was one of the first Aboriginal principals of a mainstream school in South Australia and is Co-Chair of the National Aboriginal Principals Association which he was instrumental in establishing.

Notes on the Presentation given by Gavin Khan

Early Childhood Education: an Aboriginal Perspective

The focus of the presentation was on Early Childhood Education for Aboriginal children and in covering the focus, historical information was considered as well as the current situation and possible ways forward.

It has been acknowledged for many decades that there is a strong correlation between the health of individuals, communities and economic development. Poverty and social economic status are strong determinants of future prosperity, participation and access. The report of the Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force, Department of Employment education and Training 1988 reported that *equality for Aborigines in education is essential to the economic, social and cultural development of Aboriginal communities.*

Information presented highlighted the need for a goal of general community capacity building including all sectors of education. As such it is believed that policy for Indigenous higher education must be underpinned by the goal of social, cultural and economic development of the whole Indigenous community. The higher education sector in preparing educated people for leadership roles, has a vital role to play in raising the health, education and economic outcomes for the Indigenous community overall. This provides a strong justification for the allocation of adequate resources to educate and train the next generation of Indigenous leaders; clearly early childhood educators need to be among these.

For Indigenous students it was stressed that *the school is the principle border along which their culture and the dominant culture meet, and it is marked by rejection and oppression.* (Partington 1998 p. 20). Therefore early childhood teachers and educators are critical in the early years of formal education.

Various references were made to education in New Zealand and how this might provide examples of directions for Aboriginal education in the future. Information presented was grouped in three main domains;

1. The child and their home.
2. The structures and the systems.
3. The relationships and interactions.

A significant point is that only number 3 deals with influences that are within the power of classroom teachers to control. By contrast both numbers 1 and 2 deal with influences that are beyond the control of classroom teachers. Consequently the importance of capacity building for community leaders and families is paramount as they are the first educators; family and community are forever but school is for a relatively short term. There is a constant need for carers, teachers, and a range of workers in various disciplines to work with Aboriginal communities; if this is to be achieved there needs to be long term plans and goals and adequate allocation of resources at all levels.

People were urged to identify what they have agency over and to take appropriate action as educational reform is needed to achieve the paradigm shift at a personal and system level. The continued legacy of marginalization, disengagement, low levels of achievement and an underachieving inflexible education system all need to be addressed to enhance the prospects for Indigenous people, especially children living in the contemporary world.



Publication:
Sowing Seeds of Peace: Australia and the World Organisation for early Childhood Education by Joan Waters

This book is about the development of OMEP in Australia and the involvement and influence of Australians in World Assemblies and Council Meetings

Cost: Aus \$20 Including Postage within Australia

Onus

Address by Jo Onus at the Nancy Bastow Dinner, OMEP Victoria, September 2008
Notes from the transcript

Jo is a kindergarten teacher who worked with the very supportive Nancy Bastow. Hers is a very personal story, of a relatively privileged European Australian, who married the son of Aboriginal activist and entrepreneur, Bill Onus. Her husband Lin Onus continued his father's work. In a short time Lin, his family and friends, introduced Jo to Koori culture; beliefs, language and the injustice still being perpetrated against their people. "I learned about massacres, stolen children, the Queensland Act, the Aborigines Protection Board, police bashings (including Lin at the age of only fourteen), infant mortality rates... amongst the highest in the world and the way Kooris can laugh in the face of... adversity and survive." She speaks of insensitive remarks and insensitive jokes, even among fellow volunteers at the local Country fire authority.

Her account of the searing early school experience of her now twenty seven years old son, illustrates alarmingly, the third of Gavin Khan's domains for action... "the importance of capacity building for communities and families... as they are the first educators."

"He had a fantastic teacher in Grade Six, who came to me at the end of the year and told me that not one day had gone by without Tiriki being called at least once, 'a dirty stinking abo'....When he was in Prep, some Grade Six children tied him to a tree with a dog's lead because he was 'a dirty stinking abo'...Every morning in Prep when I drove him to school he would sit in the car and cry because he didn't want to go in. I rang the principal and told her what was happening and that the other children were calling him 'a dirty stinking abo'....her only response was 'Oh, doesn't he like that?' " Tiriki endured further humiliation when his father's quite famous art work was mentioned in the press. If well meaning teachers mentioned this he would be beaten by other children. Thankfully, Tiriki's secondary school experience was more positive.

The family developed a lasting relationship with the community at Maningrida, including adoption by 'skin' by traditional artist Jack, discovering the complexity, joy and responsibility this brings. As a teacher, Jo tells of learning about teaching from Horace, a Yolngu man. Jo was having trouble showing six year old Tiriki how to skip stones on water, which stones to choose, how to hold and throw them. Horace, with completely wordless demonstration, patience, perception and no concern for time, accomplished this in 15 minutes.

Jo believes that we are not quite the racist community which we were, but that we still have a long way to go. She throws the responsibility to end racism back to all Australians, especially the educators, and even more especially the early childhood educators, who start the children on the journey from home.