

## Episode 47 - From an Indigenous Perspective - Karen

#047 - In this episode we meet Karen, a Gamilaraay woman, who is a trained primary school teacher and currently works as the Aboriginal Education Worker (AEW) in a local high school. She is a wearer of many hats and absolutely loves her job helping Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. We talk about her love for her People, her love for sharing her stories and listening to others' stories and her passion for education. Karen mentions that the door is always open to anyone, the kettle is always on and the freezer is full of food. Karen was so grateful for this opportunity to share her story and I was a keen listener!

Karen who was an only girl from a family of 7 grew up with strong influences from her mother. Education was very important to her mother and father so there was a lot of encouragement for all the kids to get an education. Karen loved learning. Karen became a teacher in 1999 and now works as the AEW and has been there for 25 plus years.

Karen identifies with the Gamilaraay nation, far north-west of NSW.

As AEW she wears many hats

- Works with students especially with Literacy and Numeracy
- Attendance
- Pastoral care
- Connection between school and home
- Nurse
- Counsellor

Initiatives at the school

- Literacy and numeracy resources
- Aides specially trained
- NAIDOC celebrations
- Aboriginal studies
- Karen goes into classes and gives an Aboriginal's perspective
- School has embedded culture into the school
- Bring cultural events / visitors into the school
- Teaching of Wiradjuri language to Years 7 and 8
- Traditional Indigenous games for Years 9 and 10

Best things about the culture

- Identity as an Aboriginal person
- Sharing her story
- Sense of belonging
- Inclusion
- Stories around the campfire
- Pride
- Family

- Extended family
- The idea of caring and helping people around you
- Kettle is always on, food is in the freezer and door is always open
- Thinking of others with respect

#### Challenges faced by Aboriginal students today

- It is very individual
- Hands on learning
- Teachers need to build that trust
- Know background so you have some understanding
- Otitis Media is an issue but Karen doesn't see much in the high school
- Access to computers and internet at home
- Resources for school

Karen thinks that there is little difference in the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. Initiatives from the government are introduced and not always completed in full before the next initiative comes out. Things are not always achieved. Action is not fulfilled and consequently there is little or success.

#### Non-Aboriginal people can learn from Aboriginal People by

- Show empathy
- Show respect
- Aware of the negative things that happened
- Just listen
- Don't be afraid to ask questions
- No sympathy
- Be understanding
- Do a cultural course to gain an understanding of the Aboriginal culture

Karen prides herself on being available when the need is there, for families, in school, and in the community.