

of the 'part-Aboriginal' population. As government policies altered in the favour of assimilation as opposed to mere protection, part-Aborigines continued to be institutionalised as the means of making them fit for absorption into the white population.

The situation in the Northern Territory was subject to the differing viewpoints of government administrators. Many young people were forced to shift from one place to another as their 'protectors' revised decisions and plans. The separation of vast numbers of children from their families created generations of people with virtually no control over their own destinies and the level of dependency imposed upon them was in many cases devastating. The increased call for a more equitable society gradually led to legislation in the 1950s which ostensibly allowed people of Aboriginal descent greater autonomy. However the 'cycle of dependency' created by earlier policies rendered such reforms less than successful.

Barbara Cummings documents the plight of her people with case studies which are revealing and often disturbing. In

*Take This Child...*, the experiences of some young people fostered by southern families are told, including the confusion and sometimes abuse they lived through and the difficulties many faced upon returning to the Northern Territory. The book also recounts the cruelty and hardship that was commonly the lot of young people in institutions such as the Retta Dixon Home, established in 1947 and closed as recently as 1980. Importantly, it describes the tangled identities of a people subjected to European and Christian values who were forced to live in relative isolation and devoid of equal rights and opportunities. Barbara Cummings reveals the problem of parenting for the successive generations who had been deprived of their own kinship networks and raised in the style thought most appropriate by missionaries and government.

*Take This Child...* provides a detailed account of the effects of institutionalisation on Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. Its analysis through the case studies of the actors in this custody play is not sentimental but poignant in its realism. This work would

provide valuable, informed insight for those interested in the history of the welfare of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory and particularly those of mixed descent in that region.

The book is punctuated by detailed reference to government and other source material which adds weight to the author's own well-articulated comments. Further support comes from the accounts of residents of the institution in which she was raised. The reader is also presented with a series of photographs of the subjects at the homes over a period of time.

*Take This Child...* places in the hands of the practitioner and lay reader alike concise, readable information from an interesting and dynamic source and can be thoroughly recommended. This work highlights the legacy of a turbulent and disturbing period in the history of the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory and should have important ramifications for those interested and involved in the welfare of people of Aboriginal descent today.

Reviewer:

Jane Owen B.A. Dip. Ed.

### ***The Arguing Edibles* by Pilawuk, Rosemary Markotic & Ray Forrest. Illustrated by Jodie Scott.**

Magabala Books Aboriginal Corporation : Broome W.A. 32 pp. \$19.92

**G**rowing from a Pea to a Pumpkin, deciding on the best fill for a pie, a decision between nutrition and taste – this Aboriginal storybook for children touches on all these areas.

The storyline is based on vegetables, and with its rhyming text, is very easy to read and enjoy. The outline of the story is based on giving children some knowledge of the variety of vegetables available and at the same time revealing that some are healthier whereas others taste better. For example:

"Oh, what rot!"  
Shrieked a shapely shallot,  
"Taste is more important,  
nutrition is not."

Although this children's book does not incorporate traditional drawings, the illustrations by Jodie Scott are very bright, colourful and distinctive, and very relevant to the storyline.

I believe the theme is exciting and has an unexpected finish, also encouraging children to eat their vegetables, like this passage for instance:

With a swoop of the hand,  
now who would it be?  
They all sat up so proudly  
crying softly, "Pick me, Pick me!"

This seems to be telling the children that the vegetables all want to be eaten, which creates an image to children that it is good to eat their vegetables.

Overall, with a colourful presentation and easy rhyming text, *The Arguing Edibles* is a pleasure to read for all ages, but is more suited to the primary school age. Parents and teachers would get much pleasure out of presenting this book to children.

Reviewer:

Joanne Riseley