

On the surface Collarenebri would seem to suggest itself as an accurate gauge of the extent to which Aboriginal society has disintegrated under the intense pressure of European values and practices.

Such an impression is misleading to the extent that Collarenebri offers an example of the strength and tenacity of Aboriginal culture despite the assault to which it has been subjected.

According to Dr Archie Kalokerinos the traditional culture maintains a covert but quite real life in this small town in northwestern New South Wales, 45 miles north of Walgett.

"There is a lot of evidence since I've been here that the old culture is being handed on," he says. "Selected children are being taught part of the old culture."

To support his claim Dr Kaløkerinos cites a case of one child who has "recently" been given tribal markings. Quite a few of the older people, he says, also have tribal markings, but this is less surprising.

Other evidence he also quoted, dealt with the difficulties experienced by farmers with properties near the cemetery, in getting Aboriginal workers to plough at night, and the case of a shed that was burned down when its elderly owner died in it.

There is the well-known case, a few years ago, of the near-fatality of twins born to a local woman.

"Such examples, it might be said, are only isolated instances. Not so, at least in the sense that many of the people still think Aboriginal," Dr Kalokerinos stressed. He went on to say, "It is wrong to assume that because people go to a European school they think as whites do."

To the extent that it has survived the traditional culture is one of the more positive aspects of Collarenebri.

The reverse side of the coin shows such comparable realities as lack of employment; educational difficulties; health problems; drinking, and so on.

Mrs Peters and her family are among the luckiest members of Collarenebri's Aboriginal community, at least in the sense that they share few of these problems.

Mrs Peters, a widow, shares a beautiful home in town with two of her daughters, Ivy and Dawn, and the youngest member of the family, Tom, who is studying first form this year. She also has three older children.

Mrs Peters, Ivy and Tom



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