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Stories from Copes Creek

Aboriginal Rights and Freedom



“I was born just after the 1967 referendum - the first person in my large family born under an amended constitution not as part of the ‘flora and fauna’ but counted as a full Australian citizen.

I grew up in a tin shack on the banks of Copes Creek in Tingha, on Gamilaroi land. As one big family (sometimes there was 28 of us) we move around, living down the coast on banana plantations. Mum always fought hard to find us a place to live and to make sure all of us kids could go to school. Dad played footy. He could have played for Balmain but didn’t want to leave his country and kin.

Growing up I remember the Freedom Rides and Charlie Perkins causing a big fuss nearby in Moree because Aboriginal people were not allowed into the pool to swim along with everyone else. Nearly thirty years later, my youngest son, born on 13 February, celebrated his first birthday on the lawn of Parliament House while we listened to the Apology to the Stolen Generation.

In *Stories from Copes Creek* I will tell you my story of Aboriginal Australia: Our family’s struggle against government policies that tried to break us apart and take away our culture and how we fought for our freedom and recognition as Australia’s First People.” – John Blair

- **Curriculum area covered** - The struggle for Aboriginal rights and freedom.
- **Presentation** – John tells personal stories and re-enacts historic material.
- **Events explored** - 1938 Day of Mourning, 1967 Referendum, Lands Rights and Mabo, and the Apology to the Stolen Generation.

John Blair is a member of the Gamilaroi Nation. He was born in 1968. He has over 25 years of experience as an actor and Aboriginal educator.

COST PER STUDENT:	\$5.50 (\$5 + 50c GST)
MINIMUM PER SESSION:	\$660 (\$600 + \$60 GST) – if less than 120 students
DURATION:	55 minutes + 15 minutes question time (optional)