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Summarising: Hunt (2007), Working on governance in Indigenous communities
Responsibility for the preparation of this research summary rests with the authors of the MCEETYA report *Education, Training and Indigenous Futures: CAEPR Policy Research 1990–2007* and not the original author(s) of the summarised material.

Title of Research:
Working on governance in Indigenous communities

Research Publication:
Issues Brief
In preparation (2007)

Name of Researcher(s):
J. Hunt

Time period:
2007

Geographic location:
Australia

Methodology:
Based on detailed evidence from over a dozen different ‘case studies’ of Indigenous governance in action across a diverse range of community, geographical, cultural and political settings across Australia.

Aims:
The purpose of the Issues Brief is to provide guidance to government agencies wishing to work with Indigenous communities.

Selected findings and insights:
The Issues Brief sets out a series of guidelines and suggested strategies that government agencies could consider when working with Indigenous communities, including the development of effective partnership arrangements for service delivery. Guidance is presented in terms of the following.

Getting to know the community before the agency begins its work. This includes recognising that discrete communities do not exist in social or cultural isolation but are enmeshed in wider communities of identity and regional networks and consist of residents with different cultural and historical ties as well as different and distinct familial affiliations.

Understanding governance of Indigenous communities. This includes recognising that Indigenous relationships and systems of representation may not be based on western models and that different governance arrangements may apply to different issues.

Working with legitimate Indigenous leaders, who are the key to strong community governance. This includes not only identifying the properly authorised Indigenous leaders but being able to work alongside them in a manner consistent with their ways of doing business through consensus, negotiation and consultation with community members. It also involves recognising the multiple pressures that they experience as Indigenous leaders.

Communicating the same concepts. This includes spending time and resources explaining the meaning of government agency concepts and trying to develop an understanding of Indigenous concepts that reflect an Indigenous view of the issue at hand.
Understanding the rules for communication and interaction. This includes being aware of the styles of communication and interaction employed by Indigenous peoples, such as them being less direct than in western style communication, being more concrete and less abstract and employing indirect techniques to indicate disagreement.

Educational implications:

This Issues Brief is a good primer for school staff when they are developing links with their local Indigenous community. It could be used as an in-service document to start discussions among school staff as to how best to begin the process of engaging with the school community in order to come to an effective school community educational partnership agreement.

Related papers:

J. Hunt and D.E. Smith, 'Further key insights from the Indigenous Community Governance Project’ 2006

J. Hunt and D.E. Smith, 'The Indigenous Community Governance Project (ICGP) ICGP Project Summary', 2005