Summarising: Sutherland (2003), *An Indigenous school and learning community in the ACT? Opportunity, context and rationale*
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:
An Indigenous school and learning community in the ACT? Opportunity, context and rationale

Research Publication:
CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 258/2003

Name of Researcher(s):
D. Sutherland

Time period:
2003

Geographic location:
Canberra, ACT

Methodology:
This paper reviews existing literature on learning communities, including several case studies of Indigenous learning communities, and contemporary government policy on Indigenous affairs.

Aims:
- The purpose of this paper is to develop the conceptual underpinnings for a proposed Indigenous school and learning community in the Australian Capital Territory. It was envisaged that such a proposal could be considered as a potential Indigenous Community Coordination Pilot under the whole-of-government approach to service delivery promoted by the Council of Australian Governments.

Selected findings and insights:
As this paper is largely a conceptual paper, its scope is wide-ranging drawing upon Australian and international literature relevant to Indigenous learning communities. In so doing the paper highlights the following issues that need to be considered in developing an Indigenous learning community:

- Consistent with a growing emphasis upon capacity building and focus upon social capital as a means of strengthening Indigenous communities, this paper describes a strong relationship between social capital upon educational engagement and success. In brief, the paper argues:
  - to achieve strong educational outcomes requires both human capital (individual skills and knowledge) combined with the elements and processes involved in the creation of social capital.

- Indigenous people living in a contemporary urban environment live in a 'contested' environment where issues of self and identity are continually being diminished, and this will affect their participation in, and engagement with, mainstream institutions, e.g. retention in secondary schooling.

1. Social capital is a rather ambiguous term but typically refers to the benefits which flow from membership in networks and other social structures, such as social cohesion and family support. It contrasts to human capital which refers to the acquisition of skills and knowledge and leads to increased employment prospects and income. Common identities based on social relatedness and connection to smaller or larger areas of 'country'. Kin and kinship is a grouping based upon the degree and type of relatedness between Aboriginal persons.
• Three elements for success in Indigenous education are identified from the literature:
  ° recognition, acknowledgment and support of culture;
  ° development of requisite skills; and
  ° adequate levels of participation,
  together with underlying notions of ‘trust’ and ‘empowerment’.

In developing an Indigenous school and learning community in an urban setting such as Canberra, the paper considers the following requirements:
• a positive and culturally safe school environment - for students, families and the wider Indigenous community;
• as well as catering for school-age students, educational programs should also cater for early childhood and for parents and other adults. As a facility then it would offer extended and life-long learning;
• an integration of services across education, health, and other government and community agencies;
• governance, leadership and management that adequately provided a sense of strong involvement for the community, with mechanisms to support and build the capacity of Indigenous people to participate effectively.

The paper concludes by emphasising that the needs and aspirations of Indigenous children, families and community should guide how best to deliver education to an Indigenous community living in an urban setting.

Educational implications:
This application of the concept of a 'learning community' to an urban setting highlights the importance of cultural considerations for schools with significant Indigenous enrolments when developing an educational partnership between the school and its Indigenous community. [educational partnership agreements]

Relevance:
Domain 2: School and community educational partnerships
  Cross-cultural relationship between school and community
  Use and negotiation of educational partnership agreements between schools and communities

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