



5th SNAICC National Conference

# For Our Children: Living and Learning Together

4 – 6 June 2013, Cairns

## Session 24

### Strong Indigenous Educators Growing Strong Culture and Identity in the Early Years

This session describes two of the approaches taken in Queensland that build on the national *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF) to:

- provide additional guidance to ensure culturally and linguistically appropriate programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and
- ensure Indigenous educators take a lead role in pedagogical approaches that reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing and being.

Both focus on strengthening Indigenous early childhood programs and Indigenous leadership capacity.

#### 1. The Remote Indigenous Professional Development (RIPD) project

The Remote Indigenous Professional Development Project for the *Early Years Learning Framework* promotes use of the EYLF in early childhood education and care services in remote, very remote and rural areas. There is a deliberate focus on Indigenous pedagogical leadership and peer mentoring.

The project, funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), gives absolute priority to 'entry-level' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators. Eleven pedagogical leaders with strong cultural connections and demonstrated leadership in early childhood education facilitate five-day professional development programs using a specifically designed visual resource.

Pedagogical leaders use a range of strategies to build an understanding of the key concepts of the EYLF and their meaning within the context of a children's service. Strong emphasis is placed on the importance of family, community, culture and language and approaches to learning that come from an Indigenous perspective, using Indigenous ways of knowing and working.

It is anticipated that by June 2013, more than 230 early childhood educators, mainly women from Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, will have participated in a RIPD program.

#### 2. Foundations for Success – Guideline for extending and enriching learning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the kindergarten year.

The *Foundations for Success* guideline aligns with the EYLF to provide educators with culturally and linguistically appropriate advice about children's learning in their Kindergarten year. There is a strong emphasis on 'relationships' and the wider context of family and community.

The guideline describes a decision-making process that supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's learning through connected processes and



relationships. It is depicted as an ongoing cycle that aligns:

- planned learning (the expected knowledge, skills and dispositions for children across the kindergarten year)
- pedagogy (the practices that promote this learning)
- documenting and reflecting for children's learning (making informed assessments to inform new learning).

Children, families and communities are placed at the core. Educators use their understanding of the decision-making process to create connected learning environments that value, respect and build on children's cultures and broaden their understandings of the world in ways that make them two-way strong.

The presentation shows what is possible when the focus is on empowerment and working from strengths, and when there is honest engagement, trust and genuine respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, doing and being.

For further information: <http://deta.qld.gov.au/indigenous/index.html>

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