THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

Report by - EDWARD TUDOR - 2016 Churchill Fellow

THE JACK BROCKHOFF FOUNDATION CHURCHILL FELLOWSHIP
to investigate programs that support the transition of young Indigenous or disadvantaged people to mainstream education

I understand that the Churchill Trust may publish this Report, either in hard copy or on the internet or both, and consent to such publication.

I indemnify the Churchill Trust against any loss, costs or damages it may suffer arising out of any claim or proceedings made against the Trust in respect of or arising out of the publication of any Report submitted to the Trust and which the Trust places on a website for access over the internet.

I also warrant that my Final Report is original and does not infringe the copyright of any person, or contain anything which is, or the incorporation of which into the Final Report is, actionable for defamation, a breach of any privacy law or obligation, breach of confidence, contempt of court, passing-off or contravention of any other private right or of any law.

Signed Dated 30 January 2018
Index

1 Introduction 3
1.1 Personal details 3
1.2 Acknowledgments 3
1.3 Key words 3

2 Executive Summary 4
2.1 Belonging 4
2.2 Other key learnings 4

3 Fellowship Programme 5

4 Photos 7

5 Background and Purpose 8
5.1 Background 8
5.2 Purpose 8

6 Fellowship visits and key learnings 9
6.1 A note on this report 9
6.2 InZone and Auckland Grammar School – Auckland, New Zealand 9
6.3 Zendesk – San Francisco, California, USA 10
6.4 University of British Colombia – Vancouver, Canada 10
6.5 Maricopa Community Colleges – Phoenix, Arizona, USA 12
6.6 Northern Arizona University – Flagstaff, Arizona, USA 13
6.7 University of Minnesota – Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA 14
6.8 Nunavut Sivuniksavut – Ottawa, Canada 16
6.9 Monument Academy and The Seed Foundation – Washington, D.C., USA 17
6.10 Prep for Prep, New York, New York, USA 20
6.11 The Sami Education Institute, Inari, Sápmi, Finland 21

7 Conclusions, recommendations and dissemination 23
7.1 Conclusions and recommendations 23
7.2 Dissemination 24
1 Introduction

1.1 Personal details

Name: Edward Tudor

Address: 16 The Vaucluse Richmond VIC 3121

Position: Executive Director, Melbourne Indigenous Transition School (“MITS”)

Telephone: 0438 536 835

Project Description: The Jack Brockhoff Foundation Churchill Fellowship to investigate programs that support the transition of young Indigenous or disadvantaged people to mainstream education

1.2 Acknowledgments

I am immensely grateful to the Churchill Trust for the opportunity to undertake this Fellowship, and to the Jack Brockhoff Foundation for sponsoring the Fellowship. The support of the Jack Brockhoff Foundation is particularly meaningful: during the development phase of MITS, the Foundation was the first major trust or foundation to provide funding to MITS, for the development of our unique curriculum. Both then, and now through this Fellowship, the Jack Brockhoff Foundation has shared our vision for MITS and for our students, and has enabled us to pursue the very best practices.

I am grateful to my referees – Craig Brown, Partner at McIldowie Partners (2003 Churchill Fellow) and Ken Davies, Chief Executive Officer of Territory Families – for generously encouraging my application and advocating for me during the application process.

I am also grateful to the many people and organisations who shared their expertise and time with me during my Fellowship. From Auckland to Ottawa, Phoenix to Inari I was welcomed so generously by a global community of educators working with and for young people. I particularly thank Winona Thirion at Maricopa Community Colleges for her work to organise so many visits during my stay in Arizona, Morley Hanson and Murray Angus at Nunavut Sivuniksavut for allowing me to become a part of their wonderful organisation for a few days, and Heidi Kitti at the Sámi Education Institute for welcoming me and my fiancée Rhiannon into her home and community.

Lastly, I am grateful to the MITS Board of Directors for supporting my Fellowship application and for affording me the time to undertake it. I’m also most grateful to the MITS Leadership Team for shouldering additional work and responsibility whilst I was away. In particular, I thank MITS Director Marg Webb OAM, who became Acting Executive Director during my time abroad. Marg’s committed leadership during this time enabled me to make the very most of the Fellowship, confident that MITS was in safe hands.

1.3 Key words

• “Indigenous”
• “students”
• “transition”
• “education”
• “young people”
• “belonging”
2 Executive Summary

2.1 Belonging

Shortly after returning from my Fellowship, I spoke to a dinner of Old Boys from my former school. The group ranged from men a few years out of school, to men nearly 60 years out of school. What was it that brought the audience together, I reflected? How was it that, so many years after leaving the school, we found ourselves back there time and time again? It was, I surmised, due to a deep sense of belonging – a connection to the place, the people and the culture.

Belonging, it would turn out, was the key theme of my Churchill Fellowship. It is a fundamental component of any successful transition program for young Indigenous people. Every organisation that I visited created, for their students, a deep sense of belonging, which made them feel a valued part of the institution and gave them the individual and collective strength to take on its educational challenges.

That feeling of belonging can be created in many ways. At InZone and Auckland Grammar School in New Zealand, it comes from a shared understanding, pride and commitment to Maori and Pasiifika culture in the InZone boys themselves, their non-InZone peers, and their teachers. At the University of British Columbia, it has been achieved through years of university-wide commitment to Indigenous students, and the creation of the Longhouse, a safe place for Indigenous students where they can belong. At Nunavut Sivuniksavut in Ottawa, a small cohort and a course which uses culture and identity as tools to unlock other content ensures the students feel at home, thousands of kilometres from home. And at Monument Academy in D.C., staff, programs and support structures are used to create a safe boarding environment for students who may not always have that same safety at home.

As we work to create educational opportunities for Indigenous students here in Australia, we must reflect on how to ensure that those students feel that they truly belong in their educational environment. What already exists to create a sense of belonging? What do we need to create in addition? What in the current shape of the institution might prevent a student from feeling that they belong? As the staff at UBC’s Longhouse ask themselves, we must ask “How is the student experiencing our institution?”

2.2 Other key learnings

- **(long-term pathways support)** The best transition programs stay with their students for many years, long after their transition has occurred (Prep for Prep, SEED, Hoop of Learning). Our students’ pathways are long, and we must work in partnership with our future schools, universities and employers to ensure that they continue to have access to everything they need to experience success.

- **(trusted transition advisors)** In our early years of operation, MITS is providing a very high level of hands-on support to our graduate students, Melbourne Families and Partner Schools. The UBC Longhouse example demonstrates that this is natural in the early years. We should expect that – in years to come – this early intensive work will result in capacity growth within our Melbourne education community, reducing some of the work that MITS is asked to undertake, and enabling us to grow into trusted advisors and thought leaders.

- **(achieving scale)** For organisations supporting the educational transition of young people, achieving scale is challenging. Our work is small-scale, tailored to our young people and communities, requiring deep relationships, and substantial resources. The global experience suggests that scale may be best achieved not by opening multiple facilities or campuses, but by developing best practice in our particular context, and sharing our knowledge with our peers frequently and generously. This is, of course, the essence of the Churchill Fellowships.

- **(affirmation of the MITS model)** MITS is a new model in Australia, and therefore it comes with no guarantee of success. However, my Fellowship is highly affirming of MITS and what we are doing. The we work on the same scale (Nunavut Sivuniksavut), applying similar methods and philosophies (Monument Academy, SEED, Prep for Prep), using cultural exploration and celebration (Hoop of Learning, Expanding the Circle, The Sámi Education Institute) as these world leaders in educational transition. While our Australian context is unique, and supporting young people brings its own challenges every day, we can feel confident that – by reference to global best practice – we are on the right track.
### Fellowship Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates (all 2017)</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31 Aug – 1 September</td>
<td>Auckland, New Zealand</td>
<td><strong>Auckland Grammar School</strong>&lt;br&gt;55 Mountain Road, Epsom, Auckland, New Zealand&lt;br&gt;<a href="http://www.ags.school.nz/">www.ags.school.nz/</a>  &lt;br&gt;<strong>InZone</strong>&lt;br&gt;99 Owens Road, Epsom, Auckland 1023&lt;br&gt;<a href="http://www.inzoneeducation.org.nz/">www.inzoneeducation.org.nz/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 – 5 September</td>
<td>San Francisco, California</td>
<td><strong>Zendesk</strong>&lt;br&gt;1019 Market Street, San Francisco, CA 94103, USA&lt;br&gt;<a href="http://www.neighborfoundation.org/">www.neighborfoundation.org/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 – 10 September</td>
<td>Vancouver, Canada</td>
<td><strong>First Nations House of Learning, The University of British Columbia</strong>&lt;br&gt;The Longhouse, 1985 West Mall, Vancouver BC, V6T 1Z2, Canada&lt;br&gt;<a href="http://www.aboriginal.ubc.ca/longhouse/fnhl/">www.aboriginal.ubc.ca/longhouse/fnhl/</a>  &lt;br&gt;<strong>Strategic Aboriginal Enrolment Initiatives, The University of British Columbia</strong>&lt;br&gt;2016 - 1874 East Mall, Vancouver BC, V6T 1Z1 Canada&lt;br&gt;<a href="https://facultystaff.students.ubc.ca/enrolment-services/strategic-aboriginal-enrolment-initiatives">https://facultystaff.students.ubc.ca/enrolment-services/strategic-aboriginal-enrolment-initiatives</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 – 13 September</td>
<td>Phoenix, Arizona</td>
<td><strong>Hoop of Learning, Maricopa Community Colleges</strong>&lt;br&gt;2411 W 14th Street, Tempe, AZ 85281, USA&lt;br&gt;<a href="https://asa.maricopa.edu/departments/office-of-student-affairs/programs/american-indian-outreach/programs/maricopa-hoop-of-learning">https://asa.maricopa.edu/departments/office-of-student-affairs/programs/american-indian-outreach/programs/maricopa-hoop-of-learning</a>  &lt;br&gt;<strong>American Indian Program, Scottsdale Community College</strong>&lt;br&gt;Student Center SC-123, 9000 East Chaparral Road, Scottsdale, AZ 85256, USA&lt;br&gt;<a href="http://www.scottsdalecc.edu/academics/american-indian-program">www.scottsdalecc.edu/academics/american-indian-program</a>  &lt;br&gt;<strong>American Indian Institute, Mesa Community College</strong>&lt;br&gt;Building 36N, 1833 West Southern Avenue, Mesa, AZ 85202, USA&lt;br&gt;<a href="http://www.mesacc.edu/students/american-indian-institute">www.mesacc.edu/students/american-indian-institute</a>  &lt;br&gt;<strong>Salt River High School</strong>&lt;br&gt;4827 N Country Club Dr, Scottsdale, AZ 85256, USA&lt;br&gt;<a href="http://www.srhs.srpmic.edu/">www.srhs.srpmic.edu/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 – 14 September</td>
<td>Flagstaff, Arizona</td>
<td><strong>Nizhoni Academy, Northern Arizona University</strong>&lt;br&gt;Cowden Hall, 1124 S Knoles Dr, Flagstaff, AZ 86001, USA&lt;br&gt;<a href="http://www.nau.edu/nizhoni-academy/">www.nau.edu/nizhoni-academy/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 – 17 September</td>
<td>Minneapolis, Minnesota</td>
<td><strong>Expanding the Circle, University of Minnesota</strong>&lt;br&gt;6 Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Drive SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA&lt;br&gt;<a href="http://www.etc.umn.edu/">www.etc.umn.edu/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dates (all 2017)</td>
<td>Place</td>
<td>Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 – 20 September</td>
<td>Ottawa, Canada</td>
<td><strong>Nunavut Sivuniksavut</strong>&lt;br&gt;450 Rideau Street #201, Ottawa, ON K1N 5Z4, Canada&lt;br&gt;&lt;a&gt;www.nunavuitsivuniksavut.ca/&lt;/a&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 – 28 September</td>
<td>New York, New York</td>
<td><strong>Prep for Prep</strong>&lt;br&gt;328 W 71st Street, New York, NY 10023, USA&lt;br&gt;&lt;a&gt;www.prepforprep.org/&lt;/a&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 Sept – 4 October</td>
<td>London, United Kingdom&lt;br&gt;Helsinki, Finland</td>
<td>Rest weekend and layover days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 – 7 October</td>
<td>Inari, Finland</td>
<td><strong>The Sami Education Institute</strong>&lt;br&gt;Saameliaisalueen koulutuskeskus, Menesjarventie 4, 99870 Inari, Sápmi, Finland&lt;br&gt;&lt;a&gt;www.sogsakk.fi/&lt;/a&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Jack Brockhoff Foundation Churchill Fellowship to investigate programs that support the transition of young Indigenous or disadvantaged people to mainstream education.

Photos

Visiting the Museum of Anthropology at University of British Colombia in Vancouver, Canada

A Minnesota Golden Gophers game after my breakfast with Anna Ross and Jean Echternacht in Minneapolis, MN

With Morley Hanson at Nunavut Sivuniksavut in Ottawa, Canada

With Anna Scudiero at Monument Academy in Washington, D.C.

Learning about Sámi handicrafts from Sámi Education Institute student Sunná in Inari, Finland

On the banks of the Juutuanjoki with my fiancée Rhi, neighbouring the Sámi Education Institute in Inari, Finland
5 **Background and Purpose**

5.1 **Background**

I am the founding Executive Director of the Melbourne Indigenous Transition School, located in Richmond, Melbourne, Australia.

MITS is a residential transition school for Indigenous students from remote and regional communities which opened to its first students in January 2016. Each year, 22 boys and girls at Year 7 come to MITS for one year. MITS believes that wellbeing and cultural strength are central to the continuing success of its students and tailors its programs to reflect this philosophy. We aim to enable students who – without MITS – would not be able to make the challenging step directly from their remote or regional home community into a Melbourne school. Most of our students come from very remote communities in the Northern Territory, and a smaller number come from Victorian regional communities. Most speak English as an additional language or dialect.

After a year of accelerated academic learning, tailored wellbeing support, and orientation to life in Melbourne, our students move onto scholarships at some of Melbourne’s best schools to continue their secondary schooling through to Year 12. MITS is responsible for identifying suitable Partner Schools, matching students to the best Partner School for them, and securing scholarships at those Partner Schools. Once our students graduate from MITS, we remain involved, providing support to our graduates, their Partner Schools, the Melbourne families or boarding schools who host them and their families back home.

Our students explore pathways that are both academic and vocational, in Melbourne and at home. We encourage our students to realise their own version of success, articulating their dreams and aspirations, setting goals and working hard to achieve them.

MITS’s classrooms are based inside the Richmond Football Club, neighbouring the Club’s Korin Gamadji Institute. Our Boarding House is based in a nearby heritage building named Lockington.

MITS is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee and is a specialist school registered with the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority. It is governed by a Board of Directors and managed by a team of specialist teaching, boarding and administration staff.

5.2 **Purpose**

Between 2008 and 2015, while MITS was in its development phase, my fellow Directors and I spent a great deal of time researching best practice across Australia. As a part of this research, we consulted widely with Community Elders, parents, and educational experts who were already working to enable and empower Indigenous students. This research spanned the breadth of the Australian practice at that time: from AFL Cape York House in Cairns, to the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation in Sydney, from the Wiltja Residence in Adelaide, to Yalari based out of Brisbane.

Our consultations with educational leaders across Australia was instrumental to the development of the MITS model, and the generosity of those we consulted with ensured that we commenced with a robust program which reflected what our families and students wanted.

Having successfully opened MITS in January 2016, we continued to learn from and share with our peers in the Australian context. At the same time, we started to explore, in greater detail, the global experience of supporting young Indigenous people to access mainstream education. Some organisations – such as Prep for Prep in New York – had provided valuable examples of successful transition programs while we were in development. Others – such as Nunavut Sivuniksavut in Ottawa – became known to us as we searched for global analogies to our own work.

The purpose of this Fellowship was to build on our national consultations and research, to seek a global perspective on the transition of young Indigenous people (or, where that was not possible or relevant, young people experiencing some form of disadvantage). The ambition was that this research would validate our work to date at MITS, provide us with further insights to enhance our practice which we might share with our Australian peers, and contribute to a global community of educators discussing and exploring our experience and expertise working with young people.
6 **Fellowship visits and key learnings**

6.1 **A note on this report**

As you can imagine, over the course of five weeks and dozens of meetings, I gained an enormous amount of knowledge and insight from the people and organisations who so generously hosted me. It would never be possible to summarise all of that information in this report.

Moreover, if you’ve found yourself reading this report, you likely work in somewhere within the broad sphere we might call “Indigenous education”, and you’re probably overstretched and time-poor. So, I have aimed to keep this report pithy and to-the-point. For it to be read and applied – the ultimate purposes of the Churchill Fellowships – it must be so. Each visit will be summarised with a short description of the organisation (information which is in itself instructive), followed by at most a few key take-aways from that organisation.

If you would like to know more about a particular section of this report, please do be in touch: I would be delighted to elaborate, discuss and explore my experiences with you in more detail.

6.2 **InZone and Auckland Grammar School – Auckland, New Zealand**

(a) **About InZone and Auckland Grammar School**

Established in 2011, InZone Education Foundation (“InZone”) aims to enhance the educational outcomes of Maori and Pasifika young by enabling them to access high performing state schools by establishing boarding houses within the school zones. The students attend high-performing local schools: Auckland Grammar School for boys and Epsom Girls Grammar for girls. Without InZone, its students would not be able to attend the local schools, as they exist within affluent and strictly zoned school catchment areas. So, like MITS, it aims to break down barriers to accessing a great education.

Also like to MITS, InZone believes that success at school about more than just the school: it’s about the environment in which students live, the support it provides and the values that are promoted within that environment. They strive “to create a supportive, whanau [“extended family”] orientated and culturally appropriate environment” that sets students up for success.

In addition to boarding facilities, InZone provides its students with support including goal setting, career advice, academic tutoring, mentorship, training in financial literacy and public speaking, sports, cultural, and life skills, pastoral care and visits from inspirational speakers.

During my time in Auckland I visited Auckland Grammar School, meeting with Deputy Headmaster Peter Morton, and the InZone boys’ house, meeting with Executive Chairperson Deborah George.

(b) **Key learnings: To belong, you must have a critical mass**

A sense of belonging

The overarching lesson of my Fellowship – that in order for young people to transition successfully into a new educational environment they must feel that they belong in that environment – was clear from my first visits, to InZone and Auckland Grammar.

Both Deborah and Peter talked of the critical mass of Maori and Pasifika students that InZone had allowed them to achieve: Maori and Pasifika boys make up 9% of all students at Auckland Grammar, and 100% of all students at InZone. By contrast, at some of our Partner Schools in Melbourne, a MITS graduates may be one of only two or three Indigenous students in the whole school. Both we at MITS and our Partner Schools share an ambition to increase the number of Indigenous students in Partner Schools. In the words of Brad, a Maori boarding staff member at InZone, the InZone boys “can stand proud in their school”.

Teaching staff are encouraged to have an involvement with the boys outside of school, to cement relationships of trust and understanding which will further foster a sense of belonging. A dedicated wellbeing support works with Maori and Pasifika boys, but it is worth noting that – unlike our experience
in Australia – neither Peter nor Deborah felt that the InZone boys had experienced prior trauma at a rate higher than their non-InZone peers.

Shared pride in culture

At Auckland Grammar, Maori and Pasifika boys are mentored by staff, and the school has appointed a Head of Maori language (following calls from InZone parents), who oversees the pairing of senior and junior boys to ensure belonging and cultural wellbeing for those younger boys. Maori and Pasifika culture can be seen, heard and felt throughout the school: all boys – regardless of their cultural background – share a pride in it, and feel a responsibility for it. Maori and Pasifika boys benefit from being at Auckland Grammar, and Auckland Grammar benefits from having the boys in their community.

This shared approach to culture offers a great model for us in Australia: we must encourage all our young people – Indigenous and non-Indigenous – to understand, share in, and celebrate our Indigenous cultures.

Practical lessons

As a peer organisation operating a model with many similarities with MITS, I really enjoyed discussing the day-to-day challenges of running InZone with Deborah. So many are mirrored at MITS.

Consistent parent engagement can be a real issue – communication is often patchy, contact details often change. Staffing is a challenge, but we both felt blessed with many passionate and committed staff. (In part due to the InZone boys being older, MITS has a significantly higher staff-student ratio.) We must both fundraise significant amounts to run our programs, meaning future funding is never certain. Funerals are a constant and can prove disruptive for the InZone boys and their school progression. But, for both of us, they are so important. Again, in Brad’s words: “When you embrace culture, you have to embrace all of it.”

I will really look forward to staying in touch with the InZone staff into the future, to share learnings, challenges, and seek advice from their own wonderful experience.

6.3 Zendesk – San Francisco, California, USA

The Zendesk Neighbor Foundation is a long-term supporter of MITS. Headquartered in San Francisco, it aims to engage with, and provide support to, the local communities in cities where Zendesk has an office. The Foundation focuses particularly on neighbourhood renewal and improvement by (amongst other things) addressing poverty, improving education and improving technical literacy.

Over the past two years Zendesk has supported a number of innovative projects at MITS, including having its staff host coding lessons for our students. I met with Kelly Salance, Zendesk’s Corporate Social Responsibility Program and Content Manager.

While not formally a part of my Fellowship, my visit to Zendesk highlights our commitment at MITS to taking every opportunity to engage with our community and say thank you to our supporters.

6.4 University of British Colombia – Vancouver, Canada

(a) About the First Nations House of Learning and Strategic Aboriginal Enrolment Initiatives

The First Nations House of Learning (“FNHL”) is located in the First Nations Longhouse (the “Longhouse”) on the University of British Columbia’s Vancouver campus. Opened in 1993, the Longhouse reflects the architectural traditions of the Northwest Coast: a beautiful building constructed from immense spans of local timber, with high vaulted ceilings and walls filled with local Aboriginal art. It is a centre for Aboriginal students to study, socialise, and access tutoring, counselling and other support.

FNHL itself organises all Longhouse-based student services, provides a point of contact for Aboriginal students and communities, and leads strategic planning of University of British Columbia (“UBC”) Aboriginal initiatives. In particular, FNHL leads the coordination of the UBC Aboriginal Strategic Plan: a
document forged in 2008. Aboriginal Engagement – which is detailed under the Aboriginal Strategic Plan – forms one of six strategic pillars at UBC as a whole.

During my visit I met with Linc Kesler, Director of the FNHL and Senior Advisor to the UBC President on Aboriginal Affairs, Debra Martel, Associate Director, FNHL, and Kevin Ward, Research and Communications Officer. I also met with Meika Taylor, Associate Director of Strategic Aboriginal Enrolment Initiative in Enrolment Services.

(b) Key learnings: “How are Indigenous students experiencing this institution”

**Belonging: it’s about the vibe**

My conversations on belonging continued at UBC. Linc and Debra explained how UBC had – through its Strategic Plan – committed in 2008 to making itself a safer, more welcoming place for Indigenous students. This required the university to consider, in Linc's words:

> “How are Indigenous students experiencing this institution? Are they gritting their teeth through their degrees? Is there a mismatch between how they view themselves, and what the institution offers them?”

Linc, Debra and Kevin discussed how, through targeted efforts – increasing Indigenous student service roles; creating safe spaces; the development of an Indigenous culture curriculum that better informs all students; and a commitment to Indigenous students at every level of the University – today, the campus “feels” different to pre-2008. In the Australian lexicon, perhaps we could describe it as “the vibe”.

Indigenous students – who had previously expressed concerns of being assimilated by the university experience and of wondering “Should I be here at all?” – described a change in the way university content was taught. The University and its schools worked hard to avoid historical traps, and to ensure that content was taught from multiple perspectives. Rather than making students feel “assimilated” by Western knowledge and ways of thinking, this new approach allowed students to ask “What does it mean to me as an Indigenous person now that I know these things?”

**Empowering non-Indigenous students to make UBC safer for Indigenous students**

For UBC, building a sense of belonging for Indigenous students also required the University to consider how it could encourage non-Indigenous students to know their Indigenous peers better. One successful initiative was the development of a guide called *Indigenous Peoples: Language Guidelines*.

The guide was developed in response to calls from non-Indigenous students for assistance in navigating the sometimes complex or historically-loaded language of Indigenous Canada. In the two years since its publication, FNHL staff say that it has empowered both non-Indigenous and Indigenous students to share more and make the campus an increasingly culturally safe place.

**The changing role of the Longhouse – from crisis manager to thought leader**

Linc talked of the early years of the Longhouse, and how its role has changed. This discussion was hugely relevant to MITS, and how our own role with our students and Partner Schools may change in the coming years.

In its early years, the Longhouse became a “point of refuge” for Indigenous students at UBC. With a still-young strategic focus on Indigenous inclusion at the University, many University staff felt ill-qualified to assist Indigenous students across a range of services: careers, wellbeing and academic staff all, to some degree, referred Indigenous students to the Longhouse for assistance. The Longhouse, whilst culturally safe, did not have the resources of expertise to manage many of the issues that were presenting to them. In the words of one Indigenous academic, it risked becoming “a dumping ground”. But, in the formational years of UBC’s Indigenous commitment, it provided a critical triage service to students and staff alike.

As years passed, and UBC maintained its commitment to its Aboriginal Strategic Plan, slowly staff across the University grew their skills and expertise working with Indigenous students. Service delivery
started to return to the correct point of delivery: staff felt the confidence to provide services, and Indigenous students felt the cultural safety to receive them.

This presented, at first, something of an identity crisis for the Longhouse: what would be its purpose in the future? In fact, it liberated the Longhouse and its staff. Freed from acting as a “point of refuge”, and having earned the respect of university staff and Indigenous students through those formational years, FNHL was able to become a thought-leader in Indigenous culture and identity. FNHL was able to review, and refine the implementation of, the UBS Aboriginal Strategic Plan. It was able to undertake projects like the Language Guidelines. It has transformed from front-line service provider to experienced and respected though-leader.

**Provide the space, and culture will happen**

I asked the FNHL staff and Meika if they run cultural programs for students at UBC. Their answer was that, broadly, they did not. With over 1500 Indigenous students from 177 communities at the time of my visit, there was a shared view that in order to be effective, cultural initiatives must be student driven. In their view, students (who are much older than our MITS students) don’t need cultural programs – they simply need the space for culture to happen. This is what the Longhouse provides today. It is also inspiring the establishment of new “Aboriginal Gathering Places” where culture can happen and grow.

The recent history of the Longhouse is instructive for MITS, and provides a roadmap for our future. In our early years we have been, and will continue to be, a point to refuge for graduate students from time to time. We seek, now and in the future, to become a respected thought-leader in our community, a reputation forged through our experience and having done “the hard yards”. And, we already see that MITS is a place of immense cultural practice for our graduates, without us delivering any specific cultural programs to them through MITS. As our Pathways Program grows in the coming years, we will develop a holistic program to support our MITS graduates in Melbourne. As we develop this program, we must be mindful to reserve the time, and the space, to allow students to let culture happen for themselves.

### 6.5 Maricopa Community Colleges – Phoenix, Arizona, USA

**About Hoop of Learning at Maricopa Community Colleges**

The Maricopa Hoop of Learning program is an early high school-to-college bridge program developed by the Maricopa County Community College District (“Maricopa”), and delivered in all 10 Maricopa Community Colleges across greater Phoenix.

Hoop of Learning (“Hoop”) aims to reduce the academic, economic and cultural barriers that American Indians may face in aspiring to transition from high school to college. Its mission is “to encourage, enable, and create the conditions that empower American Indian students to complete high school and transition successfully to higher education”.

The basic philosophy of the program replicates the “Circle of Life” philosophy long practiced by American Indian people of the North and South America. It strives to make students feel a sense of belonging on Maricopa campuses before they have left high school, so that they can step with confidence onto the college campuses as high-school graduates. Once students have enrolled at a Maricopa college, they can earn university credits and transfer to a state university degree – another transitional step.

Students who enrol in Hoop receive a scholarship that covers tuition fees, books, transport, workshops and other activities. Cultural identity and strength are central to Hoop, and students benefit from cultural courses and workshops, field trips and introductions to American Indian leaders and organisations.

Hoop grew out of Maricopa’s ambition to increase high school retention and graduation, college enrolment and college graduation for Indian American students. Additionally, the College wanted to enhance its American Indian culturally relevant curriculum and increase American Indian participation at its Colleges. This would only be achieved by ensuring that a greater number of American Indian students had the skills, confidence and cultural belonging to be successful on campus.
More broadly, Hoop enables Maricopa to strengthen its external collaboration by establishing and continuing partnerships with American Indian communities, school districts, and other agencies. This is particularly important given Maricopa shares its land with its communities: Scottsdale Community College is located entirely on Federally recognised Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community land (land also shared with Salt River High School, which I visited during my days at Maricopa).

I was generously hosted by Winona Thirion, Director of American Indian Outreach Programs, who arranged an enormous number of visits, introductions, and a lunch with Mesa Community College faculty at which I presented on MITS. I was also hosted by Gerard Begay, Student Service Specialist at Maricopa, and Jim Larney, Director of the American Indian Institute at Mesa Community College.

(b) Key learnings: high expectations, early starts and extension opportunities

My days with Maricopa were highly experiential. Formal interviews and note taking gave way to classroom visits, many conversations, and the osmotic experience of spending time – at the invitation of Native American people – on a number of Indian Reservations and visiting American Indian-run organisations.

Encourage extension rather than remediation

Through Maricopa’s programs for Native American students – the Junior ACE summer enrichment program from Grades 5 to 8, Hoop of Learning for Native American students from Grades 9 to 12, the Dual Enrolment program which enables high school students to earn college credits – each step is based on an early start and extending wherever possible. Where many programs for American Indian students are remedial in nature, seeking to – in the Australian language – “close the gap”, Maricopa’s programs were noticeably aspirational and empowering of their students.

Two students I spoke with at Scottsdale Community College talked about how much they valued the high expectations that were placed on them at college. This provided a point of difference to so much of their prior experience and gave them the confidence to believe that they could succeed at college and beyond. Both attended Scottsdale through the Hoop program and continued as college students. One said that her positive experience of education, and in particular education about her own culture, had caused her to decide that she wanted to work for her tribe, rather than leave her reservation after college.

Enabling access

The community college system, and in particular Maricopa’s university transfer programs (which I believe are replicated at other community colleges) enable access for students who may not have otherwise been able to attend university, including Native American students. Students can undertake two years of study at a Maricopa college, then transfer to any of the three Arizona state universities, taking college credits with them.

Transfer programs like this are a genuine enabler for disadvantaged and underrepresented students. The community college environment is highly accessible for first generation post-secondary students. With programs that reflect the upper-secondary experience in their early stages, before progressing to a more typical post-secondary experience, community colleges allows students to transition gradually, over time, breaking down barriers to accessing university, and the shock that can occur for new students. One of the students I spoke with at Scottsdale planned to transfer to Arizona State University, having started her educational pathway many years earlier in Hoop.

6.6 Northern Arizona University – Flagstaff, Arizona, USA

(a) About Nizhoni Academy at Northern Arizona University

The Nizhoni Academy at Northern Arizona University (“NAU”) is a pre-college enrichment program for Native American High School students. It is designed to strengthen their academic skills, to increase their high school retention through to graduation, and to enable them to confidently enter post-secondary education.
The Academy comprises an annual six week academic and residential program held on the campus of NAU in Flagstaff, Arizona. Nizhoni emphasizes rigorous STEM teaching, a clear understanding of the demands of college studies, and the high academic competency necessary to be a successful student in post-secondary education.

The ultimate mission of the Academy, which was established in 1984, is to empower students to develop academic, emotional, interpersonal, citizenship, leadership and life-long learning skills to achieve personal growth and life success. Students learn to balance their academic expectations and their community responsibilities.

I met with Princess Benally, Assistant Director, Talent Search & Nizhoni Academy to discuss Nizhoni.

(b) “The science of Indigenous knowledge”

The power of Nizhoni is its acknowledgment that Indigenous knowledge – in this case the knowledge of Navajo and Hopi people – is complex, vast, and at its core, fundamentally scientific. This recognition enables the Nizhoni coordinators to use a student’s prior knowledge to contextualise and make familiar an otherwise foreign environment: university.

Princess spoke of how STEM reflects traditional Navajo and Hopi values and views, saying, “though Nizhoni, it’s easy to see students in the harder sciences”. Students study topics using traditional concepts. For example, climate change is considered through it’s impact on “the three sisters” grown, harvested and eaten by Navajo people: corn, beans and squash.

6.7 University of Minnesota – Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

(a) About Expanding the Circle

Expanding the Circle (“ETC”) is a tailored curriculum developed at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. The curriculum, which is designed to be delivered alongside a mainstream high school curriculum, offers students culturally relevant activities that facilitate the successful transition from high school to postsecondary experiences for American Indian students. The curriculum is designed to help young people explore who they are, what skills they need, and what their options are for life after high school. Lessons are designed for use by teachers as well as elders, community members, or other professionals who may work with American Indian young people.

The curriculum is based on the logic that American Indian students who prepare for the transition to postsecondary education with a clear understanding of themselves and their mental, physical, spiritual, emotional selves are more likely to make this transition successfully. In addition, ETC upskills students with the ability to set goals, organise themselves, communicate, self-advocate, problem solve, and work in teams.

ETC has been developed over some 20 years under the leadership of Jean Echternacht, with whom I met at the University of Minnesota. At the time of my visit Jean had recently retired, but nevertheless she generously returned to campus to meet with me and share her work on ETC.

(b) Key learnings: “We intentionally include mistakes, because they always have mistakes in them!”

When Jean set about developing ETC, she wanted to address a perplexing problem. The graduation rates for Native American students in Minnesota were the second highest in the USA. But, the transition rates from high school to college to school were very low. Many Native American students had never had a family member attend university, historical oppression and discouragement meant that there was not a culture of university-going, and Native American students reported feeling that they didn’t belong on campuses.

The ETC curriculum is encourages formative personal reflection – encouraging students to understand themselves and their cultural identities better – whilst also being terrifically practical. In the first unit – “Discovery” – students interview their Elders on site at their schools, learning their heritage, recording their histories and mapping their family. (Jean said many Elders commented that this activity was the first time they had felt welcomed and safe on a school campus.) This self-exploration is paired with a
practical outcome: students must identify a key support or champion from their network, who they can target for support in the future.

The second unit – “The Framework” – builds the students’ ability to self-advocate as young Native American people and consolidates organisational, study and communication skills. “The Choice” is the third unit and is again wonderfully practical. Students must learn to read and interpret a sample university subject syllabus, working out the contact hours, readings, assessments and so on. The syllabus is littered with occasional errors intentionally, because, in Jean’s experience, “they always have mistakes in them!”

Throughout the ETC curriculum, students develop their personal portfolio. Again, this has dual purposes. It presents the student’s own reflection on themselves: their community, their cultural identity, their interests and aspirations. It also serves as a great base for the many personal essays that they will have to write as they apply for university positions at the end of school.

While it relates to Native American culture and was designed with Native American students in mind, the ETC curriculum has the potential to be very useful as we build a Pathways Program for our MITS students from Years 8 – 10. Jean was generous enough to gift me a copy of the curriculum, which I’m excited to apply to the Australian context with my MITS colleagues.

(c) About Minneapolis Public Schools Indian Education

Minneapolis Public Schools Indian Education ("Indian Education") provides services to Native students enrolled in the Minneapolis Public Schools system. Its work includes:

- **(family involvement)** providing resources to Native families and engagement opportunities throughout the school year, including “parent circles”, parent trainings and programs including Connecting Parents to Educational Opportunities;

- **(student advocacy)** if a Native student is experiencing a problem at their school, working with the student, their family and their school to resolve the issue;

- **(teacher support)** providing professional development opportunities to teachers to “help them become more familiar with the best ways for Native students to learn”. It is also responsible for the development of culturally relevant and engaging curriculum and materials for use in schools; and

- **(college readiness)** working with Native students on college planning steps, personal awareness an academic preparedness through meetings, college field trips, assisting with financial aid and the tribal enrolment process.

Indian Education is led by Anna Ross, Director of Minneapolis Public Schools Indian Education. I met with Anna and Jean for a classic mid-western brunch at the famous Hell’s Kitchen in Downtown Minneapolis.

(d) Key learnings: Giving voice and accountability

Anna explained that Indian education in Minneapolis fundamentally changed as a result of a Memorandum of Understanding between the school district and the Metro Urban Indian Directors Group. They key to this MOU is that it gives voice and accountability to both parties, and makes the school district an ally of the Indian community, where previously they were seen as an adversary.

The MOU has had a huge impact on Indian education in Minnesota. Native American high school graduation has doubled since signing, from 17% to 34%. Meetings with parents to discuss low school attendance – previously held in culturally unsafe and intimidating courthouses – are now held at the student’s school, with an Elder in attendance to support the family and explain the importance of good school attendance. Indigenous content is mandated in local curricula, and a “smudge” – the ceremonial burning of medicines akin, perhaps, to a smoking ceremony in the Aboriginal Australian practice – is held before every meeting of Native American parents.
I particularly liked an initiative that Anna described for Native American Family Involvement Day. A Youth Council of Native American high school students is charged with responsibility for reviewing applications for funding for activities to mark the day, choosing the winning applicants, and granting them funds provided by Minneapolis Public Schools.

The Minneapolis Public Schools experience provides a wonderful example of working together with local Indigenous communities to improve outcomes for their children at school. At MITS, while we’ve always been guided by our parents and communities, we can strive to do more.

6.8 Nunavut Sivuniksavut – Ottawa, Canada

(a) About Nunavut Sivuniksavut (NS)

The Nunavut Sivuniksavut (“NS”) program began in 1985, at a time when Inuit were negotiating a land claims agreement for their lands in what was then known as the Northwest Territories. These negotiations spanned almost two decades, and culminated in the signing of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA) in 1993.

NS was originally founded to train fieldworkers, who could return to their communities to keep people informed about progress in the land claims negotiations. Over time, it evolved into a much broader educational experience, in response to the expressed needs of the young Inuit who attended. Its name – Nunavut Sivuniksavut – means “our land is our future”.

NS offers two one-year-long Certificate programs (formalised through an arrangement with the local Algonquin College): Inuit Studies (first year); and Advanced Inuit Studies (second year). Students study Inuit history, land claims, Inuit organizations and issues, and Inuit culture and language. By living away from home for the year, they also develop the life skills needed to prepare for entry into the workforce back home, or for further post-secondary studies. Throughout their studies, they also engage with Ottawa Government and non-government bodies, preparing them to become leaders who can advocate on behalf of their communities.

NS is what Inuit would call a “silattuqsarvik” (Inuktitut for “a place and time to become wise”), where, through unique cultural and academic learning experiences, they develop the knowledge and skills to contribute to the building of Nunavut. Fittingly, it has been led, for almost three decades, by two extraordinarily wise people: Morley Hanson and Murray Angus. Morley and Murray gave their time and experience generously while I was there.

The program began with two instructors and an enrolment of 10 students. By the time of my visit in 2017, it had grown to over 50 students across two year levels, six full-time instructors, one full-time social worker, plus several, part-time lecturers and support workers. Very interestingly, Morley and Murray said that, in their view, the ideal size for a year group was 22 students: the exact number that we have each year at MITS.

(b) Key learnings: “Learning to manage our relationship with a dominant society”

As an organisation, Nunavut Sivuniksavut resonated with me more than any other I visited. I found the philosophy, deep consideration, leadership (at both staff and student levels), and delivery of the program to be outstanding, and inspiring.

Cultural strength, understanding and reflection

NS, its staff and students articulated beautifully their organisation’s reason for being. It is not about becoming “whitewashed”, about leaving home behind or about succumbing to Western ways. In Murray’s words, it is about empowering the NS students “to manage [their] relationship with a dominant society”, to benefit themselves, their families, their communities and their culture. This resonated deeply with me: MITS aims to do the same.

Students said that the cultural content of their coursework enabled them to “walk with confidence” off their county and on it. Murray explained that it allows them to answer the question of “How do we say who we are?” The other aspects of their study – land claims history, government engagement, politics – gives them the “toolkit” to understand and exercise their rights as Nunavut people. The students I met
all were critical thinkers, well equipped to become leaders for their people. Hearteningly, a number remarked on how they wished they’d had something like MITS as 12 and 13 year olds!

**Understanding your whole self**

A number of students talked with me about their study of the “Marginal Man Theory”: that a person suspended between two cultures may struggle to establish his or her identity. The students – themselves minorities from another place – respectfully disagreed with this theory. In the words of one, “you need to step outside your own world to understand it”. At NS, that cultural exploration that is so necessary for debunking the Marginal Man Theory is used (as at ETC or Hoop) as a “complement” to academic learning.

Like our own MITS students, despite their excellence, the NS students are sometimes very challenged by life circumstances. Direct and intergenerational trauma is common; the first high school in Nunavut only opened in the early 1970s, and so many families have felt excluded from education, or have been forced to leave their country to pursue it. A trauma therapist works at NS two days per week. On how to address trauma, she said “nothing heals trauma like creating something”, and she applied this theory in her lessons with students.

**Design principles for successful transition**

In 2002, after 16 years of success, the NS leaders developed a very concise overview of the reasons, in their view, for that success. It was titled “The 7 Principles underlying the design of a successful transition-year program for Inuit youth from Nunavut”. Those principles were:

1. **acknowledge the full range of student needs**: they may be emotional, social, financial and material, in addition to academic;

2. **maximise opportunities for relationships** between students, and between students and staff. The NS experience shows having one small peer group (like MITS) anchors students in times of stress and allows staff to be responsive to students’ needs;

3. the effectiveness of the educational experience will flow from the quality of staff relationships with students. **Allowing staff the flexibility to take on a variety of duties** ensures continuity of attention and deeper relationships;

4. **curriculum material that is relevant to the students’ own collective experience** is a powerful inducement to continuing study;

5. **affirm the students’ individual and collective points of view**: give up the pretence of academic objectivity and reinforce the legitimacy of each student’s own experience;

6. **integrate skill development with content**, combining the compelling with the necessary; and

7. **broaden the measures of success** by looking beyond academic success only. Engaged students will always learn, regardless of the immediate academic outcome.

I’ve reflected on these principles often since returning from my Fellowship. At MITS, we do all of them in some way, although often without turning our minds to them. Some we do very well, others we can improve. The principles are so relevant to our own work at MITS, and across Australia.

### 6.9 Monument Academy and The Seed Foundation – Washington, D.C., USA

(a) **About Monument Academy**

Monument Academy (“Monument”) is a weekday boarding school for students in Washington, D.C. The Academy opened in 2016 and at the time of my visit was open to Grades 5 to 7, expanding through Grades 8 and 9 in 2018. Ultimately, it will grow to a Grade 5 to 12 school.

Monument Academy was established to provide students, particularly those in the foster care system, with the academic, social, emotional, and life skills to be successful in college, career, and community,
and to create an outstanding school that attracts, supports, and retains exceptional and caring people. Through its weekday boarding program, students are provided with a safe and supportive environment at Monument during school weeks, and return home to their families (all of whom live in neighbouring suburbs) for weekends.

Monument’s educational philosophy is rooted in a belief that “all students have the capacity to succeed at high academic levels and experience positive life outcomes. While many students may have been subject to adverse childhood experiences, these events do not define who they are or predetermine their trajectories.” The school is designed with an emphasis on personalized learning, experience-based learning, and social-emotional wellbeing to ensure that students with disabilities or who speak English as an additional language or dialect will benefit.

The day before my visit to Monument a major safety incident occurred which required the school to go into “Safety Mode”, with all activity in the school contained and limited disruptions. However, I was fortunate to visit with Shane Mulhern, President, and Anna Scudiero, Development Assistant.

(b) Key learnings: “There’s no economy of scale in this space”

Monument Academy is addressing extreme disadvantage in its community. 85% of its students are in the child welfare system. They are half as likely to graduate from school as other students in D.C. And they have, without intervention, a 2% chance of graduating from college. They’re students with real needs, which are not being addressed by the broader education system.

Monument takes the approach of a teaching hospital. Students are arranged into small classes of only 10 students, and each class has a teacher and a wellbeing worker. In boarding, the students live in small “apartments” of at most 12 students (very similar in size to MITS’s 11-student boys’ and girls’ boarding houses). Each apartment is run by a staff member, couple or small family, and apartments are encouraged to cook and eat together and share “family time”.

Its resourcing is compelling: it has 70 staff for 65 students, and in the view of Shane Mulhern, “there’s no economy of scale in this space”. Shane believes that if the school grew to 100 students, they’d need just as many staff. If they were smaller, they wouldn’t reduce staff all that much.

This is affirming for us at MITS: we have 15 FTE staff for 22 students – by mainstream standards heavily resourced, but by Monument standards quite lean – and we address, at times, a similar range of challenges. At MITS, we’re often asked when we are going to grow: as a small school of 22 students, growth would seem an obvious ambition. While we are very keen to share our know-how and experience with others, we don’t currently have an ambition to grow, because we believe in the effectiveness of our scale. Monument’s experience affirms this view.

(c) About the SEED Foundation

The SEED Foundation (“SEED”) is a network of public, college-preparatory boarding schools designed for students who need a 24-hour learning environment to achieve their full potential: the only network of its kind in the USA. Its vision is, over time, “to build a community of support that empowers students to own their educational journeys and succeed in college and beyond”, and it seeks to build strong, determined and self-aware students.

Like MITS, SEED acknowledges that its students’ journeys continue long after their graduation day, and SEED continues to play a part in those journeys. From their senior year through their college graduation, every SEED graduate has a staff member dedicated to their continuing success through to SEED’s College Transition and Success program.

SEED serves 900 students from Grade 6 to Grade 12 across three campuses in D.C., Maryland, and Miami. 80% of its students are the first generation of their family to be college-bound.

90% of SEED students graduate high school (compared with an average 70% for non-SEED low income students, and 64% enrol in college (compared with an average of 35% for non-SEED low-income students). It boasts 450 alumni across the USA, and those alumni graduate from college at 3.5 times the rate of other low-income, first-generation students who enrol at college.
I found SEED’s beliefs to be particularly interesting. I will discuss a number of these in my key learnings below:

1. **(college-bound culture)** Providing students with the academic, organizational, and life skills that enable them to attend and graduate from college.

2. **(a 24-hour learning environment)** Committing to keep every student safe and secure, to use the gift of time, and to provide fulfilling academic and life experiences.

3. **(a positive culture of high expectations)** Students and staff are expected to relentlessly pursue excellence and to consistently exhibit the SEED core values.

4. **(fostering a love of learning)** SEED helps each student find his or her passion through academics, enrichment programs, social/emotional supports, and authentic experiences.

5. **(individual student support)** SEED commits to targeted student support and coordinated communication between students, parents and practitioners.

6. **(focus on data and continuous improvement)** Assessments and data analysis are used to show students their own progress and to keep their staff focused and accountable.

7. **(recruiting and nurturing outstanding educators)** SEED commits to hiring exceptional staff, and to supporting them so that they can better guide the achievement and success of SEED students.

8. **(family and school partnership)** SEED collaborates with families to support the success of SEED students.

9. **(community relationships)** Relationships with community organizations enhance the college readiness process for SEED students.

(d) **Key learnings: No data without a story, no story without data**

**Family and school partnership**

We know that family engagement is critical in the success of our students. SEED articulates this in its beliefs, and demonstrates it through its outcomes. I observed a staff training session, in which academic and administrative staff were being trained to undertake visits to students’ homes: a shared responsibility of all staff at SEED. The presenter used a compelling statistic: of students whose homes were visited at least twice in the once year, by the same staff member, 100% returned the school the following year.

Family are made a part of their students’ education at SEED. The schools connects parents to services, like the YWCA, and as SEED speaks with its students about their college aspirations, they also speak with families. They recognise that many of their parents may not have themselves attended university.

**Focus on data and continuous improvement**

SEED believes that data is critical to keep students on-task and to keep teachers focussed on achieving academic outcomes for their students. It employs – impressively – two full-time data analysts to gather, interpret and make recommendations from vast amounts of student outcomes data relating to student academic and wellbeing outcomes. They recognise that data alone only tells part of the story: “There’s no data without a story, and no story without data”.

**College-bound culture**

Students are encouraged with consistently high expectations and an attitude that assumes they will be college-bound. This is noticeable throughout the campus: dorms are named after American universities and for senior year students, the dorms are styled to look and feel like university dorms, to put students in the mindset of, and expose them to the experience of, a university student. Each student receives a
designated counsellor from SEED’s College Transition and Success team, who works with the student as they enter college and throughout their college years. The CTS team builds relationships between families, SEED teachers and counsellors, and college advisors.

This approach pays off: against an average of only 11% of low-income, first-generation student who enrol in university, 65% of all SEED graduates have, or are currently completing, a university degree in one of SEED’s recommended colleges.

6.10 Prep for Prep, New York, New York, USA

(a) About Prep for Prep

Prep for Prep ("Prep") assists disadvantaged students of colour to enrol and thrive in independent schools in New York City and boarding schools across Northeast USA (the equivalent of MITS’s Partner Schools). To ensure their students’ success at their schools, Prep prepares them in advance of their placement through an intensive 14-month academic program, which runs full-time in school holidays, and twice a week during school terms, after school and on Saturday mornings.

Throughout their educational journey, Prep for Prep supports its students’ development by providing academic and social guidance, leadership development opportunities, college guidance, and undergraduate support. Its mission is to develop “ethical and effective leaders who reflect [its] diverse society for the enduring benefit of all”.

Founded by South Bronx school teacher Gary Simons with the support of Columbia University’s Teachers College, Prep for Prep opened its doors in 1978 with 25 students and three teachers. Eleven independent schools committed places in their seventh-grade classes. Today, nearly 80 schools enrol over 700 Prep students each year, and its broader community includes over 4,500 students and alumni.

The “Prep Journey” is a comprehensive program that supports students for many years on their educational journey. It spans:

- **(admissions)** A comprehensive admissions process that sees over 4000 students from 750 schools apply for only 175 positions.

- **(preparation)** The “cornerstone” of Prep – the 14-month preparatory program to ready students to enter their new schools.

- **(placement)** All students who successfully complete the preparation stage are placed by Prep in Grade 7 (for day schools) or Grade 9 (for boarding schools). Prep arranges for all families to visit several schools as an introduction to the placement process, and also help with applications and financial aid forms.

- **(student support)** Prep alumni are supported by Prep counsellors through monthly meetings with the students and their teachers, and meetings and activities for alumni.

- **(internships and travel opportunities)** Through its vast network, Prep offers its alumni with a wide range of leadership development opportunities, exposing them to an ever-broader view of life possibilities.

- **(college guidance)** Prep alumni are often the first in their family to attend university. Prep assists with introductions to colleges, applications, financial aid and SAT preparation.

- **(undergraduate support)** Prep’s Undergraduate Affairs team supports students with individual advice, workshops and social gatherings.

- **(alumni affairs)** Prep stays closely connected with its university alumni through reunions, professional workshops and networking. Alumni are encouraged to volunteer with Prep, provide internships for current students and fundraise for Prep.
Prep’s impact is impressive: of nearly 3,000 Prep high school graduates, 90% have earned degrees from the most competitive colleges in the country including Columbia, Harvard, and Yale. Each year, its students are awarded $35 million in independent school financial aid.

For many years at MITS we have cited Prep as a great global example of the power of transition programs. So, it was a thrill to visit it and to talk with Bridget Johnson, Associate Executive Director.

(b) Key learnings: 40 years demonstrating the power of transitional support

An affirmation of our early MITS outcomes

Prep receives extraordinary demand from students and schools across New York City. Each year, over 4,000 students apply for only 175 positions at Prep. These students go through a rigorous selection process comprising an SAT-style test, an IQ test, a teacher recommendation and an interview. (In the MITS context, accurate testing before enrolment is challenging due to the number of our students who speak English as a Second Language).

Despite this enormous demand, Prep experiences, on average, attrition of 25% during its 14 month program, due to lack of student or parent engagement, students finding the work too challenging, poor attendance, and other factors. This figure – 25% - is approximately the same level of attrition that MITS has experienced during its first two years. This is hugely affirming – despite the significant additional barriers faced by our students – language, cultural, and geographic barriers – we experience attrition no greater than one of the world’s most admired and successful transition programs.

Support at every step, in particular that critical point of placement

As I’ve detailed above, Prep follows, and supports its students for years after they complete their Prep program. At the point of placing and transitioning students, there are many parallels with the MITS experience.

Prep is responsible for brokering and maintaining relationships with its day schools, and like MITS, no contracts exist between Prep and these schools – they are based on a shared trust and commitment to the students attending Prep. Again like MITS, Prep considers the cultural safety of schools – in Bridget’s words, “you need faculty who look like the Prep students” – and always sends students to schools in at least pairs. Sometimes school placements fall through (again, like MITS), but Prep is committee to its students, and guarantees a placement for every student who finishes its program.

Grow through influence

Bridget described how many people have urged Prep to expand to other cities and states over its 40 year history. However, Prep has resisted these calls. Certainly, it is bigger than it was. But Prep has chosen to grow in a different way: by leading thought and sharing its practices with kindred organisations across the globe. Bridget explained that replication – in the style of a charter school – isn’t easy: it requires immense capital, lots of manpower, and risks dilution of Prep’s effectiveness as the program and its resources risk being spread too thin, or applied to contexts where it isn’t effective.

Through the development of a thought leadership initiative named Smart Connections, Prep has impacted another 250,000 students worldwide by offering consulting and networking to peer organisations. This style of growth resonates with us at MITS. Our model is people-and-capital-intensive, requiring so many intangible inputs. Critically, our model woks because it is what our students, families and communities want: applied in a different context, there’s no guarantee it will work. So, it makes sense for us at MITS to be thought leaders, to share with our peers, and to advocate for wider change in the Australian context. Prep provides a valuable model on how to achieve this.

6.11 The Sami Education Institute, Inari, Sápmi, Finland

(a) About The Sami Education Institute

Located in the northern depths of the Arctic Circle, in Inari, Sápmi (Lapland), Finland, the Sámi Education Institute (“Institute”) provides vocational qualifications, education, and all-round education to young Sámi high school graduates. It also conducts research and provides student services which
support or are closely linked with its education program. The Institute works nationally and internationally to preserve and develop Indigenous cultures and the livelihoods related to them.

The purpose of the Sámi Education Institute is to provide education mainly for the needs of the Sámi Area, to maintain and develop Sámi culture and nature-based occupations, and to promote the production of educational material published in Sami.

All courses taught at the Sámi Education Institute are accredited higher education courses focused on the continuation of Sámi skills, practices and enterprises in the current context of Sápmi, Finland and the European Union. Courses include:

- natural and environmental protection;
- reindeer husbandry and nature-based production;
- Sámi handicrafts (including handicraft design and production, gemstones and precious metals, soft materials such as reindeer leather);
- tourism, wilderness and nature guiding, hotel and restaurant services; and
- nursing, health care, aged care.

In essence, the Sámi Education Institutes works to enable young Sámi people to retain and strengthen their knowledge of their culture and land, while participating in a growing local and global economy.

During our visit to Inari, my partner Rhiannon and I were hosted by Sámi Language Teacher Heidi Kitti. Heidi even invited us to her house for a traditional lingonberry meal and a sauna!

(b) Key learnings: A Northern Star

The Sámi Education Institute provided an incredibly unique and immersive final stop on my Fellowship. Far above the line of the Arctic Circle, we were there in the final days of a short autumn: just days later the first snows would fall, burying the last of the season’s wild berries. The colours of the landscape were indescribable using the Australian palate, and for someone who is familiar with remoteness here in Australia, I was struck by feeling very, very remote in Sápmi. It was beautiful.

The Institute does not focus on student transitions per se. It is based on Sámi land, teaching Sámi culture to Sámi students. What it does do, is firstly to build the strength of its cultural knowledge. Today, handicrafts like reindeer leather making or silversmithing, or land management skills such as reindeer husbandry. Without the concerted effort of the Institute, many of these skills might otherwise have been lost in the coming decades.

Having built the cultural knowledge and strength of its students, the Institute uses this knowledge and strength to empower its students. The Institute’s leaders recognise that its students will need to be Sámi leaders in a global context: they must navigate Finnish and EU law, the growing tide of tourists to their lands, the impact of climate change on their land, and balance the opportunities and threats of the resources sector. In doing this, the students must have a broad knowledge and must be participants in an ever more global economy. They must also be champions of their people, culture and land. The Sámi Education Institute demonstrates that it is possible for them to do both.

Whilst Sámi people experience challenges as Indigenous people in Finland, their outcomes are aspirational. Heidi explained that in education, health and employment, Sámi people experience the same outcomes as all other Finns. Of course, we share very different histories in relation to our Indigenous peoples. But the Finnish experience of empowered, equal Indigenous people, pursuing their skills on their land, and experiencing the same life outcomes as their fellow Finns: surely that’s a wonderful Northern Star for us to aim for in Australia.
Conclusions, recommendations and dissemination

Conclusions and recommendations

The key conclusions and recommendations of my Fellowship are:

1. (ensure students belong) We must reflect on how we can ensure that Indigenous students feel that they truly belong in their educational environment. What already exists to create a sense of belonging? What do we need to create in addition? What in the current shape of the institution might prevent a student from feeling that they belong? As the staff at UBC’s Longhouse ask themselves, “How is the student experiencing our institution?”

2. (commit to our students for the long term) Our responsibility to our MITS students must not end when they leave our transition program. The best programs are committed to their students in the long term – they act as trusted mentors and advisors through high school, university and into the workforce. At MITS, we have recognised the importance of supporting our students once they have graduated from MITS, and from the start of 2018 now have three staff with responsibility for our Pathways Program.

3. (share in celebration of Indigenous culture) Many people remarked on how fortunate they believe we are in Australia to share in the culture and country of our Indigenous Australians. To create a sense of belonging, and in the longer term to give effect to true reconciliation, we must all share in a celebration our Australian Indigenous cultures. Whilst Indigenous culture belongs to our Indigenous people, we can all learn from and be enriched by their 65,000 years of occupation, language, culture and belonging. This sharing will create culturally safe institutions where our Indigenous students can thrive.

4. (transition from service provider to thought leader) At its core, MITS will always be a transition school for Indigenous students from remote and regional communities. However, the role we play supporting our graduate students, Melbourne Families and Partner Schools is significant. We should expect that in the early years of our program, this support will be hands-on, resource intensive and often triage-foresussed. But we must anticipate that, in the coming years, our role will change. Our community of Melbourne schools and families is building its capacity to support Indigenous students. In the coming years, MITS should pivot from active service provider, to trusted advisor and thought-leader. This will flag the maturing of our collective capacity to support Indigenous students in our Melbourne schools, and will ensure greater sustainability of the MITS model.

5. (use Indigenous knowledge to meaningfully engage Indigenous students) Our MITS families want their students to come to Melbourne to develop a broad range of skills and knowledge. To enable this, we must tap into their prior knowledge, in particular by using Indigenous content. Students learn best when they can relate to and are excited by the subject matter. Acknowledging and valuing a student’s own knowledge will encourage them to pursue study in broader, less familiar fields.

6. (articulate clearly the purpose of the transition) Occasionally, people will be critical of programs like MITS for imposing Western values on Indigenous students. We must articulate clearly the purpose of MITS. It provides its students and families with the opportunities and life-choices that they want. It enables access to a Melbourne education for those students who aspire to one. It is not about “becoming white” and it is not the right model for all students; it is about empowering our students, who have chosen to come to MITS, “to manage their relationship with a dominant society”, to benefit themselves, their communities and their culture.

7. (resource student transitions properly) Transitioning from a remote community to a large Melbourne school is immensely challenging for our students and requires substantial resourcing. The global experience tells us that this resourcing is essential, and that MITS is – by global standards – lean in this regard. We must commit to fully resourcing our transition year, and the support of our students once they have graduated from MITS. My Fellowship experience demonstrates that the short-term costs are far outweighed by the long-term outcomes.
8. **(use data to demonstrate outcomes)** “There’s no data without a story, and no story without data.” In so many places I visited, there was clearly something special and intangible – in the Australian lexicon, it was “the vibe”. But, a vibe is hard to pin down, and harder to describe to others. So, in this report, I’ve relied heavily on outcomes data. How did students compare against their control group, and therefore what measurable uplift does the program provide? Clearly, great transition programs are about so much than data, but data allows us to demonstrate their success, identify where approaches are working, and identify where more work is needed.

9. **(for now, achieve scale through influence)** At MITS, we’re often asked about our plans for growth. For organisations supporting the educational transition of young people, achieving scale is challenging. Our work is small-scale, tailored to our young people and communities, requiring deep relationships, and substantial resources. The organisations that I visited provide a model for knowledge sharing as way to achieve scale and impact. Whilst it doesn’t close the door to program growth in the future, it does demonstrate how MITS’s impact can be broader than its own footprint in the mid-term.

10. **(be affirmed by the early success of MITS)** At MITS, our model is innovative, new, and so our outcomes are not guaranteed. But, the organisations I visited on my Fellowship give us reason to feel very hopeful for the future of our program and more importantly our students. Across the globe, transition programs are enabling young people to access new opportunities not only retaining their cultural identity, but using that identity as one of their pillars of strength. There’s much we can learn from kindred organisations around the world, but we’re on the right track.

### 7.2 Dissemination

Since October 2017 I have presented preliminary findings from my Churchill Fellowship to our MITS staff, the attendees of the 2017 MITS Gala Dinner (410 people) and a dinner at Scotch College, Melbourne (140 people). In the coming months I will deliver a presentation of my findings to staff at Berry Street, and to meetings of MITS Partner Schools and MITS volunteers.

In our many engagements with our stakeholders – Indigenous Communities and Families, Partner Schools, Melbourne Families, MITS donors and sector peers – I refer frequently to the learnings of my Fellowship. In late 2017, we incorporated Fellowship findings into a MITS Case for Support, co-authored by PricewaterhouseCoopers, which we will launch to Federal and State Governments, donors and kindred organisations in 2018.

This report will be disseminated in a shorter, more colourful form to a targeted group of MITS stakeholders and sector peers, and I will offer those people the opportunity to discuss my findings better. It will also be made available on the MITS website and promoted through our social media channels.

Our model is still evolving. As we review of our program to consider how we can deliver it best, we are referring to the learnings of my Churchill Fellowship to find analogies and to guide our decision making. It will be many years before we see the long-term impact of MITS, and so it is most valuable to have learned from organisations applying global best practice to guide our work in these early years.