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Submission:

IDEA:-Cross-Cultural Environmental Education using the School "House" system as a vehicle for cultural exchange and CONTINUITY of environmental experiential learning at a Regional, Catchment and Local level.

The enclosed PDF submission contains detail for:- A. Background info B. an outline of the IDEA contributed C. why the IDEA has been chosen for this submission, and how it may be implemented D. How the submission relates to the key themes for a National Cultural Policy

A. The submission has a largely Environmental Educational and Advocacy agenda. WHY?

Because ENVIRONMENT encompasses all. Cultural interactions of our many different communities do not preclude our diverse and wonderful Environment.

B. My idea that I am contributing is the FOLLOWING:-

"TOTEM" based Environmental Education at a Catchment, Regional and Local level via the School "House" System.

* The word "TOTEM", is used, for lack of any better word. I mean it in a very loose sense here, not in the strict sense of a personal, clan or inherited indigenous TOTEM.

* The word "TOTEM" is used to encompass a practical understanding and care of a particular LOCALLY or REGIONALLY SIGNIFICANT native plant or animal species or genus.

* BY this, I mean a "TOTEM" caring that is integrated into a student's schooling, through exposure and interaction with teachers, artists, community workers, scientific workers, wildlife and environmental volunteers and experts, cross- cultural educators, musicians, story tellers. A caring that, through continued exposure to an understanding of that "TOTEM" over time, brings with it increased awareness and understanding of the habitat necessary for it's survival and well being. An understanding, that when carried into adulthood, will foster in many, more informed decision making, as Australian youth become active community members and leaders.

Choice of "TOTEM" could include a particular PLANT or ANIMAL that is currently :- 1. endangered or threatened (at risk) within the area of the school's "Catchment".

2. particularly relevant to the environmental & ecological well being of the catchment area about the school.

3. easily identifiable, able to be used as a School "HOUSE" name and focus, able to be learnt about, incorporated into a variety of syllabi content across the schools' curriculum, as well as in sport and cultural experiential learning programs.

4. specifically identified by Australian Indigenous peoples as an animal or plant that they feel deserves more understanding and respect.

C. Why Chose a TOTEM based cross-cultural environmental educational approach?

- * To encompass a holistic caring and Stewardship approach toward a particular native plant and/or animal species or genus and its HABITAT, through continued and diverse cultural exposure via all types of cross-cultural experiences, at a basic level of an individual's schooling life.

- * To foster greater understanding and Stewardship responses, when a student later becomes an active, functioning adult member of the Australian Community at large.

Why chose a School "HOUSE" system by which to deliver such an innovation?

- * I have chosen the school "HOUSE" system as this is often the basis for many activities within a school and one that often unites students on a number of different levels. It has CONTINUITY. Some schools already use native animal names for their "houses". For new schools, this is an opportunity to engage Cross-Cultural learning, should their house system be formed about a "TOTEM".

- * To engage Students, via continuity, throughout a region, catchment or local area. To create a vehicle for an ongoing cultural dialogue, via cross-cultural learning, with a "SIGNIFICANT" animal or plant, (its history, habitat requirements and interactions, ecological contributions).

And so, in response to the three key themes for a National Cultural Policy 1. Keeping culture strong:-

All types of cultural heritage come under the umbrella of our unique Australian Environmental Heritage that is the setting for future Australian Cultural Exchange.

- * National identity with our native wildlife and landscapes using Cross-Cultural Environmental Education can strengthen our National Identity, whilst keeping our pluralistic cultural identity.

- * To maintain an ongoing dialogue with the country. This has often been associated with Aboriginal use of art and other cultural activities - in the form of painting, singing, dancing, celebrations and stories.

- * However, as well as Aboriginal Cultural exchange, there other valuable community members who have been practicing land custodians, Land and Water Stewards, Wildlife Carers and Vegetation specialists. Their stories, practical work, art, visions, music, photography, literature and creativity are part of our Cultural Environmental fabric.

- * There are a number of other cultural experiences, concerning our native wildlife and habitats that can also be shared, for heritage purposes, in a "TOTEM" based Environmental Education initiative. For example building and architecture, gardening and landscaping, engineering and earthmoving, farming and livestock management, entertainment and recreational activities. These things all have cultural components in our diverse Australian Culture

2. Engaging the community:-

* The concept of Totem based Education within schools can be encompassed via ARTS, ENVIRONMENT, HERITAGE and many other forms of CROSS-CULTURAL exchange.

* As a Regionalized and Catchment concept, this can only be a good thing, for our future as an environmentally sustainable nation of many identities, all caring for the Country.

* WATER CATCHMENTS, as a geographical and environmental reality, provide a basis by which localised and Regional cultural identity can be fostered, via linking with native wildlife habitat, and Land and Water Stewardship.

* Along any particular stretch of an Australian River or Creek System, there is always some animal/plant that needs mentorship, needs more habitat, needs help from threatening processes. In short:- a key signature animal or plant, that can act as an indicator for the Total Catchment Health.

* If Schools are encouraged to create vision with a "TOTEM" based environmental educational "HOUSE" system, leaving all types of "religious" implications out of it, cross-cultural outreaching may work for well with this Vision.

* At the heart of this idea of the word and concept - "totem" - is caring and fostering the future of our Australian Environment. The idea of linking one back to the environment, fostering a more harmonious life with one's natural heritage. Using a signature animal or plant as a focus for creating environmental wellbeing, at a catchment or regional basis would involve Integrating the Cultural and Cross-Cultural components of Art, Music, Storytelling and Caring.

It is important, in this day of a largely urbanised Australian Identity, to pass on information, using the process of CONTINUITY and a vision of CARE, for the Land, Water and Habitats of our Natural Heritage. Continuity is important for community.

* The life cycle of the animal, the environmental and ecological contribution, the local carers experiences, the science, the art, the stories, the songs etc: - These, if combined into cohesive education and carried, at an all encompassing level through the School housing system, will engage many young people into understanding their local environment at a basic educational level. It will create opportunity for youth to be part of meaningful cross-cultural exchange via art, environment, sport, education and community.

3. Powering the young:-

* Vision leads us forward. Cohesion and continuity in the Vision, from elders to the younger creates strength in outcomes. The young, if educated in ways of the environment via cross-cultural exchange, creates a stronger future, and a powerful base for future, cultural discernment, tolerance, understanding and empathy via many levels.

* Continuity, especially in times of great change, can be a useful tool. Continuity, with Cultural exchange can provide our Australian youth with practical skills, enhanced by increased awareness and understanding for vision building. This can help the Australian Nation's young obtain the discernment necessary to help create an Environmentally Sustainable Future