



The Inclusion Continuum and Social Capital

If human capital, built from education, is roughly *what* we know, social capital, built from linkages to others, is *who* we know. It's proven that where there is strong social capital, kids do better at school, crime rates drop, social engagement expands. At the world's largest development agency, the World Bank, a development project's potential for growing social capital is often regarded as the "make-or-break" issue. It is no small matter that as an organization mounts the *Inclusion Continuum*, the goals of inclusion become inseparable from the values and advantages of social capital. A new model of the *Continuum*, stressing social capital, is in development. Here, provisionally, are seven spotlights -- phrased as questions -- on social capital as it can assist and accelerate a corporation's movement up the *Continuum*:

1. Of any proposed policy, practice, or initiative designed to grow inclusion, ask what the World Bank would ask: In what ways will this initiative contribute to social capital?
2. Never underestimate the *strength of weak ties*. Network theorist Mark Granovetter struck this phrase to describe the powerful effect of access to a wide variety of people in different circles. Studies have shown the surest route to a new job is truly who you know (if only distantly), and not what you know. With this in hand, how can we go about designing smarter approaches to Aboriginal recruitment?
3. *Bonding* social capital involves strong links, based on family, ethnic, religious, and cultural bonds; *bridging* social capital is based on reaching out. "Without 'bridging' social capital, 'bonding' groups can become isolated and disenfranchised from the rest of society." (Wikipedia) From this, what can we infer about corporate social responsibility in relation to Aboriginal communities?
4. According to studies in social capital, networking is not a secondary function of the jobs we do, but a shortcut to the most important goals we are pursuing, in virtually any community or organization. What policy shifts could accommodate and accentuate this insight in your organization?
5. According to the World Bank, all new developments should incorporate means to "re-shape the built environment to make social interaction easier." This principle has led to urban marketplaces, pedestrian malls, open offices. How can the principle of making "social interactions easier" be applied to efforts in Aboriginal inclusion?
6. Authorities in social capital, such as James Coleman and Robert Putnam, have asserted that wherever social capital is strong -- no matter what the economic status -- educational performance is also strong. How can this causal principle be used to ignite an appetite for education?
7. The surest measure of social capital is trust. Here the powers of inclusion truly shine. As Abraham Lincoln once said, "Am I not destroying my enemies when I make friends of them?" How make it a pivotal requirement of any new initiative that it must grow trust between the parties involved, even if those parties are initially antagonistic to one another?