



The National Empowerment Project

Cultural, Social and Emotional Wellbeing Program Evaluation 2014 – 2017

May 2017





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PREPARED BY

Tjalaminu Mia, (Sister Kate's Home Kids Aboriginal Corporation)

Professor Darlene Oxenham (School of Indigenous Studies, University of Western Australia)

The National Empowerment Project received funding from the Australian Government Department of Health under the National Mental Health Program.

The grantee or Project Manager, not the Minister, State or Territory Government or the Australian Government is solely responsible for the content of, and views expressed in, any report and/or related materials unless they have been formally endorsed by the Department of Health.

ISBN 978-1-74052-388-2

Contact: School of Indigenous Studies
University of Western Australia
sis@uwa.edu.au, 08 6488 3428

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Empowerment Project (NEP) is an Aboriginal led research project that was established in 2012, with the aim of developing a nationally applicable program to promote cultural, social, and emotional wellbeing and reduce psychological distress and suicide in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The NEP was designed to be delivered in two stages: Firstly, the completion of extensive community consultations and secondly, the delivery of a Cultural, Social, and Emotional Wellbeing (CSEWB) Program in NEP community sites.

The NEP employed a Participatory Action Research methodology (Dudgeon, Scrine, Cox, & Walker, 2017), which is an approach that enables 'subjects' to become participants in the research process, and consequently, the research becomes responsive to community needs. As such, the NEP was developed in response to high rates of psychological distress, self-harm, and suicide within Aboriginal communities. This was an outcome from extensive community consultations in 11 sites across Australia. The NEP Cultural, Social, and Emotional Wellbeing (CSEWB) Program, developed in 2014, spanned twelve months and was delivered in three intensive six-week blocks. The Program was developed following the community consultations and was informed by feedback from community co-researchers across the 11 NEP sites.

The CSEWB Program focused on strengthening the Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) of individuals, families and the community and involved a number of activities with a community-wide focus. Part of the Program involved community relationship building where community co-researchers (who are all community members) contact other services and providers to enlist their support and involvement in the Program. This established

coordinated and supportive networks and avoided duplication. Importantly, participants from earlier consultations and key families in the community were approached to be involved in the Program, either as participants for the six-week blocks, or to assist with identifying, planning, and delivering other workshops or community events.

Funded by the Queensland Mental Health Commission, the NEP CSEWB Program was delivered to the Queensland communities of Kuranda and Cherbourg between 2014 and 2016. A project evaluation of the NEP was commissioned by the NEP Project Director to determine how effective the NEP was in achieving its stated goals. This project evaluation assessed the NEP during two years of Phase Three, 2014 – 2016 (Oxenham, 2017) and included a brief examination of the Queensland NEP sites. The Oxenham Report (2017) summarises and details the CSEWB Program in the communities of Kuranda and Cherbourg over this two-year period.

A further evaluation focusing on specific outcomes and impacts of the CSEWB Program was undertaken in 2017 with participants from Kuranda and Cherbourg. Information was considered through an analysis of 1) current interview outcomes 2) information summarised from the Stories of Most Significant Change (written after participants complete the Program) and 3) the original data from the 2013 NEP consultations – see Diagram 1.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



DIAGRAM 1: The NEP Outcomes Process

Thirty interviews were conducted with participants from both Kuranda and Cherbourg. Six detailed case studies were also undertaken, emerging from interview findings. Participants reported that the Program had significantly changed their lives in positive ways.

Interviews for this Evaluation re-affirmed the outcomes from the summaries of Stories of Most Significant Change (SMSC); a process completed by participants at the end of the CSEWB Program. A secondary analysis of the SMSC outcomes as a group identified eight themes that captured the elements within people's lives that had changed and brought about positive outcomes.

These themes were:

1. Personal Strengths:

- Participants reported increased self-awareness and self-esteem. There was a strong emphasis on improved confidence, including being more assertive in achieving set goals. Participants acknowledged their own development of individual strengths, including public speaking skills and the ability to voice their own opinions and viewpoints in family and community discussions, business settings, and other situations.

2. Healthcare and Healthier Lifestyle Choices:

- Participants reported an increased understanding of, and commitment to, their own health and wellbeing, and that of their children and families. This extends further to also be inclusive of the collective community's overall health and wellbeing.

3. Relationships: Children, Partners, Family, and Community:

- Participants voiced their increased knowledge and resolve around the importance of nurturing more positive relationships with their family members and the wider community. This resulted in a stronger commitment to reconcile in more positive ways that do not impinge on individual self-esteem and health.

4. Family/Domestic Violence and Incarceration:

- There was increased awareness and networking support for participants whereby they could share a range of issues affecting their wellbeing and their children's and partner's wellbeing.

5. Life Skills and Life Planning:

- Participants reported an increased awareness and development of skills to change situations and develop confidence. They reported a stronger understanding of the benefits of positive self-talk, and how this can dispel negative self-talk (bad thoughts, old negative habits/behaviours, aggressive actions and language) towards oneself, family members, and others.

6. Education, Training, and Employment:

- Personal and professional development was seen as a positive aspect of the Program. Pursing higher education and training assists in individual growth, assertiveness, attaining a better life, and economic stability and sustainability for participants and their families.

7. Cultural, Social, and Emotional Wellbeing:

- Participants reported a strengthened sense of identity, including cultural identity specifically. Completing the Program and undertaking a self-assessment of their progress via Stories Of Most Significant Change enabled participants to better understand the series of success factors that aided their achievements over the duration of the Program.

8. Cultural Reconnection, Identity, Pride, and Community:

- There was a renewed focus of the importance of reconnecting with country and culture. The positive benefits of feeling a sense of belonging, and family and community unity were also highlighted.

Since the CSEWB Program was delivered in Kuranda and Cherbourg, participants have reported a significant change in individual strengths and a renewed and more positive focus within the community. This further demonstrates the reinforced sense of hope within community members, that some of the distress and disadvantage endured by the communities for many years can be overcome. On an individual basis, participants have found that applying the Program's life skills strategies has had positive outcomes in their physical and mental health and general wellbeing. This in turn enables participants to focus on their personal and family's needs in a more positive and constructive way, which contributes to individual healing as well as strengthens family and community relationships.

Participants reported that the CSEWB Program provided new ways of looking at the world and what is happening in it, across individual, family, and community levels. Further, the Program enabled participants to assess individual gains/growth attained throughout the program. Such growth included how participation in the Program changed the lives of participants and their families, and how they can continue to use newly acquired information and skills for their own and their family's benefit.

Throughout the Program, participants were provided with information about Aboriginal history and the political systems and policies that have impacted on, and continue to impact on,

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultural, social, and emotional wellbeing. Participants learned how this has directly impacted on them as individuals, their families, their communities, and Aboriginal peoples more broadly. Learning about past policies that governed the lives of all Aboriginal peoples, and what this meant for the wellbeing and self-determination of participants' ancestors, participants themselves, and their families and communities in the present day, was enlightening.

Another important aspect that participants identified in the Program was the value of strengthening culture and spirituality, which extends to self, family, others, all living things, and the natural world. A crucial outcome for participants was the realisation or affirmation around how everything is connected within a cultural context, and how this can bring a sense of inspiration, connectedness, and hope for individuals, families, and the wider community. This is especially important when going back to country for cultural purposes, and for family and community reconnection to the land, and cultural ceremony.

The voices of the Program community, both individually and collectively, were reported to be more confident and empowered across a multitude of fronts, following Program completion. Participants continue to demonstrate greater insight and purpose in their lives and these successes have resulted from having access to a program that enabled a community-based empowerment.

The value of the CSEWB Program has been demonstrated throughout this evaluation through direct statements and feedback from Program participants regarding their own positive experiences and journeys. Participants who completed the Program reported feeling a greater sense of wellbeing, greater resilience, and increased capacity to address and resolve many of the issues impacting on them, their families, and their communities. Participants have attained skills and knowledge that will assist them to succeed in a range of ways that have only been realised since participating in the empowering Program.

OVERVIEW: VOICES OF THE PEOPLE

The National Empowerment Project (NEP) is an Aboriginal led research project that was established in 2012, with the aim of developing a nationally applicable program to promote cultural, social, and emotional wellbeing and reduce psychological distress and suicide in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The NEP was designed to be delivered in two stages: Firstly, the completion of extensive community consultations and secondly, the delivery of a Cultural, Social, and Emotional Wellbeing (CSEWB) Program in NEP community sites.

The NEP evolved from the Kimberley Empowerment Program (KEP). The KEP was introduced in the Kimberley region of Western Australia in 2011. Due to its success, funding was sought for a similar program that could extend to communities across Australia, which resulted in the establishment of the NEP in 2012. Initially nine sites were commissioned; Redfern/Sydney and Toomelah in New South Wales, Darwin in the Northern Territory, Perth, Northam/Toodyay, and Narrogin in Western Australia, Mildura in Victoria, and Kuranda and Cherbourg in Queensland. The NEP has since been extended to include two additional sites; Geraldton in Western Australia and Mt Gambier in South Australia. Sister Kate's Home Kids Aboriginal Corporation (SKHKAC) became a partner organisation for the NEP in 2014, and was responsible for working with the Western Australian sites of Northam and Toodyay.

KEY COMMONALITIES BETWEEN THE KEP AND THE NEP

Key findings within both the KEP and the NEP communities are as follows:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander conceptions and understandings of mental health differ considerably to dominant Western concepts. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities conceive mental health and wellbeing to involve physical, social, emotional, mental, environmental, cultural, and spiritual wellbeing.

- Healing, empowerment, and leadership are interconnected and involve a process of decolonisation, recovery, and renewal. Only through a healing journey can people become empowered and be able to assist and lead others in their own journeys. This empowerment occurs at individual, family, and community levels.
- Healing and empowerment enable the development of a strong sense of self and a strong cultural identity, which are critical protective factors against community distress and suicide risk (Dudgeon et al., 2012).

Funding for the NEP was extended over three phases; phase one encompassed the initial stages one and two over the 2012 – 2013 period, phase two took place over the 2013- 2014 period, and phase three took place over the 2014 – 2017 period.

The NEP employed a Participatory Action Research (Dudgeon, Scrine, Cox, & Walker, 2017) methodology, which is an approach that enables 'subjects' to become participants in the research process, and consequently the research becomes responsive to community needs. As such, the NEP was developed in response to high rates of psychological distress, self-harm, and suicide within Aboriginal communities. This was an outcome from extensive community consultations in 11 sites across Australia. The NEP Cultural, Social, and Emotional Wellbeing (CSEWB) Program, developed in 2014, spanned twelve months and was delivered in three intensive six-week blocks. The Program was developed following the community consultations and was informed by feedback from community co-researchers across the 11 NEP sites.

From the initial concept of the KEP, to the establishment of the NEP community sites, and the development of the CSEWB Program, the enduring and underlying principles guiding all developments was an authentically community-driven process and the genuine inclusion of local Indigenous community co-researchers and participants.

THE NEP PRINCIPLES

Informed by the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation principles (2009), and the Department of Health and Ageing's Supporting Communities to Reduce Risk of Suicide (2013) program, a set of principles the guide the NEP were developed alongside community co-researchers. These six principles have guided and informed the development and implementation of the NEP:

- Social Justice and Human Rights
- Community Ownership
- Community Capacity Building
- Resilience Focused
- Building Empowerment and Partnerships
- Respect and Central Inclusion of Local Knowledge

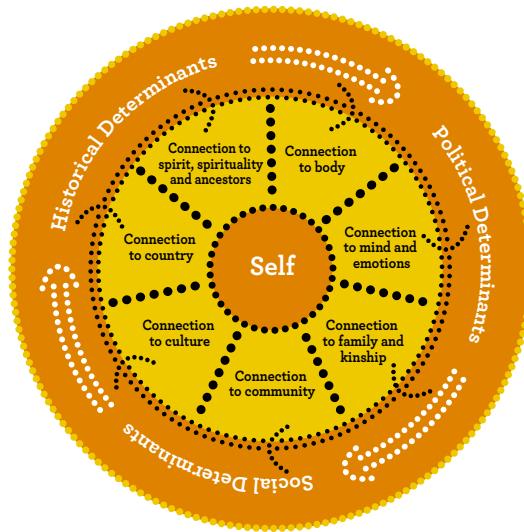
THE NEP COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS

During initial community consultations across all the NEP sites, participants were asked to comment on issues that they viewed as being important to themselves, their families, and their communities. Following this, they were asked to provide suggestions on how these areas could be strengthened and improved.

The resulting information from each site was analysed with the relevant community co-researchers, and findings were then published in Site Reports. These Site Reports were distributed back to each community and later used as part of the foundation for the development of the CSEWB Program. The Site Report data was then re-analysed and it was confirmed that the identified themes fell clearly within the SEWB domains and/or social determinants. Although there are differences within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia, there is a shared commonality of issues impacting on the social and emotional wellbeing of Indigenous individuals, families, and communities (Dudgeon et al, 2014).

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

The concept of Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) is multi-layered and has a much broader and deeper scope than the dominant Western perception of mental health. SEWB is a whole-of-life view that incorporates and reflects a holistic understanding of health, emphasising wellness, harmony, and balance, rather than illness and symptom reduction (Social Health Reference Group, 2004). It is more accurate to understand SEWB as a series of connections and interdependent relationships between body, mind, emotions, family and kinship, community, culture, land, and spirituality. This is depicted in the diagrams below: Diagram 2 outlines the determinants of SEWB and Diagram 3 is adapted from the Gee et al. (2014) model and explains SEWB from an Indigenous perspective. The term 'connection' reflects the diverse ways in which people experience and express the various domains of SEWB throughout their lives.



(Reference: Gee, Dudgeon, Schultz, Hart & Kelly, 2014)

DIAGRAM 2: Determinants of Social and Emotional Wellbeing

The influence of social determinants upon wellbeing is also part of the SEWB model. Social determinants include access to economic resources, housing, education, and community resources, the impacts of poverty, unemployment and underemployment, racism and other forms of discrimination, and exposure to violence, trauma, and other stressful life events. These social determinants impact individuals, families, and communities concurrently and accumulatively. The impact of history, namely colonialism, policies of protection and assimilation, and the continued neglect and denial of cultural and citizenship rights, is particularly important when considering the broader determinants impacting on Aboriginal peoples' SEWB (Gee et al., 2014).

The NEP team and community co-researchers included 'cultural' in the SEWB name to further highlight the importance of this element and to distinguish the specific implementation of CSEWB as a Program. The concept leading to the CSEWB Program was originally identified as the core framework for the KEP and the NEP and the Gee et al. (2014) definition and diagram has informed the research approach and Program development.

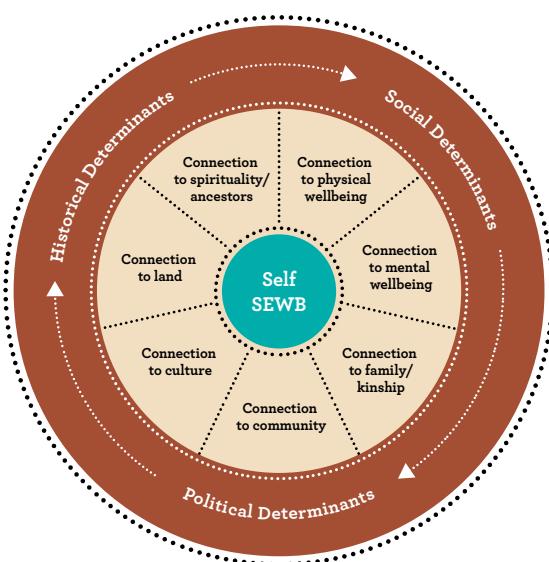


DIAGRAM 3: Determinants of Cultural, Social, and Emotional Wellbeing

THE CSEWB PROGRAM

The CSEWB Program focused on strengthening the cultural, social, and emotional wellbeing of individuals, families, and the community and involved a number of activities with a community-wide focus. The Program was developed with the aim of repeating three, six-week long blocks, throughout the overarching 12-month timeframe. The Program involved community relationship building, where community co-researchers (who are all local community members) contacted other services and providers to enlist their support and involvement in the Program. Community co-researchers then worked with these existing groups to host community events aiming to achieve positive outcomes for families and communities.

A Community Reference Group (CRG) was formed to guide and assist the implementation of the Program. This further strengthened community ownership, avoided program duplication, and ensured that the Program worked with existing programs. The CRG consisted of senior members of the community who shared the goals of the Program and included representatives from main family groups, relevant service providers, and key stakeholders. Importantly, participants from earlier consultations and key families in the community were approached to be involved in the Program, either as participants in the six-week blocks, or to assist with identifying, planning, and delivering other workshops or community events.

Community co-researchers also worked with the CRG to identify other programs to address SEWB within the community that could supplement and complement the CSEWB Program. These other activities or programs, scheduled outside the CSEWB six-week blocks, included activities such as life skills programs, planning major community events, cultural camps, and healing programs. Where possible, existing local services were utilised (eg. Mental Health First Aid Training and Leadership Training in Queensland).

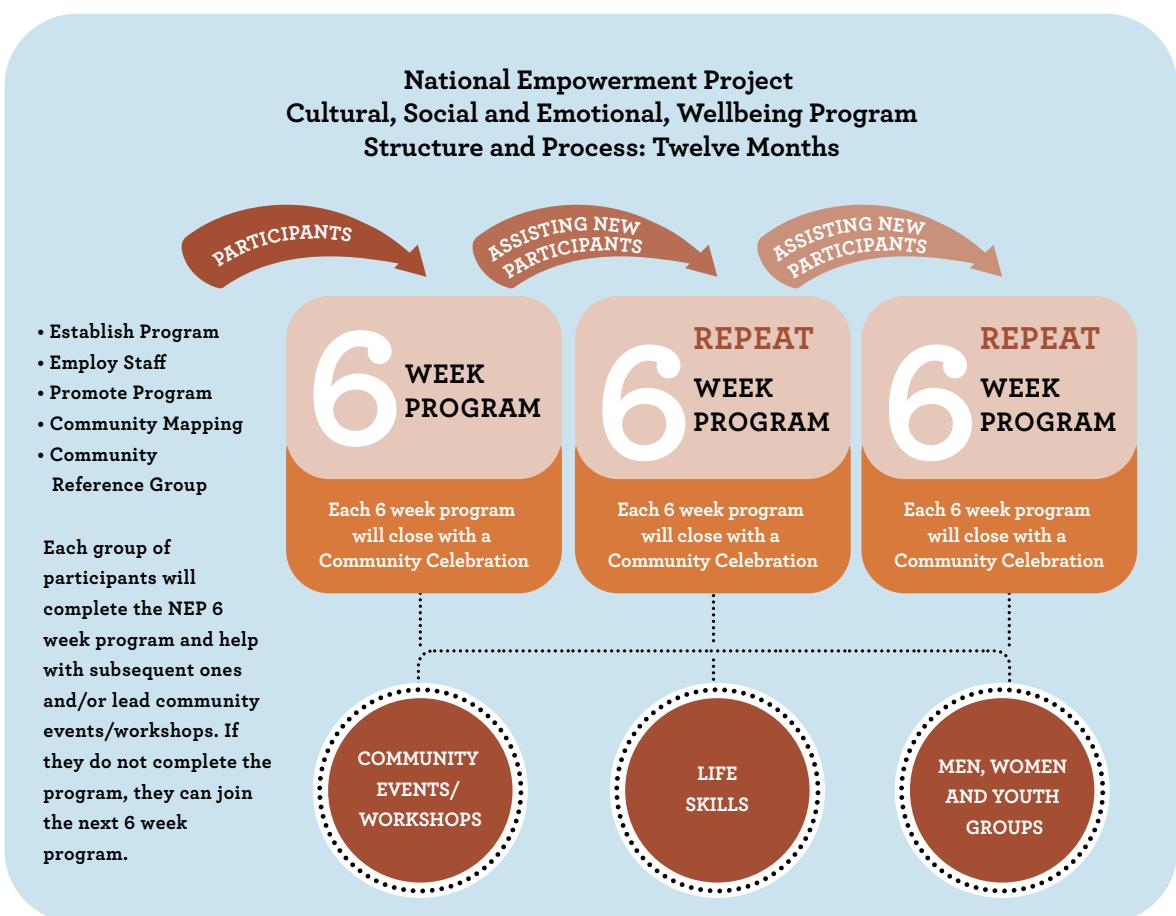


DIAGRAM 4: NEP CSEWB Program Structure and Process

The Program aimed to promote positive cultural, social, and emotional wellbeing and mental health, build resilience and prevent psychological distress, suicide, family/domestic violence, substance misuse, and related issues. Empowerment and creating strong supportive relationships between participants was also a key objective of the Program.

The CSEWB Program focused on different domains of SEWB (such as connection to culture, family, community, and spirit) and restoring and strengthening self, family, and community:

Self includes understanding self in the context of a colonial history and the SEWB framework. Self also involves developing greater self-awareness, assertiveness, self-esteem, empathy, positive thinking, and storying oneself into family, community, history, and culture.

Family reviews Aboriginal family structures and dynamics, the importance of Elders, and the development of interpersonal and conflict resolution skills. Family also includes an increased understanding of the history around the Stolen Generations, intergenerational trauma, and positive parenting (including child development and the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents in contemporary life).

Community provides an understanding of history both at local and national levels, celebrates Indigenous achievements, and explores concepts of self-determination at individual and community levels. What it means to be a good community leader is also part of the Program.

The Program enhanced personal skills through interactive, fun, and informative activities. Sessions and activities relating to stress management, problem solving, healthy relationships, managing conflict, and healthy habits including exercise, were included. There was a celebration at the end of each six-week block of the Program, with invitations extended to men's and women's groups (if established), the CRG, family members, Elders, community representatives, and service providers.

Specific areas of focus within the Program encompassed self, family, and community as follows:

- Cultural, Social, and Emotional Wellbeing
- Self Empowerment
- Nurturing Individual, Family, and Community Strengths
- Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution Skills
- Goal Setting
- Communication
- Mentoring

The Program provided community co-researchers with a Facilitators Guide and participants were given a Participants Handbook. The comprehensive Facilitators Guide was developed to assist community co-researchers in delivering the program. In addition, the Participants Handbook has become a very useful resource for participants to reflect on and review after completing the Program.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

The NEP CSEWB Program Evaluation had four broad objectives:

1. To engage with community participants who undertook the CSEWB Program in a series of one-on-one interviews in Kuranda/Mt Garnet¹ and Cherbourg communities.
2. Analyse interview data to determine benefits of the Program.
3. Present six detailed case studies from interview findings, to highlight identified benefits of the Program.
4. Complete an Evaluation Report of findings.

EVALUATION SCOPE

In early 2017, the Sister Kate's Home Kids Aboriginal Corporation (SKHKAC) was commissioned by the NEP team at the University of Western Australia (UWA) to undertake a Post-Program Evaluation in the community sites of Kuranda and Cherbourg. Both Kuranda and Cherbourg had participated in the NEP since its inception in 2012 and both had implemented the CSEWB Program since 2014.



MAP 1: Queensland Interview Locations

Within Kuranda and Cherbourg 199 community members had commenced the CSEWB Program and 159 (or 80%) had completed it.

SKHKAC and the NEP UWA staff had a series of discussions with staff from the local partner organisation, Ngoonbi Community Services Indigenous Corporation, to identify participants who had completed the CSEWB Program in the Kuranda and Cherbourg communities. Further discussions took place, identifying people who would be willing and available to participate in the Evaluation. The Program coordinator and community co-researchers of the CSEWB Program were responsible for identifying and confirming participants. It should be noted that only those who had completed the Program were included in this Evaluation. Initially the target number of participants was 50 (25 participants from each site) but later this was adjusted to a smaller number to be interviewed. The UWA researchers and the community co-researchers delivering the Program in Queensland ensured that there was representation of the diversity of Program participants within the interviewee group. Consequently, researchers sought gender balance, a range of age groups (Elders and youth), and Aboriginal staff from different organisations and services, to be interviewed. Despite the challenge posed by the transient movement of community members to other regions, and a series of unexpected crises within communities at the time of interviewing, a robust number of participants ($N = 30$) were interviewed.

The best approach to the Evaluation was discussed during consultants with the NEP team at UWA and Queensland staff. Evaluation options were to gather information through either group workshops or one-on-one interviews. The Evaluation proceeded with a series of one-on-one interviews. Participants agreed to the interview format to share their experiences, discuss the benefits of the Program for them as well as for their families, and to identify the success factors of the Program for the communities as a collective.

¹ Participants within the scope of Kuranda also include people from Mt Garnet community and surrounding areas.

EVALUATION DATA

The focus of the Evaluation is on the specific outcomes and impacts of the CSEWB Program in Kuranda and Cherbourg. The NEP has been in consultation with community members from Cherbourg and Kuranda since 2013. The fundamental goal of the NEP, and the CSEWB Program, remains to increase empowerment to aid Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their families to facilitate trauma recovery and wellbeing, with a specific focus on their cultural, social, and emotional wellbeing. The data used to inform this Evaluation spans 2013 - 2017 and is informed through an analysis of interviews undertaken within Kuranda and Cherbourg, the SMSC completed during the Program, and an analysis of data from the NEP original community consultations undertaken in 2013.

Ethical approval for the CSEWB Program and associated research was gained from the UWA Human Research Ethics Office (reference number RA/4/1/5299).

Data Source One: Initial 2013 NEP Consultations

During 2013, the NEP undertook a series of community consultations with Elders and other community members to discuss the issues impacting on families in the Kuranda and Cherbourg communities. The outcomes of these comprehensive consultations are detailed in community Site Reports that were handed back to the respective communities at the end of 2013 (Duffin et al, 2013; Murray et al, 2013). The findings from these consultations were used to develop the CSEWB Program that was then delivered in Kuranda and Cherbourg.

The initial Site Reports from Kuranda and Cherbourg found that the following themes were reported as impacting on the SEWB of community members:

- Family and community breakdown
- Alcohol and substance misuse
- Physical and mental health
- No confidence
- Low self-esteem
- Over-taxed by others expectations on individual family members
- Gambling

- Family and domestic violence
- Negativity and reluctance
- Lack of awareness regarding practical life skills
- Transport
- Communication
- Education, training, and employment
- Lack of access
- Limited prospects
- Financial issues and poverty
- Children and youth

Data Source Two: Stories of Most Significant Change

The Most Significant Change (MSC) technique is a participatory form of monitoring and evaluation developed by Davies and Dart (2005). This technique enables researchers to determine and measure intangible qualitative indicators of importance. Davies and Dart (2005) refer to this evidence as Significant Change (SC) stories. In regards to the CSEWB Program, researchers adapted the MSC technique as Stories of Most Significant Change (SMSC) to ensure the cultural appropriateness of the evaluation methods. The emphasis on the word 'Stories' reflects Aboriginal values and enables participant's to engage more openly in sharing their experiences. The valuing of individual 'Stories' reinforced the importance of unique experiences and facilitated sharing between participants. Therefore the MSC technique, in reference to the CSEWB Program, remains known as the SMSC.

The MSC technique, and therefore SMSC, is valuable in measuring outcomes of social change programs (Holden, 2017). It is particularly relevant when those social change programs hold seemingly intangible goals, such as strengthening empowerment or increasing confidence. The process of expressing and writing SMSC tend to focus people on the most positive and memorable experiences they have throughout a particular journey (although adverse or negative stories can arise). Further, Holden (2017) details how the MSC technique, and SMSC, is suitable for researchers who have regular contact with participants, who wish to collect data on impact rather than outputs, and who want to investigate any possible unintended consequences of their program.

A total of 153 participants completed the SMSC process at the end of the Program. The use of SMSC enabled participants to reflect on and evaluate their personal journeys, review their growth, and reinforce positive changes. It also enabled participants to assess and express how the Program benefited them, their families, and communities. Program facilitators assisted participants in expressing their stories. The standard form included the following information:

Stories of Most Significant Change

From your point of view, describe something that shows the most significant change you have seen in yourself as a result of attending the Cultural, Social, and Emotional Wellbeing Program.

The Story

*Why was this change significant for you?
What title would you give this story?*

Data Source Three: Kuranda and Cherbourg Interviews

Interviews were carried out in Kuranda and Cherbourg over a seven-day period that necessitated the consultant travelling to Queensland and visiting the sites. Geographically, Kuranda is one hour from Cairns and Mt Garnet is approximately five hours from Kuranda. The Cherbourg community is five hours drive from Brisbane. It was envisaged that this would enable 50 one-hour interviews to take place – 25 interviews within each community. However, due to some unexpected critical events within the Cherbourg community at the time of the site visit it was not possible to access the anticipated number of participants to interview. Over the seven-day period 30 interviews were completed with 18 participants interviewed in Kuranda, six participants interviewed from Mt Garnet, and six participants from Cherbourg. While the participants interviewed did represent a wide range of ages, a gender balance of interviewees was not achieved with more women being interviewed than men.

The purpose of these interviews was to:

- Gather data to contribute to a growing evidence base;
- Gather data to evaluate if and how the Program has positively changed people's lives; and if so,

- Analyse the benefits to individuals, families and communities.

The collection of interviews gathered throughout the Evaluation represent a longer-term assessment of the Program by community participants. This assessment, from participants' own perspectives, includes Program benefits and the associated outcomes for families and community members.

Note: The Cherbourg community had a series of crises at the time of interviewing, including one suicide, two attempted suicides and the passing of an Elder. These incidents occurred whilst the consultants were in transit to the community, and although the community was in mourning, the Elders were gracious in letting the consultants proceed with some interviews, which was a further indication of their support of the Program in the community.

A major focus of undertaking interviews was to provide an opportunity for participants to share their individual experiences and journeys at a deeper level. Interviews gave participants the opportunity to express ways in which the Program has changed life for themselves, their families, and their communities.

Interviews were structured to enable participants to identify the success factors within the Program, with open-ended questions allowing participants to explore their own experiences more freely. The appropriateness of the Program for participants and their reflections about their experiences were analysed and matched to the summary of outcomes from the SMSC.

Participants were asked the following interview questions:

1. How do you think participating in the Program has helped you?
2. What was the most useful part of the Program for you and your family?
3. What was the least useful part for you and your family?
4. Do you think the Program helped the community? How?
5. In what ways, if any, did the Program change things for you?
6. Is there anything else you would like to share about how the Program made changes in your life?

Data from the Kuranda and Cherbourg interviews were analysed and responses for each of the six questions were assessed and form the interview findings displayed later in this Evaluation.

The six case studies that evolved from these interviews considered the Program delivered in Cherbourg and Kuranda and sought to assess the level of impact of the Program on the lives and personal experiences of participants. The participants whose information was used in the case studies were fully informed of this, and agreed to have their details highlighted and shared.

A further outcome of completing the case studies was the identification of useful participant details framed around empowerment and life-style change as follows:

- Your Background
- What Were the Identified Themes in the Interview
- How Empowerment Was Achieved?
- Positive Outcomes in Your Life
- Recommendations You Would Make

The case studies are included as Appendices 1 to 6.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

The findings of the Evaluation are presented in this section through an analysis of data from both communities and a summary of the interview outcomes. Examination of the initial community consultations, the participants' SMSC, and information from recent interviews illustrate consistency in the issues and concerns identified by community members in 2013 and 2017. Further, these examinations demonstrate the distinct beneficial outcomes that the Program has for community members, and the community as a collective.

This section outlines:

- Relevant statistical data for the community.
- The themes identified from analysis of SMSC.
- Excerpts from participants' SMSC to illustrate the type and depth of feedback, as well as provide evidence of impact and benefits.
- Data from on-site interviews with participants (including case study data) to illustrate evidence of Program impact and benefits.

Participant Data

Approximately 80% of those who started the Program completed it. Of the 159 graduates of the Program, 67% were women and 33% men, with 96% of the graduates completing SMSC.

	KURANDA	CHERBOURG	TOTALS
Participants Commenced	125 (48 men & 77 women)	74 (30 men & 44 women)	199 (78 men & 121 women)
Participants Completed	100 (32 men & 68 women)	59 (21 men & 38 women)	159 (53 men & 106 women)
Stories Completed and Analysed	96 (29 men & 67 women)	57 (20 men & 37 women)	153 (49 men & 104 women)

CHART 1: CSEWB Program Participants

Summary of Themes

Analysis of the SMSC data from Cherbourg and Kuranda show the emergence of eight key themes present within the communities:

1. Personal Strengths
2. Healthcare and Healthier Lifestyle Choices
3. Relationships: Children, Partners, Family, and Community
4. Family/Domestic Violence and Incarceration
5. Life Skills and Life Planning
6. Education, Training, and Employment
7. Cultural, Social, and Emotional Wellbeing
8. Cultural Reconnection, Identity, Pride and Community

THEME 1: PERSONAL STRENGTHS

The Program provided information on self-esteem and confidence, and on being more assertive in achieving set goals. It encouraged positive thinking and actions, and assisted in addressing feelings of anxiety and fear in any situation, including domestic issues (eg. violent partners and/or abusive and negative behaviours). The Program facilitated the development of individual strengths, encouraged individuals to voice their opinions and viewpoints within family and community discussions, business settings, and other situations.

Participant Stories

Following are excerpts from SMSC that illustrate participants' feelings of increased personal strength.

Title: Better Future

I [have] 2 children and live in my own house with my partner, I smoke yardi and drink, but I'm trying to give it up. [The community counsellor] talks to me and helps me.

Why: *I know what I'm mixed up in now, before it was like I was living for the moment.*

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: The Power Will Not End

I told myself that I can do the things that I was scared to do and this [Program gave] me will power and know[ledge] that I am not alone. [I am] more confident in myself.

Why: *I could do things that I wasn't able to do and stand up for my rights as a [gender], because I was shy and quite and now I am more confident being around other people.*

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: [Name] Comes Out of [Their] Shell - Marvellous Inspiration

I have become less passive and more assertive - before I was afraid of confrontation now I meet challenges head on and use the assertive communication skills that I have learnt. I have put more boundaries in my house and have plans to bring more good ways into my family. I am also moving forward in wanting to do a course to be a facilitator in a community-based program.

Why: *Because I was so afraid of confrontation and felt that no one would listen to me anyway. I never had much faith in myself to be able to do a program I would have rather been in the background.*

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: Think Positive

I found the Program was very significant in my learning and teaching me about how to be assertive, how to go about getting country back. Every aspect of this Program has [given] me knowledge and ideas and has changed my attitude and made me to be positive in applying these procedures so I will get positive outcomes. We are, as all Aboriginals - we are very resilient people and proud.

Why: *[I have applied] these changes to my life and think more positive[ly] so I can get the outcomes that I want in everyday living.*

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: Be Proud of You!

I'm more open to talking about myself, my hopes, my goals and speaking up and being more assertive. Before the [Program] I wasn't a very open person. And I always wanted to learn how to be assertive.

Why: *It taught me not to be so closed. Give myself credit sometimes.*

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: The Miracle

The most significant change that I have seen in myself is many things. I have more confidence, self-respect, love, happiness, and joy in my life. I have given up cigarettes, alcohol, and marijuana, and been baptised through the church. I am now studying to do [counselling and support role] and work in [various community roles]. I am more relaxed, healthy and working.

Why: *I was an alcoholic living on the streets in [three towns in New South Wales]. I was also into marijuana and cigarettes. The Program has turned my life around and given me the confidence to stand up for myself.*

CSEWB Program Participant

EVALUATION FINDINGS

Title: About Myself

The [Program] gave me the strength to keep going and to see and listen during the Program was very spiritual and healing. It empowers my mind and ability to say I can do this for my family and to be strong within my family and workplace.

Why: *My most significant change finishing this Project is not to worry too much about things, not feeling negative and just think positive for me and my family towards the future. The [Program] made me more understanding.*

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: I Am Who I Am

My story is that 'everyone' has a story, that comes right from the guts of their existence, whether it be race, health, mental or physical etc. I feel that what I [have] learnt from this is to listen and think and then act, therefore I am being honest to myself and to others.

Why: *Having and taking most things to heart I sometimes 'jump' and have a [panic] attack and give bad reactions to certain issues, but now have learnt to think first, react later.*

CSEWB Program Participant

Program Outcomes and Personal Gains

Participants reported a wide range of increased self-awareness and personal skills, including:

- Stronger sense of self, self-acceptance and the importance and benefits of nurturing self-worth (including value of self within family and community structures).
- Identified individual strengths and how to overcome negative emotions through knowledge and practice (including sharing information).
- Increased capacity to handle crisis situations, and family and community issues, in a more positive and calm way.
- Stronger sense of the benefits of positive behaviours and positive attitudes when addressing individual, family, and community issues.
- Setting achievable goals – applying oneself to attain set goals in a reasonable timeline, whilst managing realistic expectations to alleviate stressful pressures on self.

- Realisation of the need to set positive examples for children and to take more responsibility with caring for their children and families (including addressing truancy issues).
- Ability to be self-reliant, rather than dependant on others, to take on caring roles within family and community.
- Increased responsibility around demonstrating more positive attitudes (including increased assertiveness in voicing points of view) and changing lifestyle habits and behaviours.

THEME 2: HEALTHCARE AND HEALTHIER LIFESTYLE CHOICES

The Program introduced participants to better health practices to assist in improving their own wellbeing, and that of their children and families. Information provided included topics such as diet, the effects of alcohol and other substance misuse, and general healthcare.

Participant Stories

Following are excerpts from SMSC that illustrate participants' perspectives on health and healthier lifestyles.

Title: About My Health

Taking care of myself and trying to give up on smoking cigarettes, and slow down on the alcohol, yes I am a big drinker and I smoke a lot of cigarettes when I am drunk. I [would] like to see myself lose some weight, and look and feel good about myself.

Why: *My health because I was starting to feel sick, overweight [with] no energy and stressed out. I am now on tablets for my cholesterol.*

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: The Lonely One

I want to get off the drugs and stop drinking, stop being influenced by people, maybe move away. Want to be more strong-minded.

Why: *I want my children and grannies to accept me for who I am.*

CSEWB Program Participant

EVALUATION FINDINGS

Title: *The Change*

I want to change being a drug addict.

Why: *Because it is ruining my life and I want to change.*

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: *Stay Healthy*

I work at the [place of employment], family orientated, but worry about certain family members. I get migraines all the time, need a health check done. I used to drink and party a lot. I've been a [job title] for the past 12 years now and I enjoy it. I have a very supportive [partner] who does everything for me and I have a [child] who is 12. I want to buy my own home with my [partner] someday.

Why: *To clear everything; to say that my health is good after my health check, I stress easily.*

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: *Struggler*

I drink often to pass the time and I like to party being young. I would like to have a better life. I sleep in too much. Sometimes I wish things could be better.

Why: *Most of my family drink and party on.*

CSEWB Program Participant

Program Outcomes and Personal Gains

Participants reported greater awareness of their own physical and mental wellbeing, including:

- The realisation that better lifestyle choices, including diet, sleep, and stress-free environments, contributes to a range of positive outcomes for people and their families.
- Establishing a healthier lifestyle plan for children who are sick and/or have disabilities.

- The negative impacts that alcohol and substance misuse can have on individuals, family, and the wider community. The Program helped participants to identify and address (on a personal level) major problems in families and the community as a result of negative and dysfunctional behaviours which lead to continued cycles of distress, domestic violence and imprisonment.
- Negative and dysfunctional behaviours can cause stress, mental anguish, and general unwellness within families and communities.
- Identification of factors including better lifestyle choices that are dependant on changing individual attitudes towards better healthcare and self-management (healing, empowerment and leadership). This was reported to assist with increasing understanding around accumulated stress disorders and mental health issues.
- Increased awareness of the Stolen Generations, adoption issues, and trauma recovery. Participants also researched their family histories and the negative impact that past policies continue to have on Aboriginal individuals and families today.
- Developed more positive attitudes for self. Participants gained the strength to break away from negative influences and behaviours of others.
- Participants increased their resilience and capacity by identifying negative behaviours that impinge on self-worth and self-esteem.

THEME 3: RELATIONSHIPS: CHILDREN, PARTNER, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY

The Program helped to increase participants' awareness around their existing relationships and strengthened their resolve to nurture more positive relationships with their children, partners, family members, and the wider community. This growth resulted in a firmer commitment to reconciling in ways that are more productive, and have more positive outcomes.

Participant Stories

Following are excerpts from SMSC that illustrate growth in participants' perspectives on relationships.

Title: Breaking Free

I am a social butterfly character who finds it difficult to be in the social world due to my [child] who has a disability. I am genuinely happy most of the time but I get depressed and fearful when my eldest [child] is in a bad mood. I don't know what to say or how to act when [they] get moody. I have great friendships who are often there to support me when I really need it.

Why: *I feel my children often suffer because of the choices I made in life.*

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: Trying to Change

I always depended on family friends and my parents, but after losing my parents I had to battle life on my own with my [child]. I also care for two children that aren't mine and I thank my partner for [their] help and support with that. I don't think that I could do this on my own.

Why: *I was spoilt and got my own way.*

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: [Name]'s New Chapter

I'm a family [person] who wants the best for me and my family. I love my children and I want them to have a good education because no one ever told me to take education seriously and I have missed opportunities. Finding work has been hard, but I try not to get depressed over it. Doing the [Program has] helped me to get up and do things and we [have] our own house now.

Why: *Because family is supposed to be your rock. I can now heal a bit because I have lost a lot of family members (they have died), which includes my Mum and Dad.*

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: How the Caterpillar Found its Wings

Since doing the Program I have gained more confidence with myself. I have also learnt a lot more about myself, and my family connections - the people around me - community. I have appreciated the input and learning that I have encountered from Elders that have been present. I was feeling lost and confused but no more. I feel very much a part of this community and it has helped with my communications with others and with finding myself again.

Why: *I was not confident, [I was] insecure, nervy, anxious and stressed when I began. I did not feel part of this community. Since doing the [Program], I have realised a lot - about myself, and the role of community. I am more relaxed and feel part of the community now. It has also helped me immensely with my job.*

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: The Turn Around....

Patience to listen [to] others and respect others - peace, letting go of negativity. Taking time to teach, love and correct children without yelling, speaking calmly. Being able to listen. Wanting to learn more from the Elders' stories.

Why: *It helped with the way I was feeling at the time. Feeling numb, angry, stressed, and sick. I had learnt that when things got all too hard & confusing to take time out and meditate, or go out in the garden, to think, reflect, and find inner peace.*

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: The Lonesome One.

Learning to say 'no' to people who take me for granted. I'm a single [person] and I earn a good pay cheque. Stop punting on the horses too or slow down.

Why: *I realised how much I get used by others and I really have nothing to show for my income.*

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: [Parent]hood

I have lived a life that I rushed into, and becoming a young [parent] of three little ones gave me a lot of responsibility and made me feel like I couldn't do it but, attending this Program helped me a lot and showed me my inner strength, that I can do anything.

Why: *It helped me become a wiser, stronger black [parent] for my family.*

CSEWB Program Participant

- Display a more positive attitude and general good manners towards other people.
- Acknowledge what other people may contribute when resolving a family and/or a collective community issue.

THEME 4: FAMILY/DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND INCARCERATION

The Program provided a safe space where participants could share a range of sensitive and significant issues affecting their wellbeing and that of their families.

During the interviews, it was observed that on the subjects of family/domestic violence and incarceration, participants voiced their views on how the Program has assisted them in dealing with these issues, and identified ways to address them via a life skills plan.

Participant Stories

Due to the sensitive nature of family and domestic violence, and incarceration, some participants requested that their direct quotes not be published. Following are excerpts from redacted SMSR that illustrate participants' perspectives surrounding issues of family/domestic violence and incarceration.

Title: The Wise [Parent]

I live alone with my [children] and [older relatives]. My partner took off with another [person], but I don't worry about [them]. I brushed it off and I am just moving on with life because [I've] got better things to do. I just stay at home. I am looking for work. [The community counsellor] has been very inspirational for me. The [Program] assured me that I was on the right path. My problem is that I can't say no to [helping others].

Why: No information

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: Better Life

I get sick and tired of going around in circles – in and out of jail.

Why: No information

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: Why Me?

I found the [Program] good. I have [children] and [am] recently [single]. I was lost, confused and turned to the grog there for a while to heal my pain that I was feeling. Since doing the [Program] it has helped me to focus on the things that are important. My [children] were getting into trouble in the community and all I wanted to do was flog them. I stopped hitting them now just to please others and I try to discipline them in other ways. My ex-[partner] still interferes in our lives, but I tell [them] to get lost.

Why: I never really had good support because I lost my parents when I was younger.

CSEWB Program Participant

Program Outcomes and Personal Gains

Participants reported increased awareness around family/domestic violence and incarceration issues:

- A stronger resolve to address issues surrounding family/domestic violence and incarceration.
- Ability to develop a life plan, including strategies for a positive way forward.
- Commitment to make better life choices for themselves, their children, and their families.
- Increased ability to prioritise participants' own needs and say 'no' when necessary.
- More motivated in facing personal challenges for changing individual lifestyles.

THEME 5: LIFE SKILLS AND LIFE PLANNING

The Program enabled participants to develop a stronger understanding of the benefits of positive self-talk, and how this can dispel negative self-talk (bad thoughts, old negative habits/behaviours, aggressive actions and language) towards themselves, family members, and others.

Participants acknowledged how negative self-talk can lead to their own dysfunctional behaviours and personal situations, which may then impact in a range of negative ways on their wellbeing, and that of their families and the wider community.

Participant Stories

Following are excerpts from SMSC that illustrate participants' perspectives on life skills and life planning.

Title: New Beginning

I started to realise that I always put others first. I now put myself first.

Why: I didn't realise how much I was being used by others.

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: Change

At the time of starting this [Program] I was emotionally unstable, suffering depression. I was also unemployed. Today I feel a lot better within myself. I am currently employed at [place of employment]. I feel a lot happier within myself and am able to deal with things a lot better.

Why: Because of being a [parent to] five children, it has helped our family immensely. I am a lot happier, [and so are] my partner and children.

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: Heal/Come Rest/Come Home

Understanding my anger and stress levels and what triggers my emotions. Connecting with the other [people of same gender]. Admitting to needing help in times of stress and depression. I understand and admit to myself now about my behaviours and anxiety. Re-programming my stance in the family network. Knowing my concern from the core - showing love so it can shine again.

Why: Understanding strategies to overcome depression/anxiety and have asserting conversations. Knowing that I can make changes with leaving my past and trauma behind. Self Resolution.

CSEWB Program Participant

EVALUATION FINDINGS

Title: Untitled

From a young age I was always hot headed, quick tempered, and lacked patience, I had no consideration for others; I [saw] my behaviour was getting me nowhere. Finally now that I have my own family, a [parent] of two and recently becoming [married] has taught me the qualities of life, loving my family more, learning to be patient & not so hot headed. Through one of the discussions we had during [the Program] it opened my eyes to see that [my] kids [are] teaching me to be calm, patient, and to be happy. I thought it was my job to teach them but I can see it can go both ways. I also lacked these skills within the workforce; I drove myself to be more involved and was so determined to get things done even if it interrupted my family life. I would get angry and frustrated when things didn't work out.

Why: Being a part of the [Program], I've gained more determination to be happier and successful at the same time but not allow work to take over my life and to treasure those precious family times we now have. It also encouraged me to keep on track to gaining my goals and not carry a heavy load. Most of all, I have learnt that Family Comes First.

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: Thankful

Going to court all the time for truancy. This stressed me out. [Community counsellor] came to do home visits with me and [my child].

Why: I learnt discipline to control my children.

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: Alive and Happy

[I am] feeling motivated and positive during this [Program] also sharing each other's stories and company. Throughout this [Program] it has given me a different [perspective] on changing my ways of living and a positive future for myself.

Why: To better myself and give me confidence to overcome my everyday challenges.

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: Letting Go (because now I can see that our community will be left in good hands with the younger leaders)

My change has been about self-healing, to take time out for myself. I don't have to keep going until I burn myself out. I now see the potential in our younger leaders where I can take a step back now and have faith in them, where before I didn't have time to see the younger ones stepping up and making their presence known in the community.

Why: I have been heavily involved in the community and political scene for so long now and it has had an effect on my health and family. I have also taken on more than my fair share of community responsibilities within the majority of organisations (Aboriginal, sporting, community, political etc) in and around [my local community], which has led to health problems on more than one occasion. I am committed and passionate about my community and my people, it is the reason why I keep doing what I do for a better future for us all.

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: The Guardian

I did a lot of good and bad things in my life. I don't want my [children] to turn out like me so I have made small changes to be better role model for them to follow my guidance.

Why: I had no real [gender-specific] figure in my life to look up too.

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: I cannot give a story title. This is a fact of my life

Having more confidence in myself. Previously when I was in employment, I followed orders, rarely questioning anything that was asked of me, because growing up I was always told to be obedient. Now I can trust in my judgement and make decisions accordingly.

Why: Not to rely on everything to be done by others. Be more in control of decision making for myself.

CSEWB Program Participant

Program Outcomes and Personal Gains

Throughout the Program, the community co-researchers introduced several techniques to participants that strengthened self-esteem and resolve to change their current lifestyles. These techniques included self-checking and a step-by-step checklist, which also aligned with their SMSC:

- Identify what is not working in their life, and why.
- Identify the changes they want or need to make and determine what they want out of life.
- The ability to implement these strategies, to proceed to grow and establish these in their lives and make them achievable.
- Identify significant changes and keep nurturing positive outcomes and build on them.
- Strengthened capacity to address issues that are negatively impacting on them and their families.
- Strengthened will power and resilience to say ‘no’ to people who are draining them in unrealistic expectations, especially those who are not supportive in return.

THEME 6: EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND EMPLOYMENT

One of the major aims of the Program was around personal and professional development, which participants positively support. This development aids participants' individual growth and assertiveness, and their future prospects in attaining increased employment, to ensure a better life for themselves and their families.

Participant Stories

Following are excerpts from SMSC that illustrate participants' perspectives on education, training and employment.

Title: I'm Almost There

Listening to peoples' stories empowered me to study hard with my own study and to get where I wanted to go and to have a life without struggling.

Why: *I didn't feel there was a significant change, just to keep going with my studies and getting by from one week to another week.*

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: Untitled

In my point of view, I have made changes in my life due to work. I have gotten better at knowing how to communicate, better in ways in understanding others. I also made changes in my relationship so both my partner and I could solve problems by sitting down and talking about the situation.

Why: *I got to understand myself better than I was before and to know that anything is possible if you put your mind to it and focus on the things I want out of it.*

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: Sharing and Caring lolz

Feel good about myself, Role model, happy, more outgoing, better parent (spending more time with the kids [and] family). Since working again it made me happy and confident about myself.

Why: *Yes it's been a while since I've worked and it's all new to me.*

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: Cultural Values

I have two [children] and two grandchildren who I love so dearly. I have been going through [treatment] for the past two years, because I have [medical condition]. I can't wait to get back to work.

Why: *My father instilled culture in me.*

CSEWB Program Participant

Program Outcomes and Personal Gains

Participants reported a renewed interest in education, training, and employment, and identified the benefits that these would bring to themselves and their families:

- Identify the benefits of further education such as learning and capacity building, self-determination, and securing qualifications that aid their self-worth, self-esteem, and confidence.
- Identify the worth of shared information and how they can use this to better enable themselves and their families in a range of ways.
- Identify the importance and need for their children to attend school on a regular basis.
- Identify a range of positive outcomes from enrolling in the Program and other courses that will assist in securing employment opportunities for themselves and their families and establish better lifestyles.
- Nurture positive attitudes towards a working life, even possibly setting up their own businesses.
- Feel more confident seeking and securing employment since completing the Program.

THEME 7: CULTURAL, SOCIAL, AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Participants identified that by completing the Program and undertaking a self-assessment of their progress via SMSC they were better able to understand the series of success factors that aided their achievements over the Program's duration.

Participant Stories

Following are excerpts from SMSC that illustrate participants' perspectives on cultural, social, and emotional wellbeing.

Title: The Elder

I love being a [parent]. I lost my [parent] as I was doing the [Program]. This makes me sad. In the [Program] I learnt about my Aboriginal history that I didn't really know happened.

Why: *I want to learn more because I only went to grade 10.*

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: Family - Culture

To strengthen family through doing cultural activities, playing sport, and other family activities.

Why: *To reunite family and it was about me spending more time with my family because my family and I were drifting apart.*

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: *I give my time to the [community] and family when they need a hand doing anything, just like the old people used to do when I was young and I want for more young people to carry this on*

When I was doing my family tree it made me see how much I didn't know about my family and our history, where we come from, how to talk my language. I want to know our connections to other families. I do my Aboriginal paintings of the rainforest and sea, but I want to learn about our traditional stories so I can paint them and know the stories better. I want people to see that I am proud of who [I am].

Why: *I like walking all the time, I learnt that it helps me clear my mind and it gives me good thoughts and keeps me fit. I look at nature all the time, it's good to be outside of the house to get fresh air, and this also gives me ideas for my paintings.*

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: Untitled.

I liked the story of 'Dadirri,' which has taught me that things will happen, not always when we want them to happen. There was this one line that has stuck in my head. 'We don't mind waiting because we want things to be done with care', I know that one day my [child] will be with me again but I must [trust].

Why: *Family is important to me, [this importance is] something that my own family have strengthened in all our kids. We don't always see the little things our parents do but when you do become a parent you start to see and understand.*

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: History

*Understanding cultural background.
Understanding how history impacted on my family's life.*

Why: Understand how history affected individuals, families, and whole communit[ies].

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: I Am Who I Am, because of Who I Am

I need to get involved in more community events and don't be ashamed to speak out about my Aboriginality. Although I am proud of that fact, I never felt I had the right to speak out loud and be heard because other family members were doing it for me. I felt that they had the right and more experience than I could ever possess. This Program made me realise that my story is just as important, because that's what makes me, me. No one else is like me, some may be similar, but I'm an individual, there is no other [name]. I am who I am, because of who I am. I'm a [various family/caring roles] and friend. I'm part of a strong family who fought and continue to fight for the rights of others. My thoughts and actions shouldn't be over shadowed by other's accomplishments. So now I am [a] valued and respected member within my family, friends, and community, Most importantly, I have come to realise just how strong my family connections mean to me, my connection to country and [how] significant it is to share what I have been told from a young age.

Why: It taught me so much about myself, that I am worth something and deserve to be heard. It gave me an opportunity to share with others about me - my beliefs and my teachings. This Program allowed me to be so open and honest, not only to everyone else in this group, but to myself. I have never felt more spiritually connected to my deeper inner self and because of this experience, I finally recognise my strengths. Past acts and actions [are] in the past, because that is where [they] belong, never to be forgotten. But I need to move on into my future. Healthy self is a closer step to healthy family, is a closer step to healthy community.

CSEWB Program Participant

Program Outcomes and Personal Gains

Participants reported that the Program strengthened their sense of identity and pride in culture:

- Stronger sense of cultural identity and pride, a stronger sense of Aboriginality.
- Increased knowledge base of ancestors, family connections, Australia's political history, and the ongoing negative effects of colonisation.
- A greater sense of how culture (including cultural pride and cultural identity), connection to country and knowing their place of belonging can make people stronger in themselves, their families, and their communities.

THEME 8: CULTURAL RECONNECTION, IDENTITY, PRIDE, AND COMMUNITY

The Program provided a safe space for participants to be open and share aspects of their lives. A high number of participants utilised this opportunity to voice their opinions regarding the importance of reconnecting with country and culture. Further, participants discussed the positive effects of feeling a sense of belonging, to family and to community, and a greater sense of connectedness, unity and support. Participants also talked within group settings about how to make their community stronger in a cultural way through attending to individual and group responsibilities, guiding youth, and displaying positive attitudes, behaviours and actions.

Participant Stories on Culture and Identity.

Title: Going from Helplessness to Helpfulness

I felt very nervous and not willing in participate in peoples affair[s] (ie. the NEP etc.) I gathered the strength to enrol in the [Program] with [participant name] and [participant name] and I am glad I did cause it has given strength and will to carry on [helping our mob].

Why: It was very significant in that it has strengthen[ed me] from very weak to strong in regards to not being helpless and hopeless in my thinking before I participated in the [Program].

CSEWB Program Participant

EVALUATION FINDINGS

Title: *The [Identity] Awakened*

Before I started the [Program], I was lost when it came to my cultural identity. I feel this [Program] has definitely strengthened that in me, and given me the encouragement and drive to continue on this path of self-discovery and empowerment.

Why: *My self-identity in a cultural sense has been explored, discovered, and strengthened through the many areas of discussion in the [Program]. I have also developed wonderful relationships with others in the community that will assist me in my continual journey.*

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: *Living in [name of community]. 'Keep our Spirit Alive'*

I have more time to listen to my children and try to tell them or show them which way to go in life. I learnt to do things I like for myself rather than for community. Family comes first then friends. Understanding, listening, and respect, I try to even my relationship in my community.

Why: *[Be]cause its always there but sometimes I forget. Keeping our spirit in our community and looking at everyone getting on with each other and overcoming what we have.*

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: *Sense of Belonging*

I've learned more about culture and connection with family. I am making an effort to go and see family, and

I'm helping more in the community.

Why: *There is a significant change as I never thought about culture, how things happened and how things work.*

CSEWB Program Participant

Title: *'From Strength to Strength.' Stepping-Stones with Small Steps*

As a person that didn't understand the depth of how suppressed and disadvantaged Aboriginal people are it was enlightening to me [to see how] the strengths in family and community unity were bound together sharing strengths and future empowerment. I myself have experienced their respect and forgiveness of tough times and [am] employed with no discrimination being a [non-Indigenous person] living in the community finally experiencing true fellowship and harmony within the Indigenous community.

Why: *Gives me a greater respect and understanding of where I live in [community]. I was impressed with the high standard of which this [Program] was delivered even understanding past history of their society as well as myself being brought up in a [non-Australian Indigenous] community comparing the advantages and disadvantages of different cultures. All in all, the change of freedom in all my endeavors enhanced the opportunity to want to grow and enjoy modern living in harmony with both white and Aboriginal people as past peoples' strength revealed this change.*

CSEWB Program Participant

Note: The above participant is a non-Indigenous person (from another culture or could be a partner of a community member or a staff member).

Program Outcomes and Personal Gains

Participants reported strong gains in cultural reconnection, increased pride in their identity, and a stronger commitment to strengthening community:

- The family tree activity was a valued tool in connecting and re-connecting participants to family and country. The program provided a link to Elders and enabled them to share cultural and family knowledge and history.
- Stronger community focus for change and working together to empower people in their individual roles to work towards a more positive future.
- More interested in listening to each other and being positive toward each other (family and community members).

- Stronger cultural focus on identity, the land and environment, and a better understanding of Aboriginal history, especially the struggles Elders have endured.
- Self-awareness and self-empowerment with an increased focus on healing, culture, and knowledge.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES AND PARTICIPANT GAINS: OVERALL SUMMARY

Participants showed a strong interest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, family histories and the history of their communities. This increased historical knowledge includes a better understanding of the Stolen Generations, and how the associated policies, practices, and outcomes, have negatively impacted on the lives of individuals, their families, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples collectively. Gaining this historical knowledge is beneficial as it encourages a greater understanding of the ongoing impact of colonisation and how this also impacts many of the social determinants and other issues continuing to affect the cultural, social, and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. There was a great level of self-development and growth for participants through gaining knowledge of Australia's dark history.

The Program enabled people who have experienced, or continue to experience, family/domestic violence and family breakdown to recognise various strategies to deal with the issues affecting them and their children's safety and wellbeing. Incarceration was a major factor in family and community breakdowns. Discussions highlighted the cycle of poverty, family/domestic violence, and negative behaviours by partners and family members leading to a range of additional problems.

The value of strengthening culture and spirituality was another important aspect of the Program, as identified by participants. This extends to and encompasses self, family, others, all living things and the natural world. The cultural aspect of both the spiritual and physical worlds (how everything is connected to each other in a cultural context, and how this can bring a sense of inspiration, connectedness and hope for individuals, families and the collective community) was an important outcome. This cultural aspect was considered

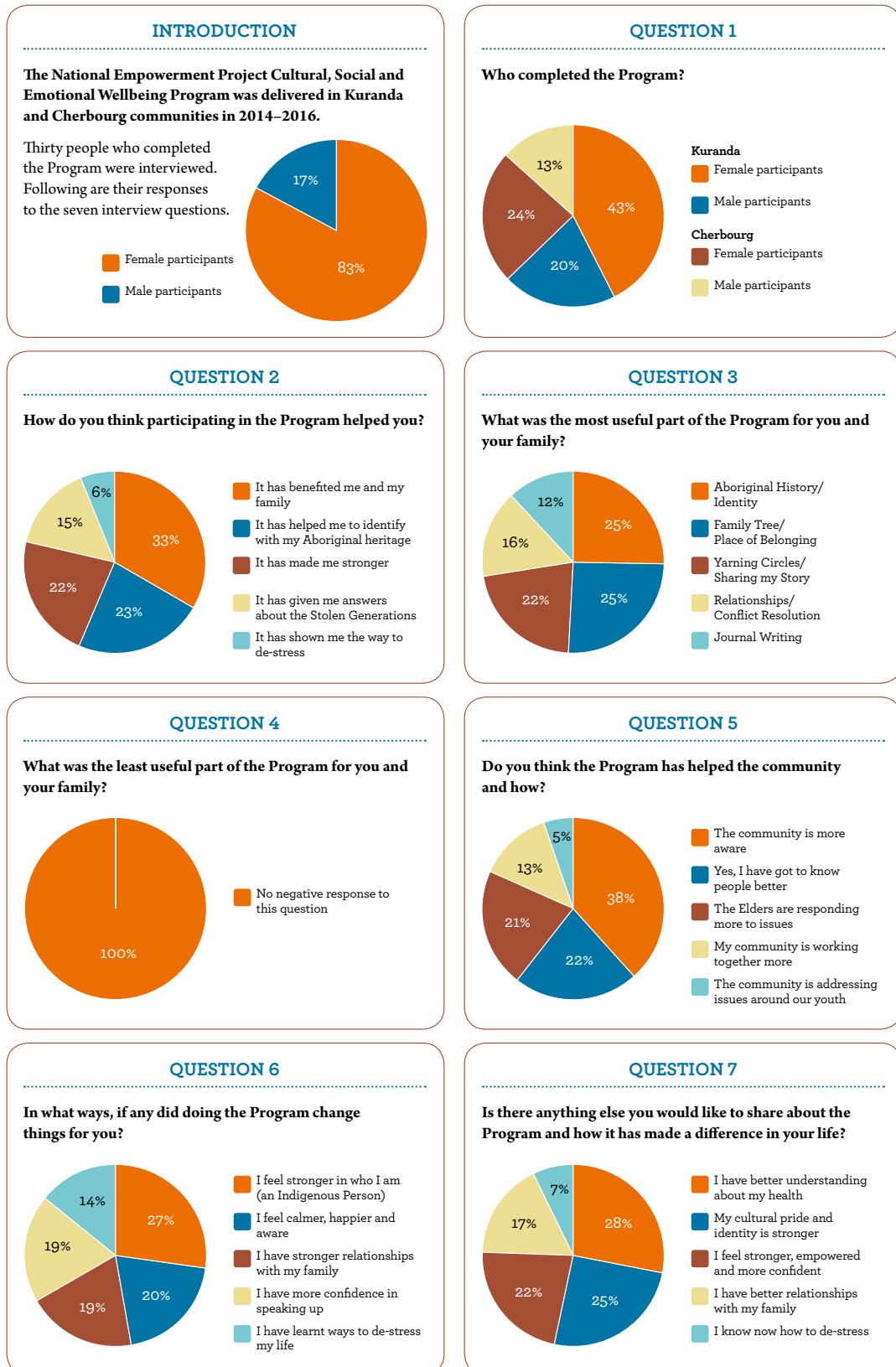
especially important when going back to country for cultural purposes, and for family and community reconnection to the land, and cultural ceremony. Participants highlighted the importance of concluding each Program block with a cultural camp or other celebratory event.

Whilst the Program operated within a cultural framework and Aboriginal Terms of Reference (consultation around community needs, developed and delivered by community members) some participants did not explicitly refer to cultural activities when discussing their individual journeys of healing and empowerment. This does not mean that some participants ignored culture as a valued component of the Program. Rather, it likely indicates that cultural activities were overshadowed by ongoing and unrelenting negative, stressful, and oppressive lifestyle factors. Such distressing factors include poverty, unemployment, family/domestic violence, and substance misuse, and impede on wellbeing at individual, family, and collective levels.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

INTERVIEW OUTCOMES

The interviews undertaken have affirmed the programs value to participants, their families, and their communities in Kuranda and Cherbourg over the two years from 2014 – 2016.



CONCLUSION

The CSEWB Program was an innovative, Indigenous-led, needs based initiative, undertaken in a genuinely community-driven way that involved local communities from the onset. The NEP employed and trained community co-researchers, undertook community consultations, and this process resulted in the community developed and delivered healing, empowerment, and leadership Program.

The Program sought to enable community members to address a multitude of challenging issues. Addressing these issues is crucial as they impact on, and hinder, individual and collective healing journeys, and the cultural, social, and emotional wellbeing of participants, their families and their communities. In delivering the Program, community co-researchers offered a range of activities and components that aimed to nurture individual self-determination, capacity and resilience building, which are areas of proven value within empowerment. Since the Program was delivered in Kuranda and Cherbourg, there has been a significant change in both individual aims and a renewed community focus. This demonstrates a sense of hope in overcoming some of the distress and disadvantage that communities have endured for many years.

Reported strengthened resilience and capacity to address and resolve many of the issues impacting on individuals, families, and communities, further demonstrate the success of the Program. Participants who completed the Program have gone on to succeed in a range of ways that were not previously realised before undertaking their Program-led journey of healing and empowerment. Participants reported positive outcomes from applying the life skills strategies that aid in their physical and mental health care, and general wellbeing. This has enabled them to focus on their personal needs, and their family's needs, in a more positive and constructive way, leading to individual healing, and family and community unification. The voices of participants, both individually and as a collective,

demonstrate increased confidence and feelings of empowerment. Participants reported strengthened insights and purpose, which grew through accessing a Program centred on a community movement of healing and empowerment. Further, participants gained increased awareness and confidence in re-prioritising what is important within their lives.

The NEP, and the CSEWB Program in particular, seek to address the high levels of psychological distress and suicide in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia. These communities, including Kuranda and Cherbourg, have experienced immense loss and grief through the psychological distress, suicides, and self-harm, of their people. Elders and other community members have struggled to deal with the devastating rates of psychological distress and suicide within their communities. There remains a great need for transformational change, across policies, service and program delivery, and within communities. The social and economic determinants preventing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from attaining optimal cultural, social, and emotional wellbeing must be addressed. Whilst the Program and SMSC confirm the resilience of Indigenous individuals, families, communities, and culture in the face of adversity, major concerns about continued suicide and preventable deaths remain.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: CASE STUDY ONE

**National Empowerment Project
CSEWB Program Implementation and Post Participation Evaluation
Queensland NEP Community Site, 2014 – 2017**

PARTICIPANT'S HEALING, EMPOWERMENT, AND LIFESTYLE CHANGES

Community Member's Interview 2017

This section represents an in-depth interview with a community member, in which they reflect on their participation in the Program, and identify beneficial outcomes for them, their family, and their community.

Age: 35 to 50 year age group

Program Completed: 2014/2015

Identified Themes in Community Member's Interview:

- Health and Mental Health Care Issues (depression and suicide)
- Education, Training, and Employment (generating employment and land care opportunities)
- Empowerment and Capacity Building (younger generations)
- Community Development and Collaborations (environmental land care issues)

Historical Background of Participant:

This community member was born in [another state], and moved around Australia in their younger years, finally settling in the Queensland community to be closer to their extended family living in a town. The participant is married and has children. Previously they worked in the private sector for a number of years and in their current position continue to draw on experiences and knowledge from their past employment.

Whilst, within an Aboriginal cultural framework, this participant is considered to be of the younger generations, they have demonstrated a strong knowledge base. This has the potential to empower the participant in their chosen field of employment as well as to enable other young people to engage in opportunities for their own empowerment and professional development.

The interviewee has a history of mental ill health and the reasons for this became clear to the participant through their completion of the Program. However, these reasons were not shared, in any detail, during the interview.

The participant did acknowledge knowing that they were not well, either physically or mentally, for a time in their life and whilst they realised that they were not behaving as they should – not addressing their own healthcare, or their relationships with their partner and children – the participant did admit that they were baffled as to why they were not functioning right and that they knew there was something wrong in their thinking and behaviours. A positive outcome of completing the Program is that the participant now knows how to identify the triggers that bring on their feelings of sadness, apathy, and depression.

The interviewee completed the Program and as a result believes they have a better understanding of the implications of not dealing with health and mental health issues that impact on a person's wellbeing, as well as how this can then impact on other family members including partners and children.

The participant states that they are more open with their partner and children now, and as a family, they have found the courage to talk about the participant's condition and now work together to address issues that arise.

PARTICIPANT'S CHOSEN METHODS OF EMPOWERMENT

The interviewee has worked hard to transform their life and turn it around to a point where they and their family are more stable and harmonious in their relationships with each other.

The participant did not share whether they were on medication (prior to the Program or at the present time) but they did reveal that their mental illness was quite severe, to the point that they are not always able to get out of bed. Whilst the participant did not elaborate further on their condition, they did share that when they started doing the Program, it opened up a whole new world of knowledge and understanding around health, mental health, and wellbeing that they did not know about previously.

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APPENDIX 1: CASE STUDY ONE

The participant reported that the Program gave them the insight to identify areas of their life that were not functioning to the level that they should be. Now, with knowledge of certain triggers that can set things in motion around depression, the participant feels more confident in dealing with this part of their life.

The participant said:

"What [the Program] is offering participants is the tools to deal with their depression or whatever is confusing them, or just life in general. I mean, depression is a bloody killer for our mob. Considering all the facts that give us the depression, we desperately need the skills to be able to deal with it and the Program has provided that."

Though the participant did not elaborate further on their recovery plan, they did outline a few forms of practice they undertake to keep well and healthy (see outlined in next section). Further, the participant shared a practice and coping strategy they use; when things get too much for them, they go to several places on country (rock art sites and water ways) around the community and sit quietly, meditating with nature and their culture.

Chosen Methods of Empowerment: (outlined by the participant as valuable to their empowerment and cultural, social and emotional wellbeing)

- Positive Self-Talk and Action (stemming negative thoughts when they start happening)
- Identify Triggers (has knowledge about what triggers their depression)
- Positive Communication (with their partner and children)
- Walking Away from Conflict (in high level stressful situations)
- Speaking Up (to share opinions and views in a calm way)
- De-stress: Physical and Mental Wellbeing through Environmental Meditation (exercise, diet, and going out to country to calm thinking and dispel negative thoughts – communicating with nature)

Positive Outcomes:

This community member has worked through a number of their own issues and is back working full time in a responsible job. Although full time employment is demanding in its own right, their job has been a major catalyst in their healing.

The participant also holds a position as a committee member within an [Aboriginal Organisation] and is seen as a rising future leader by the community they both live in and work for.

The participant's idea for empowering younger generations within the community and within several other regions in and around Queensland, demonstrate great vision and the potential to provide a range of employment opportunities for their people.

THE EMPOWERED VOICE OF THE PARTICIPANT

This participant has a range of skills that could be used to further implement the Program in other regions within Queensland as outlined in their interview.

Recommendations (participant's suggestions):

- Adapt the Program for youth (high schools).
- Promote the Program to government agencies and all Aboriginal community grass roots organisations.
- Introduce the Program as a pre-requisite for Aboriginal education, training, and employment programs.

The participant's ideas and suggestions have merit and should be considered favorably by both the NEP Coordinator and the administering body of the Program based in the community.

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APPENDIX 2: CASE STUDY TWO

National Empowerment Project CSEWB Program Implementation and Post Participation Evaluation

Queensland NEP Community Site, 2014 – 2017

PARTICIPANT'S HEALING, EMPOWERMENT, AND LIFESTYLE CHANGES

Community Member's Interview 2017

This section represents an in-depth interview with a community member, in which they reflect on their participation in the Program, and identify beneficial outcomes for them, their family, and their community.

Age: 35 to 50 year age group

Program Completed: 2015

Identified Themes in Community Member's Interview:

- Culture (identity, pride, and spirituality)
- Education (importance and future opportunities)
- Youth (leadership and support networks)
- Relationships (family and community)
- Parenting

Historical Background of Participant:

This community member was born in the [NEP site] community, and is one child of a large, well known, and respected Aboriginal family from the region. Though they work in the [NEP site] community, they are currently living in a nearby community with their family.

The participant works as an education professional and is passionate about showing children the right way forward, and training children to think for themselves. The participant has a love of children and is very dedicated to both their wellbeing and education.

The participant has children and grandchildren, and stated “the Program has helped me to relate better to my family, including, better relationships with my siblings and parent.”

They have also relayed that after completing the Program, they have a different perspective regarding conflict resolution. The participant now finds that when there are family disagreements, the Program “has helped me and my family members to agree to disagree and not personalise situations that arise.”

The participant spoke highly of the Program component regarding negative self-thought and talk and how to change these to positive self thought, talk, and action. They feel that this was an extremely beneficial element to not only for themselves, but also to the community as a whole, as it resulted in a collective positive change within the community. For example, in the participants own words “self-talk is really important... It is a tool where you can get to say, hey, I am not going to buy into this stuff because a lot of the time, that is what is damaging people... I know that with a lot of conversations I have had, people are saying to me that it has helped them to stop thinking negatively and they are thinking more now about positive things in life, so they are running with that, so it's a good tool.”

The participant has worked within education for a number of years, and is very committed to providing a balanced curriculum, specifically when working with Aboriginal children. Their focus is on mainstream curriculum coupled with cultural teaching learning, which is delivered by Aboriginal Elders living in the community.

A further focus in this participant's interview is youth. They feel strongly about the provision of maximum support for young people around leadership and agency networks. Such support will help to address major issues affecting young people in the community.

As a parent and member of a strong family within the town, this participant highly valued the parenting component of the Program, where the focus was introducing the participants to strong values that are important for the wellbeing of their children and the family in general.

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APPENDIX 2: CASE STUDY TWO

PARTICIPANT'S CHOSEN METHODS OF EMPOWERMENT

This participant has strong values and is extremely supportive of both their immediate and extended family, and the wider Aboriginal community.

The participant is also very supportive of the view of community as a collective, embracing everyone as a valuable contributor to community strength and unity. Whilst the participant comes across as a very strong and capable person with firm views that have their foundation in empowering others, they shared that the Program has given them a deeper understanding of community dynamics. From this new understanding, the participant feels the Program has great potential in healing, empowering, and developing leadership within the community that will further strengthen community harmony and empowerment.

Though this participant did not specifically share any negative aspects of their personal life (any underlying issue that is directly affecting their esteem, self worth, health, or wellbeing), this is likely due to their natural positive attitude and spirituality.

The participant has found a very positive niche in their life, to support both the children and parents within their local Aboriginal community. The Program has furthered their ability to think more extensively about how their professional role can advance the social and emotional wellbeing of students and the community as a whole.

Chosen Methods of Empowerment: (outlined by the participant as valuable to their empowerment and cultural, social and emotional wellbeing)

- Positive self talk and action (always look for a positive solution to negative situations)
- Aboriginal cultural heritage and identity (going back to country, cultural camps)
- Positive communication (conflict resolution—positive outcomes)
- Family (stronger relationships with siblings, parents, and extended family)

Positive Outcomes:

As an older community member, this participant, who has a broad experience of life, has demonstrated their dedication to working with children and pre-adolescent youth within the domain of their professional life.

THE EMPOWERED VOICE OF THE PARTICIPANT

The participant has very strong capabilities, which were evident in both their interview and during a visit to their place of work.

Recommendations (participant's suggestions):

- Adapt the CSEWB Program for youth in high schools, to assist in developing future leaders in our youth
- Nurturing strength and capabilities in younger generations to become future leaders/informed Elders for the community
- The Program is about the community, not about being followers but being thinkers and supporting individuals to know their identity and their place within family and community
- Increase NEP community events, such as women and men's business and cultural practices that include creative expression and the arts

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APPENDIX 3: CASE STUDY THREE

National Empowerment Project CSEWB Program Implementation and Post Participation Evaluation

Queensland NEP Community Site, 2014 – 2017

PARTICIPANT'S HEALING, EMPOWERMENT, AND LIFESTYLE CHANGES

Community Member's Interview 2017

This section represents an in-depth interview with a community member, in which they reflect on their participation in the Program, and identify beneficial outcomes for them, their family, and their community.

Age: 35 to 50 age group

Program Completed: 2015

Identified Themes in Community Member's Interview:

- Aboriginal History and Human Rights (knowledge sharing/historical facts)
- Cultural Identity and Cultural Re-engagement (young generations)
- Empowerment, Capacity Building, and Leadership (Elders, parents, younger generations)
- Healthcare and Alcohol Misuse (younger generations/community members)

Historical Background of Participant:

This community member resides at the [NEP Site] community in Queensland with their partner and children.

The participant has held several positions within the community infrastructure over a number of years and whilst they moved away for a short time after completing the Program, they have recently moved back to the community with their family.

The participant and their extended family are long time residents of the community and have cultural connections to the land either through their partner or through relationships with community members. Whilst they have no biological links to the area, the participant is aware that community members have deep respect for their observations of caring for country.

The participant grew up during early and adolescence years with their mother, though on her leaving, were left in the care of their grandmother, aunty and mother's two brothers. The participant did not know their father whilst growing up and their uncles were father figures throughout their early and teenage years.

Though the participant has strong ties to this part of country, they moved around considerably in their younger years, travelling across Australia, visiting sites in other states. This has given the participant a wide range of expertise in cultural practices and reflects their passion for cultural re-engagement and caring for the land.

Though the participant completed the Program in 2015 and moved away from the community for a time, they remain very pro-active in promoting the Program within their community. This is due to the positive benefits that they have gained and continue to experience from participating in the Program.

Though quite vocal since completing the Program, the participant stated that they were previously very nervous to talk in front of strangers. However, as they progressed through the Program the participant became more confident and this assisted them in their employment.

The Program helped every one of us in [our place of employment], not only myself, [but] every worker there. They had no self-confidence about themselves but now, I could really say, that each and every one of us has no problem standing up and giving a talk, and taking up responsible roles.”...

In the interview, the participant voiced their concerns around youth and what could be considered for them as a way to engage better with Elders and their parents.

The participant has a range of ideas they would like to see implemented in a condensed version of the Program to be considered by NEP - a tailor-made version for the younger generations in the community. The participant feels that young people would benefit greatly if the Program could be introduced into various community initiatives within a cultural context and framework. This vision involves older community members assisting in various roles, so as to reinforce the position of Elders as respected cultural knowledge holders and parents as the responsible primary caregivers of their children.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 3: CASE STUDY THREE

PARTICIPANT'S CHOSEN METHODS OF EMPOWERMENT

The participant did not overly venture into discussing any of the issues that they may have concerning their own wellbeing or any other issue within the community outside of what was shared during their interview and pre-interview conversation. The participant did not offer any indication of a healing strategy that they apply in everyday life since completing the Program in 2015.

This community member radiates a strong persona, a respectful attitude, and is quite articulate in communicating the need for cultural realignment within the community. Further, the participant expressed the importance of younger generations having a sound knowledge base in their cultural heritage and understanding and acknowledgment of the hidden history of the treatment of Aboriginal people by the Australian government (historical facts and past policies governing all Aboriginal peoples).

Chosen Methods of Empowerment: (outlined by the participant as valuable to their empowerment and cultural, social and emotional wellbeing)

- Positive Self-Talk and Action (communicating with others on community issues)
- Positive Communication (with Elders, community members, and younger generations)
- Walking Away from Conflict (in high level stressful situations)
- Speaking Up (to share opinions and views in a calm way)
- Cultural Alignment (traditional practices – going bush/connecting with the natural world)

Positive Outcomes:

The participant has faith in their vision for their people and community but understands that these plans are intertwined with outcomes from talks with the NEP Coordinator.

From the interviewers perspective "Although I was only in the community for a short time (1 day), I found that whilst it is a very small community, it could be given further opportunities to develop a number of needed infrastructure that is aligned with community needs toward its growth. It is an isolated community, which needs attention especially in the area of education, training and employment opportunities for both adults and the younger generations."

THE EMPOWERED VOICE OF THE PARTICIPANT

This community member has a range of skills, a passion for culture, and a vision for both their own children and the younger generations in the community.

The ideas discussed by this participant regarding empowering the children and young people have great merit and should be considered by the NEP Coordinator. Effectively engaging with young people would be a positive way to further engage community members in the Program, especially the Elders in their role as community leaders and parents and children in cultural events.

Recommendations (participant's suggestions):

- Adapt the Program to cater to younger generations
- Confirm a cultural/community project in all six week blocks of the Program
- Include parents in the community projects with their children

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 4: CASE STUDY FOUR

National Empowerment Project CSEWB Program Implementation and Post Participation Evaluation

Queensland NEP Community Site, 2014 – 2017

PARTICIPANT'S HEALING, EMPOWERMENT, AND LIFESTYLE CHANGES

Community Member's Interview 2017

This section represents an in-depth interview with a community member, in which they reflect on their participation in the Program, and identify beneficial outcomes for them, their family, and their community.

Age: 35 to 50 year age group

Program Completed: 2016

Identified Themes in Community Member's Interview:

- Family (to know your family tree is important to cultural identity and place of belonging—knowing who you are and where you come from is vital to your wellbeing)
- Capacity Building (very important for the younger generations because they are our future leaders/Elders)
- Health care (Elders and individuals in the community need to watch their health because they can get burn out)
- Mental Health Care (this needs to be addressed both personally and at the community level)
- Journaling (a very good tool as it provides a way to reflect on what you have learnt, where you have come from, and what you have achieved at a personal level)

Historical Background of Participant:

This community member is an Elder in the community and is passionate about their community and supporting people. They have applied themselves to this end for a number of years across a wide range of cultural, professional, and community initiatives.

The participant is aware of the disadvantages of their community at varying levels, and they have been an advocate for many causes around healing, empowerment, and developing leadership in younger generations. They are also aware that individuals in the community need to regularly assess their levels of healthcare and reevaluate their commitment.

This Elder has suffered burn out from pushing themselves too hard over too many years, and is genuinely concerned with the health of individuals who take on more than they can cope with.

The participant's concerns are especially valid due to the high number of issues affecting the community. Whilst the participant feels that it is the responsibility of the community to address these issues, there needs to be a consensus that all community members have an obligation, not just the Elders, to work together to make positive change for everyone.

As an Elder, the participant has supported the Program since 2013, when it was first introduced to the community and various Aboriginal organisations in the town. The participant has seen first hand the successes for those who have participated in the Program. They feel that the Program is helping their people and community to heal from the trauma of the past but to also learn new ways to deal with the stress of life and to re-engage families and the community as a whole around cultural activities and other major community concerns.

PARTICIPANT'S CHOSEN METHODS OF EMPOWERMENT

This Elder has worked tirelessly in their community over several decades and is still very active within the community; working both with other Elders to address community issues as well, supporting younger generations who are experiencing a range of difficulties.

The participant has engaged in many community events and has also worked hard to keep a cultural focus with other Elders, so the young people (primary, high school age and youth) have opportunities to learn about their cultural heritage.

This Elder has seen much over their lifetime and is passionate about providing a range of opportunities for younger people to learn about their culture and know their place in the world. They feel that culture and knowing where you and your ancestors come from, is very important to people's cultural, social, and emotional wellbeing.

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APPENDIX 4: CASE STUDY FOUR

This participant also feels, due to past government policies and the associated trauma it causes, that Aboriginal peoples are still healing from these events. But at the same time as this healing, the participant believes that their people need to take all possible opportunities to make positive change happen in their communities.

The participant has experienced the trauma associated with displacement and cultural fragmentation but is very optimistic that with a program like the CSEWB Program, this can be turned around. However, the participant also feels that the community as a whole (families who make up the community), need to work together more efficiently to make things different for everyone, especially for youth and children.

From the NEP's inception, his Elder has supported the Program by promoting it within the community, including in remote areas of the region. The participant has also shared aspects of the value and benefits of the Program due to seeing the positive changes in their child and the relationship with their partner, and as new parents.

Doing the Program has been a valuable experience for this community member, and they state "everyone should do the Program, even just to try something different is a positive thing".

THE EMPOWERED VOICE OF THE PARTICIPANT

This community member is a revered Elder with much experience over a number of years working in a range of community development programs, for their family and community.

The participant has a great deal of knowledge and expertise and this was apparent in their interview, where they shared a wide number of suggestions that were of value to the community, including promoting the benefits of the Program.

Recommendations (participant's suggestions):

- Other sectors of the community to do the Program (Aboriginal Elders and Aboriginal CEO's/Managers, School principals, teachers and the police).
- The Program to be adapted to cater to Aboriginal youth/younger generations.
- More thought into the promotion of the Program.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 5: CASE STUDY FIVE

National Empowerment Project CSEWB Program Implementation and Post Participation Evaluation

Queensland NEP Community Site, 2014 – 2017

PARTICIPANT'S HEALING, EMPOWERMENT, AND LIFESTYLE CHANGES

Community Member's Interview 2017

This section represents an in-depth interview with a community member, in which they reflect on their participation in the Program, and identify beneficial outcomes for them, their family, and their community.

Age: 35 to 50 year age group

Program Completed: 2016

Identified Themes in Community Member's Interview:

- Aboriginal History – the Stolen Generations (mission life, loss and grief, inter-generational trauma)
- Relationships
- Alcohol and Substance Misuse
- Family/Domestic Violence
- Trauma Recovery
- Community Redevelopment

Historical Background of Participant:

This community member was born on the [NEP Site] community Mission, and though moved around Australia in their younger and mid-adult years, has now moved back to the community and settled there with their children and partner.

The participant is aged between 35 and 50 years and has had a trauma filled life due to circumstances out of their control, especially in their early years growing up in the community. In the early teens, the participant lost their mother, which was one of the catalysts for their later relationship co-dependencies.

Grief and loss played a major role in the participant's teen years; causing negative thinking and behaviors, and bad choices. In the same year as losing their mother the participant was in a relationship with an older abusive partner and they had their first child.

"[Having a baby at such a young age] and not having anybody with me, I used to cry thinking – I need someone to hold my hand, I want someone to hold my hand."

The participant's life during those younger adult years set a pathway that they continued to travel, with the same outcomes. The participant shared many other aspects of their life with me but did not want these to be recorded or disclosed in the interview. Those years spent with their first partner and the trauma it caused is still very raw in the participant's memory and is not to be shared publicly.

Note: Areas that were discussed: family/domestic violence, control, alcohol misuse, poverty cycle, high stress levels and health issues, low self-esteem and fear.

Also, the participant's first partner is now living in the community with a new partner, and is working within the community, and whilst this does at times make things difficult for the participant, they do not speak and the participant prefers to keep it this way.

PARTICIPANT'S CHOSEN METHODS OF EMPOWERMENT

The participant has relayed that they enjoyed participating in the Program for a wide range of reasons, but namely that it gave them the incentive to change their life now that they are getting older. Coming up to the years of Eldership in their community the participant also feels that they have advanced the circumstances for themselves and their family on quite a few fronts and want to work on this outcome further.

The participant shared another incident around family/domestic violence that they did not want recorded or included in the interview. They also relayed that whilst family/domestic violence has reduced over the last several years, it is still happening in families living in the community.

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APPENDIX 5: CASE STUDY FIVE

The participant explained that there was a case of this happening that put the community as a collective into both deep mourning and community distress, as many of the residents were related to both of the people in the relationship, including the participant. From this happening, the community imploded on itself across many fronts, and it was very hard for people to come back from this happening. It was a long time before there was any normalcy, where people could start healing. The incident was also communicated through national media outlets.

"Though we all have [dis]agreements in our relationships, some people take things too far, and the result of this can be very devastating."

Since doing the Program, this participant has continued with a valued method of contemplation and reflection, that has both helped them to de-stress, calm their thoughts, and control their feelings. This has helped the participant to learn to make their mind quiet and push away negative thoughts of the past, and replace them with constructive thought around the importance of their own wellbeing. The participant is now an avid practitioner of meditation (silent and in-motion: sitting still to think and calm their body and thoughts, and walking to exercise and forward think). Several further methods of reinforcing a positive self, is communing with nature (sitting in the open area of the local park and just being one with the natural world, enjoying the environment).

A further activity for this participant's empowerment is Mirror Talk – an activity the NEP community facilitator gets the group to do on a regular basis. What the participant would like to see, after women have completed the Program, is to become a group of siblings that support each other – where they can also help younger people coming into young adulthood, to be strong, especially around making the right choices for themselves.

The participant sees it as a very positive start to influence these young people to value themselves more, as well as to introduce them to consider doing the Program, where they will be further empowered and educated on personal development and to make better lifestyle choices, to be their own leaders of the own lives.

Chosen Methods of Empowerment: (outlined by the interviewee as valuable to their empowerment and cultural, social, and emotional wellbeing)

- Visual Re-Enforcement of the Positive Self (Mirror Talking)
- Journal Writing (keeping track of progress and for reflection time)
- Positive Communication (with partner and children)
- Visualisation (positive outcomes for participant and their family)
- Walking Away from Conflict (in high level stressful situations)
- Speaking Up (to share opinions and views in a calm way)
- Meditation (calming self, and thinking positive thoughts, distress exercise/ practice)
- Keep Active (volunteer to help others when opportunities they can handle arise)
- De-stress: Physical and Mental Wellbeing (exercise, diet, drink right amount of water per day and develop good sleep patterns)

Positive Outcomes:

Various themes in the participant's interview reveal a wide range of issues that many other people in the community are still dealing with, although this participant has worked through many of these issues in union with their new partner since participating in the Program.

The participant feels more empowered now and can see that there are other options that can be incorporated in their life to turn things around for themselves, their children and partner.

In the words of this community member, "Yes, it, the Program, has helped especially with relationships between me and my partner (my new one), me and my children – but me and a lot of the community members. I am always now about being or trying to be positive. I'm thinking much better now because I've been around negativity over many years. I've lived it and I've felt it, so I'm feeling on top of the world, after doing the Program".

Though this community member has completed the Program, they have offered to still support the Program in various ways, including supporting the coordinator and community facilitators to promote NEP to community members and by engaging in NEP events, especially with young people and events that bring the community together.

THE EMPOWERED VOICE OF THE PARTICIPANT

Recommendations (participant's suggestions):

- I feel confident that I can help NEP community facilitators and community events.
- I could also help set up a [gender-specific] support group of Program graduates which will benefit the young people in the community across a wide range of areas. I hope that the NEP coordinator, when developing their 2017 program and support networks, will consider this.

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APPENDIX 6: CASE STUDY SIX

National Empowerment Project CSEWB Program Implementation and Post Participation Evaluation

Queensland NEP Community Site, 2014 – 2017

PARTICIPANT'S HEALING, EMPOWERMENT, AND LIFESTYLE CHANGES

Community Member's Interview 2017

This section represents an in-depth interview with a community member, in which they reflect on their participation in the Program, and identify beneficial outcomes for them, their family, and their community.

Age: 35 to 50 year age group

Program Completed: 2016

Identified Themes in Community Member's Interview:

- Stolen Generations (loss of family connection/family unity)
- Relationships (family, extended family, and community)
- Mental Health Issues (self and family)
- Community Development (community reengagement/working towards stronger family and community relationships and unity)

Historical Background of Participant:

This community member has a long association with the community through their parent, mainly due to their parent being taken away from their own parents/people and community to live at the mission in their younger years.

The participant's parent was not originally or traditionally from the community area but was moved there by the Native Welfare Department or the Chief Protector of Aborigines, via past policies in Queensland. As they grew older and became of workable age, the participant's parent was moved around from different places but was always returned to the community until the next job came up. This is very much like that of the policies and procedures of Mogumber Mission in Western Australia and the trade labor of Aboriginal people who were placed there from all parts of the State.

Prior to the Program, the participant had a number of unresolved issues about their parent. However, since completing the Program, the participant has stated that their relationship with their parent has now turned a corner in a positive way. The participant shared that they are now on speaking terms, after not speaking for 20 years, nearly half of the participant's life.

It has been relayed that the participant's parents are Stolen Generations people, one parent is Aboriginal and the other is non-Aboriginal, but both had extremely traumatic lives when growing up. The participant is now more aware of their parent's experiences due to several components within the Program; Australia/Aboriginal History and policies governing Aboriginal people, the family tree, the Stolen Generations, and intergenerational trauma.

Following completion of the Program, the participant is now better able to understand the issues affecting their parent, which have impacted on their family through intergenerational trauma (passed from one family member to another). This has also bought with it, a desire to know more about past history, where the participant has spoken of writing a book with the help of their child.

PARTICIPANT'S CHOSEN METHODS OF EMPOWERMENT

The participant shows great interest in working with the Program community facilitators around aiding the development of other community projects within the community. However, the participant did not explicitly disclose if they are following an individualised plan in their trauma recovery.

Whilst the participant has great vision for possible programs that are community focused, they have moved from the mission and now live with their family and partner in a small town in the region.

The participant revealed that they suffer from a mental illness and have recently been diagnosed with another, more severe, mental illness. The participant is working with their doctor and partner to aid their recovery.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 6: CASE STUDY SIX

Chosen Methods of Empowerment: (outlined by the interviewee as valuable to their empowerment and cultural, social, and emotional wellbeing)

- Family (nurturing strong alliances between family members, and addressing issues as they arise, especially with their parent)
- Health Care (has put in place a better diet and exercise regime)
- Mental Health Care (follows a stress-free plan to induce a calmness of mind and body/tuning into nature/the natural world around them)
- Community Development (working on plans to develop their community's resources—self endorsed plan to keep their thoughts focused on other things whilst in recovery)
- Strengthening Community Relationships and Unity (keeping in touch with the community facilitators to promote the Program)

Positive Outcomes:

This community member has made great headway in their cultural, social, and emotional wellbeing, and this is evident in their newly formed relationship with their parent. The participant has been unwell for a number of years, with no idea why they felt the way they did. Following completion of the Program, the participant has now moved into a higher consciousness by acquiring the knowledge and understanding needed to un-pack the many issues that have impinged on their wellbeing and family relationships over many years (including the fall out with their parent for over two decades).

Whilst this community member has a mental illness, they are still very supportive in aiding others in their health recovery. The participant remains hopeful that the community council will present the Program with a small parcel of land to develop a community garden that will benefit community members.

THE EMPOWERED VOICE OF THE PARTICIPANT

This community member felt that the Program was of great benefit to them personally as well as for their partner, who participated in the Program at the same time.

The Program has strengthened their resolve to progress their lives in a number of ways including supporting the community in a range of initiatives; from working in the community Elder's respite and hospital, to supporting the community facilitators in establishing a community garden.

Recommendations (participant's suggestions):

- That staff from all official agencies in the community complete the Program (to allow better understanding of the issues facing families in the community).
- To adapt the Program to enable other age groups to participate.
- To further the promotion of the Program via major state and national media outlets.
- To establish a community garden and other community enterprise based initiatives that will benefit the community as a collective.

I hope that the NEP Coordinator will consider my suggestions, as I feel the Program is worthy of further development through including other parts of the community's involvement, like the local council.

