



The National Empowerment Project
Cultural, Social and Emotional
Wellbeing Program Evaluation, Perth
2017 - 2018

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Empowerment Project (NEP) is an Aboriginal led research project that was established in 2012 which was developed and led Professor Patricia Dudgeon. The aim of the NEP was to develop a nationally applicable program to promote cultural, social and emotional wellbeing and reduce high rates of psychological distress, self-harm and suicide in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The NEP was designed to be implemented in three stages. Firstly, the completion of extensive community consultations, secondly the development of a Cultural, Social, and Emotional Wellbeing (CSEWB) Program followed by the delivery of the CSEWB Program in the initial NEP community sites.

The extensive community consultation process in eleven (11) sites across Australia in 2012 employed a Participatory Action Research methodology (Dudgeon, Scrine, Cox, and 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. In 2014 the CSEWB Program was developed and includes further programs such as life skills and a community project.



Principles of the NEP

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 the Risk of Suicide Guide (2013), a set of principles to oversee the NEP were developed.

These six principles have guided and informed the development and implementation of the NEP:

- Human Rights and Social Justice
- Community Ownership
- Community Capacity Building
- Resilience Focused
- Empowerment and Partnership
- Respectful of Local Knowledge

This evaluation report was commissioned to investigate the experiences of participants and the support systems during the delivery of the NEP - CSEWB Program, life skills workshops and community projects between 2017 and 2018 in three (3) sites in the Perth metropolitan area. A second evaluation report is expected after mid 2019 that looks at the implementation of the 'complete' NEP cycle in Kwinana. Nevertheless, the current evaluation is the third report of the CSEWB Program delivery nationally. The first two evaluations of the Queensland sites of specific outcomes and impacts of the CSEWB Program for Kuranda and Cherbourg were undertaken in 2014 (Deshong) and 2017 (Mia and Oxenham) which can be found on the National Empowerment Project website <http://www.nationalempowermentproject.org.au>

The CSEWB Program

The focus of this evaluation is to seek the perspectives of those involved, specifically the impacts and outcomes of the Perth CSEWB Programs. The CSEWB Program focused on different domains of Cultural, Social and Emotional Wellbeing (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 restoring 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 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 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander achievements, and explores concepts of self-determination at individual and community levels. What it means to be a good community leader was also part of the Program.

The Program enhanced personal skills and increased knowledge through interactive, fun, and informative activities and content. 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 completion of the 12 modules at the 3 sites. Invitations were extended to men and women's groups (where established), the CRG members, family members, Elders, community representatives, partnering organisations, and service providers.

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

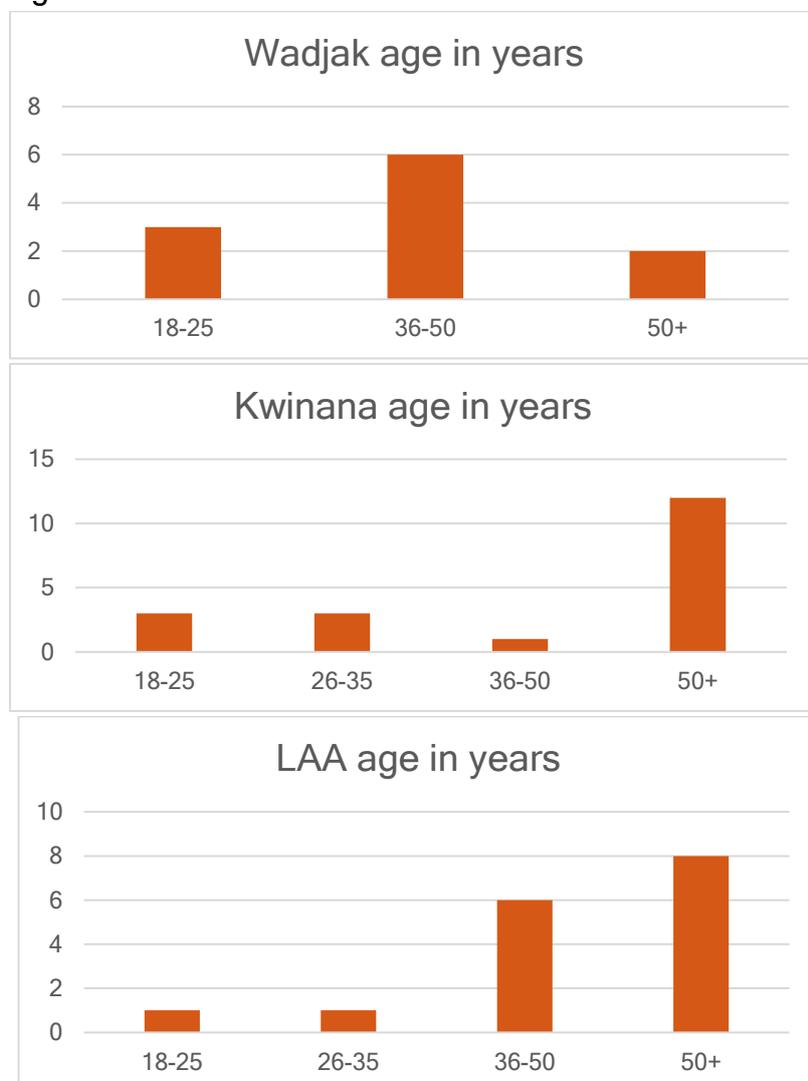
1. Cultural, Social, and Emotional Wellbeing
2. Self-Empowerment
3. Nurturing Individual, Family, and Community Strengths
4. Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution Skills
5. Goal Setting
6. Communication
7. Mentoring

Several supports were established for the CSEWB Program. Relationships Australia WA (RAWA) staff worked closely with partner organisations who identified organisations in each location who have relationships with the local Aboriginal community. These organisations were invited to be members of the Community Reference Group (CRG). The partner organisations were chosen because they had stable governance, capacity to provide administrative and general project support to implement the CSEWB Program in their location. Further, a CRG was formed at each site to guide and support the program. The make-up of this group came from local Elders, local organisations and those who supported the NEP Project. To support the participants of each program, a Community Support Worker was employed. This person provided support during the CSEWB Program delivery for facilitators and participants. At the end of the modules the graduates were further supported in the link to or, the formation of men's, women and youth groups and received life skill workshops, and assistance with their community projects.

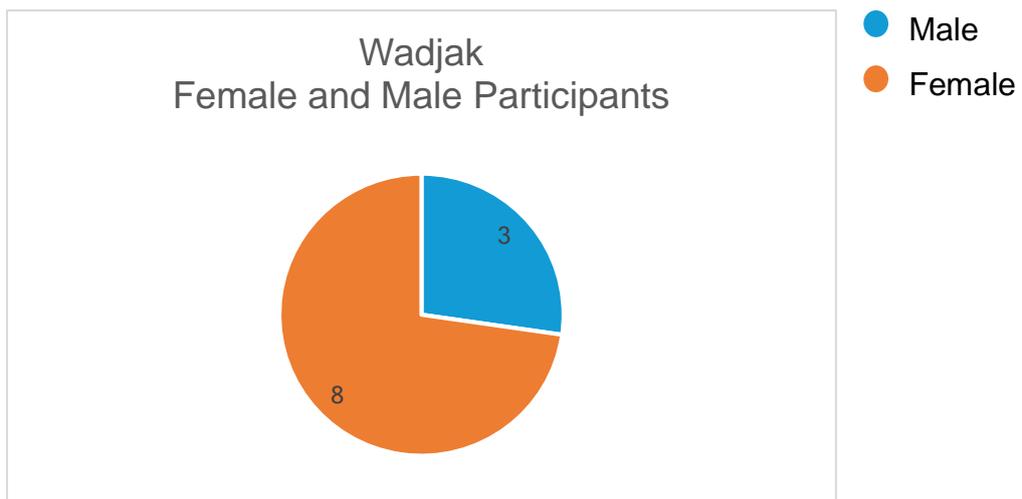
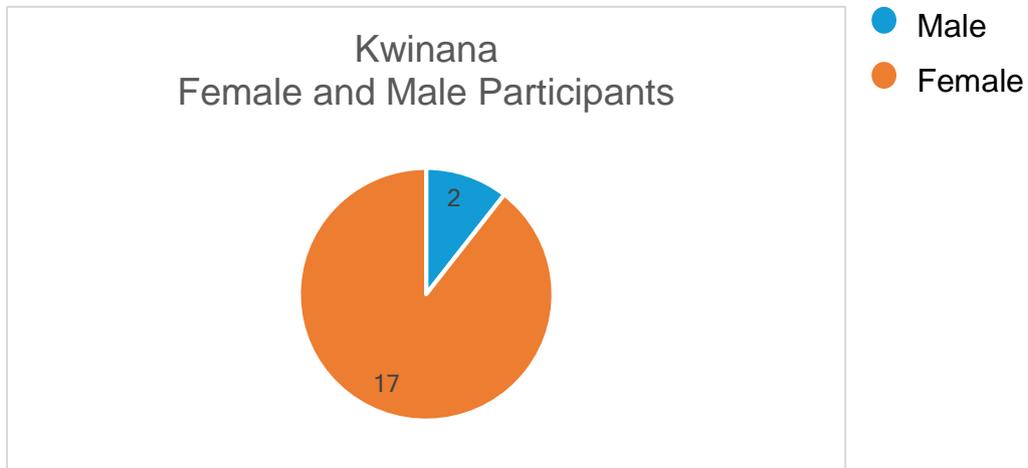
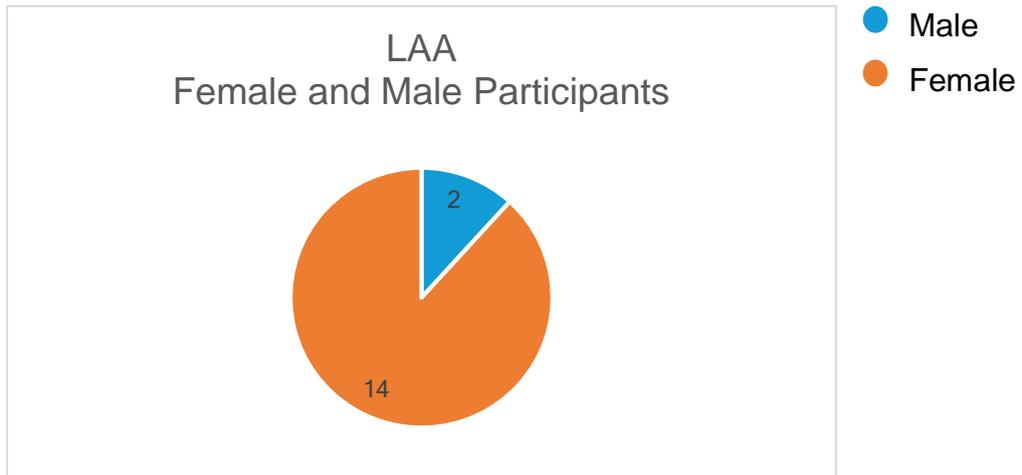
The above support structures for the Program were a result of the consultation phase in 2012. A total of forty (40) participants attended the consultation sessions for the Perth area in 2012. Of the forty (40) participants, thirty-three (33) were Aboriginal community members and seven (7) were stakeholder representatives. In 2017, four (4) of the participants who engaged in the initial consultation phase graduated from the CSEWB Program.

This evaluation was undertaken by two (2) Aboriginal female consultants. Consent was given by all participants for testimonials and photos for this evaluation. Participants of the CSEWB Program included a broad reflection of age groups, ranging from young through to older Aboriginal people and a mix of male and female. The demographics of the participants who graduated from each of the three locations are illustrated below.

Age



Gender



Data for the purposes of this evaluation was gathered from:

- Three (3) focus group/yarning circles with structured questions where thirty-eight (38) from the forty-six (46) graduates participated;
- Ten (10) telephone interviews with structured questions from those participants who didn't complete the CSEWB Program;
- Four (4) telephone interviews with structured questions from those community members who registered but did not attend the CSEWB Program;
- Eight (8) telephone interviews with structured questions from Partner Organisation employees;
- Eight (8) telephone interviews with structured questions from Community Reference Group members;
- Four (4) telephone interviews with Facilitators;
- Participant registration forms;
- Stories of Most Significant Change provided by participants on completion of the 12 modules;
- Formative and Impact Evaluations conducted during delivery of the modules at completion of 6 and 12 weeks; and
- Pre and Post Kessler 5 assessments.

This evaluation identified that the CSEWB Program had a positive and significant impact on individual participants, their families and the community. The following are the key themes that emerged from focus groups (structured yarning circles) and individual interviews.

Key Findings

The CSEWB Program focused on strengthening the cultural, social and emotional wellbeing of individuals, that flowed onto families, and the community. Thus, resulting in these individuals involved themselves in activities with a community-wide focus.

During the Program the themes Self, Family and Community clearly emerged from the six (6) week Formative Evaluation and an Impact Evaluation completed at week twelve (12). The emergence of these themes was due to the program content and the way that the participants responded to the content as individuals and as a collective. Participants gained a greater understanding of how to shift their focus from what they knew to enable them to get out of their comfort zone, to meet new challenges. Participants also demonstrated an increased awareness and knowledge from the learnings of the 12 modules, of their positioning in the community and the positive impact they *can* have to support their families and community.

Key themes that emerged from the analysis centered around the following:

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

Many discovered new information and the tools they took away from the Program allowed them to change significantly in their everyday lives. Some progressed onto further training, and others gained employment. The program enhanced the participants understanding of mental health issues. Others volunteered their time and their new-found confidence and knowledge enabled them to support local community events (which they would not have done so in the past).

During the evaluation process there were many common themes reported as to how the CSEWB Program had changed and helped participants, their families and the broader community. In some instances, common themes emerged amongst all participants. For example, many of the younger mums reported having a better relationship with their children during the Program and more so after completion. The males reported having a better understanding of their role as “the man” of the house/family and were more confident in taking on the role of a leader within their family and the broader community. The Elders expressed that they enjoyed working with others in the community as this opportunity was not often available to them and were especially appreciative of being part of a group with younger people who showed immense respect for them. The younger ones articulated this respectfulness throughout the program. The Elders were very happy to share their stories with the younger participants and were appreciative of the respect shown to them.

Additional to this, most of the participants reported an improved level of self-confidence, self-esteem, motivation, more comfortable sharing and speaking out loud (public) and a greater understanding of self. There were many that reported the parenting component of the program was extremely valuable and they had put into practice much of what was learnt and as a result their relationships with their children had improved.

What was “most” apparent, was that each group developed a network or friendship circle, as a result of doing the Program. This was “extremely valuable” and was visible to the facilitators and to most of the participants. New friendships were formed amongst group members.

This resulted in many unobvious benefits/outcomes, such as (but not limited to) strengthening awareness of each other, building support networks, being more aware of who is in each other's respective communities and a "new found" respect for their local Elders.

For participants who completed the Program, life skills, and community project, an emerging outcome has been the development of leadership skills in their personal, family and community life. This is evidenced in anecdotal stories gathered throughout the evaluation. Those who completed the Program and who are continuing to participate in the life skill workshops and their community project journey, have discovered confidence in themselves which has been enlightening and gives hope that Aboriginal individuals, families and the communities they live in, will be healthier communities, as a result of their journey and contribution.

Key Recommendations

The following are recommendations for future CSEWB Programs which meet both the operational requirements in the planning, and implementation, and most importantly, in meeting the needs and timeframe of the community.

1. The Community Project (a component of the 12 month Program), be incorporated into the 12-modules of the Program instead of an additional demand on participants' time. The first site at LAA identified it was difficult to obtain the commitment for additional input due to family and work demands after the Program.
2. Spend less time on the CSEWB Program theme song which participants sang at their graduations. Preference is for participants to talk about their journey at the graduation.
3. To have available at each session consistent counsellors both male and female so that participants can build rapport and access counselling when required to deal with issues that arise and require immediate support.
4. Graduation ceremonies preparation to include an invitation be extended to community members so they can observe the profound changes in the participants and understand the Program through participants' testimonials i.e. promotion and encouragement for community members to attend future Programs. Graduates to present at the graduation ceremony.
5. Encourage and support an increased participation of males in future CSEWB Programs.

6. Undertake a review of the Program to identify the time allocated for each module and consideration of allowing more time for some sessions especially when sensitive issues are emerging or, participants are engaged and gaining valuable knowledge, skills and empowerment.
7. Crèche services to be available for parents/carers with young children at each Program site.
8. Source leadership training programs for participants to support their CSEWB Program learnings and continued development.
9. Continue to engage Aboriginal people to be Facilitators of the CSEWB Program due to the specific content and the sensitivity of module topics. It is crucial for the success of the Program that the facilitation is done by, for, and with Aboriginal people.
10. Aboriginal evaluators continue to be engaged to undertake further evaluations of future Programs to ensure similar terms of reference are aligned with those of participants. Aboriginal evaluators are more able to obtain in-depth data.
11. Undertake a review of the training time required to orient CSEWB facilitators of the Program content to include in future budgets to prepare for future Program delivery. This is based on feedback from facilitators and participants.
12. For future evaluations of the NEP CSEWB Program it is recommended that facilitators participate in a focus group to share experiences and lessons learnt.
13. Additional resources be allocated to capture qualitative and quantitative data which is essential for a more comprehensive report.

OVERVIEW

In Perth, the CSEWB Program focused on strengthening the cultural, social and emotional wellbeing of individuals, families, and the community, which involved a number of activities with a community-wide focus. The original CSEWB Program was developed with the aim of repeating three, six-week long blocks, throughout the overarching 12-month timeframe. However, the Perth sites delivered the Program in 12-week blocks to meet the needs of the communities involved.

The Program involved community relationship building, where Community Support Workers (who are all local community members) contacted other services and providers to enlist their support and involvement in the Program. Langford Aboriginal Association (LAA) was one organisation able to employ a Community Support Worker to work with facilitators and participants during the CSEWB Program. Also, after the completion of the 12-week Program, the Community Support Worker maintained the continuation of the program by organising the life skills workshops and supporting the graduates with their community project. The role of the Community Support Worker was to work with existing groups and to host community events, aiming to achieve positive outcomes for families and communities. RAWA employed a Community Support Worker for Kwinana while Wadjak was supported by an RAWA staff member. These two (2) sites have only recently completed their CSEWB Programs and are in the process of planning the life skills workshops and a community project.

To be able to achieve the above, RAWA applied to the Western Australian Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA) for funding in 2017. RAWA managed the funding, with Langford Aboriginal Association being the NEP Partner Organisation, for the Program delivery in Perth. The delivery sites of the CSEWB Program were Langford - (Langford, Kelmscott and Gosnells), Balga - (Balga, Koondoola and Girrawheen) and Kwinana - (Kwinana and Rockingham) between 2017 and 2018. As per the implementation model, for each site a local Aboriginal organisation was partnered to facilitate implementation. The CSWEB participants underwent an intensive block of 12 modules delivered over 12 weeks, including a cultural outing and a graduation ceremony. This was followed by participants meeting on a regular basis to complete their community project, to form men's, women's and youth groups (where these were not already in place) and to participate in life skill workshops including Aboriginal Mental Health First Aid Training (AMHFAT), Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST), Our Brains Matter, to name a few.

Re-engagement Process

Following the Queensland evaluation in 2017, and prior to the roll out of the Program in Perth (Langford) in 2017, LAA applied for funding from WAPHA to undertake re-

engagement sessions. The re-engagement sessions were designed to provide community members, who were involved in the consultation phase in 2012, information about the CSEWB Program which was the outcome of their participation.

A total of 28 people attended the re-engagement sessions. Twenty-four (24) females and four (4) males. These sessions provided an opportunity to promote the Program which was due to commence in 2 months and led to the number of participants who expressed an interest in the Program.

Community Reference Groups

Each of the NEP Perth sites were supported by a Community Reference Group (CRG).

The partner organisations that the CRG's were linked to were:

- Langford Aboriginal Association.
- Wadjak Northside Community Centre.
- Medina Aboriginal Cultural Community and;
- Moorditj Koort Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre.

The location of these organisations spans the northern suburbs to the eastern suburbs and southern suburbs of the Perth metropolitan area. 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 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, families and communities (Dudgeon et al, 2014).

The CRG 's were established to inform and support the inaugural CSEWB Program in Perth. Their role at each site was to guide and assist the implementation of the Program. Further the CRG membership brought together extensive cultural, professional experience and local knowledge to promote the CSEWB Program. Another task of the CRG was the endorsement of co-facilitators of the Program. The CRG also strengthened community ownership, avoided program duplication, and ensured that the Program worked alongside existing programs. The CRG's consisted of senior members of the community, who were either involved in the business of the organisation or, participated in the consultation phase. Further, a number of CRG members participated in the CSEWB Program. The CRG members were also those who had an existing relationship with the three organisations and shared the goals of the NEP Project. The NEP Project partner organisations, exist to deliver programs to the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The methodology applied in this Evaluation of the NEP CSEWB Program for the three (3) sites in Perth was to capture the journey of all participants associated with the Program. Therefore, the methodology applied for this evaluation, was aligned with the Project Brief – as outlined by RAWA in order to achieve the following objectives:

- Review the completion of the 6-week Formative evaluation and Impact evaluation at the end of the Program;
- Review the Stories of Most Significant Change completed at the end of the Program;
- Review the Kessler 5 Pre and Post Assessments;
- Interview participants who completed the Program either through focus groups (yarning circles) or individual interviews (46 graduates);
- Interview participants who began the Program but did not complete (minimum 5 for each site);
- Interview participants who registered to do the Program but did not enrol (minimum 5 for each site);
- Interview employees of Partner organisations: Langford Aboriginal Association (LAA), Wadjak Northside Community Centre, Moorditj Koort Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre and Medina Aboriginal Cultural Community (MACC), Kwinana (8 participants);
- Interview Community Reference Group members over 3 sites (8 participants); and
- Interview four Facilitators (4 participants).

Data Collection

The data collection commenced in late June to mid-August 2018. Focus groups (yarning circles) were held at 2 (two) partnering organisations, a third at RAWA facilities and individual telephone interviews were undertaken. Other data was also reviewed as stated above. Questions for each group are at Attachment 1.

Participants

A total of thirty-eight (38) out of the forty-six (46) participants who graduated from the three (3) sites contributed to the evaluation and included;

- Sixteen (16) from Langford;
- Nine (9) from eleven (11) at Balga; and
- Thirteen (13) from nineteen (19) at Kwinana.

Other Informants

- A sample of ten (10) participants who commenced the Program but did not complete
- A sample of four (4) participants who registered for the Program but did not attend;
- Four (4) CSEWB Program Facilitators of the Program;
- Seven (7) Partner organisations employees;
- A sample of two (2) from Balga and Kwinana and three (3) from Langford, participated from the Community Reference Group membership.

Documentation

- Registration forms of all participants for demographic purposes;
- Formative evaluations from three (3) sites;
- Impact evaluations from three (3) sites;
- Stories of Most Significant Change from the three (3) sites;
- Interview feedback from participants who commenced and did not complete the CSEWB Program;
- Interview feedback from community members who registered for the CSEWB Program and did not attend;
- CSEWB Program Facilitators feedback;
- Community Reference Group members feedback;
- Partner Organisations feedback;
- Pre K-5 assessments; and
- Post K-5 assessments.

The data that was collected, was analysed through a thematic approach where common groups of information emerged into key themes and these are outlined in the Findings section.

Focus Groups (Yarning Circles)

The fieldwork process was to co-ordinate with the participants to invite them to a focus group or more culturally appropriate, a yarning circle. As Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010) suggest, yarning is a form of communication and is described as "Formal or informal conversation is involved in the production of knowledge. People talk to each other to convey information or to receive information, which once received and processed can lead to different understandings of the subject matter at hand". They go on to add "Yarning as a rigorous and culturally safe method that is highly transferable into other contexts is an interpretive process that has a legitimate place alongside other western research methods in the gathering of data and is one of many tools enabling the application of Indigenous methodologies".

This methodology enabled the evaluators to obtain information through the yarning circles by focusing on a series of questions and observations of the participants in the group. This enabled the evaluators to encourage the participants to recall their experiences as a collective and to probe further with individual responses.

Telephone Interviews

In addition to the yarning circles, individual telephone interviews were conducted. Some participants were known to the evaluators and readily made themselves available. Those who did not know the evaluators, were made to feel comfortable prior to the interview commencing.

All participants were engaged in a culturally safe informal way by explaining who the evaluators were, the evaluation purpose, confidentiality and anonymity of their responses, and outcome of the evaluation was provided to participants, prior to commencing the interview. The individual interviews allowed participants to reflect on their experience in the Program at a deeper level, and to identify what they have put into practice since completing the Program including other training and community activities.

Ethics and Interview Process

Ethical approval for the evaluation of the CSEWB program was gained from the UWA Human Research Ethics Office (reference number RA/4/1/5299). Therefore, all participants who completed the Program provided their consent forms. Prior to interviewing other informants, the evaluation team either obtained verbal consent over the phone which were signed on behalf of the informant by the interviewer or the informant signed the consent form at face-to-face interviews.

Stories of Most Significant Change

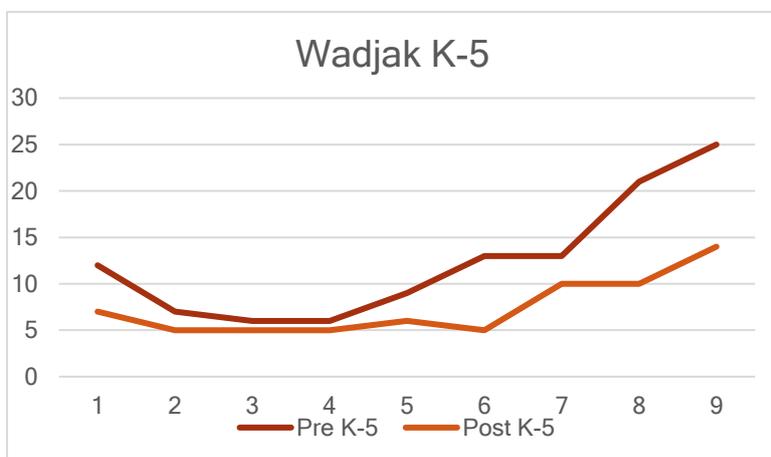
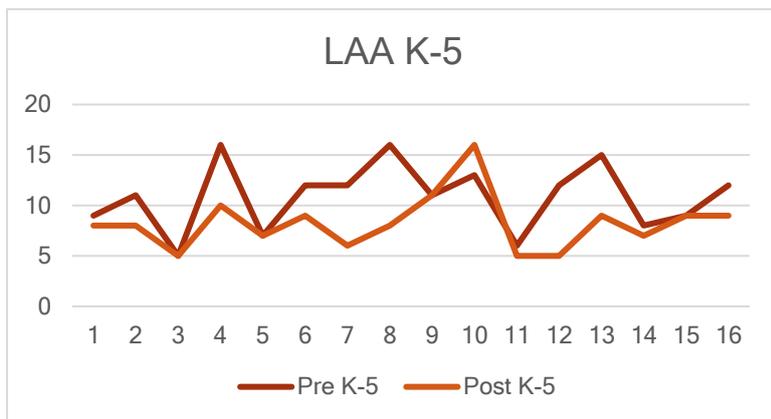
As Mia and Oxenham (2017) highlight in their evaluation of the Queensland sites in 2017, the Most Significant Change (MSC) technique is a participatory form of monitoring and evaluation developed by Davies and Dart (2005). This technique enables researchers to determine and measure intangible qualitative indicators of importance. For the evaluations of the CSEWB Program, the MSC technique was adapted to 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 participants to engage more openly in sharing their experiences and any unintended outcomes. Participants' SMSC are embedded into each theme in the following Evaluation Findings.

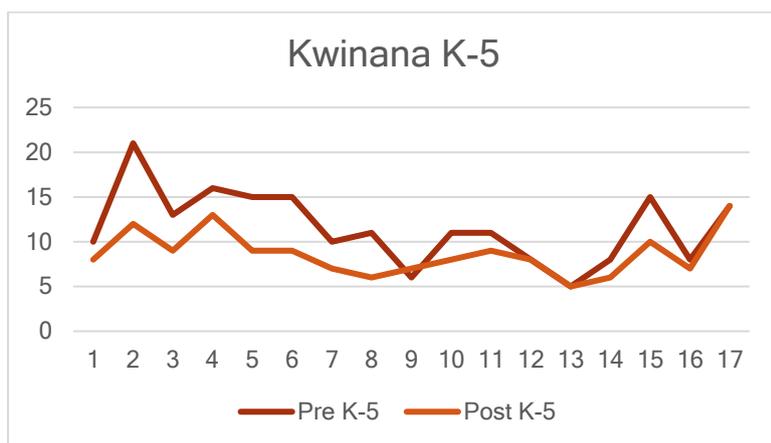
Kessler 5 (Pre and Post)

The Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K5) was used as an indicator of psychological distress and is based on questions about the level of anxiety and depressive symptoms experienced in the most recent 4-week period. The K5 is an instrument that is widely used to screen for common distress, depression and anxiety and is administered as a valid and reliable screening tool.

The K5 is not a diagnostic tool but is used as a screening tool for clients. K-5 assessments form an important part of the program content and were implemented at the beginning and end of program delivery to all participants at each location. If and when high scores were noted, the facilitators had further discussion with the participant, suggesting and offering counselling from other providers. Although it is not used as a definitive tool it does indicate people's wellbeing at the time.

The graphs from the 3 locations indicate that participant's post K-5 measurements were less than their pre K-5 assessments, indicating lower stress levels upon completing the 12-week program.





Evaluators Observations

The evaluators observed participants during the focus groups/yarning circles as being open to participating and providing their account of their experience, to people they had not met before. They were confident and welcomed us into their “space”. In addition, they demonstrated their assertiveness with other participants. This was explained to us, it would have never happened without the Program whereby they had become very close during and after the Program. Their body language was also very open and the “shame” which many of us experience was minimal. This may have been due to the connections the evaluators made with participants either face-to-face or, over the phone i.e. using our cultural protocols of connecting with people we do not know and linking to our own kinship and extended family.

Each of the participants contacted by phone were very open to the interview process and made the time to share their journey with the evaluators. However, some participants could not be contacted due to temporary contact numbers given at the commencement of the Program, disconnected phones or unavailability to participate in the evaluation for other reasons. Other informants were hard to contact to do the interviews. The evaluators put it down to their availability, workload demands and change of job roles and or reasons unknown.

Overall, the evaluators obtained significant data from a large number of participants and informants to enable this evaluation to demonstrate significant positive outcomes and support the continuation of the NEP CSWEB Programs and the appropriate funding to ensure successful outcomes.

Testimonials

Also, included in this evaluation are testimonials from individuals. These all have reflected the difference in peoples’ lives, their families and communities since doing the Program, and these are expanded in the analysis section.

Having completed the analysis, the data obtained provided an understanding of the complexity of individuals and the reality of their everyday lives. In obtaining permission to include individual testimonials, the evaluators gained individual consent to include photographs as well as their statement.

In fact, it is appropriate that Aboriginal people support other Aboriginal people in the gathering of their knowledge. This was also affirmed by participants.

Someone had referred the program to me. I had never participated in a group before, and I am off country and wanted to connect (with the local community).

The cohesion of group was good, because they were all different but all able to connect. I normally facilitate groups not join in, but this was being around people who want to help you grow. This was a healing process to participate in this.

One person got a job.

Danielle Cameron
NEP CSEWB Participant



“I really felt I wanted and needed to do the course to learn things. There were some people I hadn’t had anything to do with and some people didn’t know me. I felt that after we shared things they knew more about me and I about them. Changed my social life, met new people, I have heaps more friends. I am studying Cert II in Business. Getting education, life skills, my reading and writing improved. If it wasn’t for the program I would not have known about the Cert II. I start my traineeship tomorrow for 8 weeks at Bridging the Gap. Good for community, young and old ones, everyone talked to one another, couple of girls I haven’t seen for years I reconnected with”.

Joslyn Jacobs
NEP CSEWB participant

EVALUATION FINDINGS

What did participants learn from participating in the CSEWB Program?

The consultation phase enabled the development of resources for facilitators to deliver the Program. Resources provided for the Program included a Facilitators Guide and a Participants Handbook and other resources developed by the NEP team and community co-researchers. These included videos on several topics: Building Stronger Communities and Strong Relationships; How to Deal with Procrastination; How to Overcome Negative Self talk; Healthy Conflict Resolution and Right Way Thinking. The comprehensive Facilitators Guide was developed to assist facilitators in delivering the Program. The Participants Handbook became a very useful resource for participants to be able to reflect on and review after completing the Program.

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 were key objectives of the Program.

Throughout the Program, participants were provided information about Aboriginal history and the political systems, 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.

The outcomes of the Formative and Impact evaluations are below. The participants identified the Program supported self, family and community in their learning journey. In addition, Stories of Most Significant Change highlight individual experiences. The participants learning journey outcomes commences with the first evaluation.

Formative evaluation (6 weeks)

Self

On a personal level, participants identified the Program made them more confident and feeling better about themselves to face emotions and accept them. Also, made them more aware of what they were doing. Participants reported the Program content as inspiring and eye-opening. They looked forward to coming each week to the

Program because it helped them in a lot of ways. The content had an impact on them and they described their experience as great, engaging, useful and informative.

They also pointed out that the Program was culturally sensitive, provided a deeper understanding of culture and socially, this affected connections to culture and wellbeing. They learnt things that they didn't know before.

Many identified they had to prepare information and learnt how to speak in front of a group of people. Participants liked the journaling component of the Program. Some were creative, and others found this reflective experience quite new and empowering. Learning new things such as the tools to use during stressful times, helped participants to identify who they wanted to be and use the anger management techniques to retain and build better relationships.

Community

Another important factor identified was the connection to community, learning together, listening to others' stories, and with a mix in the groups of young and old people. Yarning with other community members was where participants learnt how to interact with people they didn't know, and form new relationships. They worked together in doing the Program activities and had fun, as well as learning new information.

Family

The self-awareness of emotions and how to deal with them made participants stronger and able to manage situations better. On that note, communicating better at home was powerful and enhanced participants' social skills which had a greater positive reaction. It was identified that the Program helped in the way that they speak to their children now, which is different because they now provide an explanation of things and modelling, how they should talk to each other. Once learnt, participants reported they knew how to self-evaluate their behaviors and communication changed within families.

The overall feedback during this period (6 weeks) was that the program was very useful and it should be widely available and promoted. Many participants advised it made them calmer and more positive, both at work and in everyday life. One participant identified they commenced work during the first two weeks of the Program. Another five (5) participants commenced a Certificate II in Business. On a personal note it helped with recovering from sad times, being able to stand up for themselves and not being angry but able to look at situations differently.

A key issue identified was learning about mental health and how to cope. Conflict resolution skills were gained and this changed decision-making, helping people to stop

and think and being mindful in responding to issues to minimise dramas. Generally, the Program was viewed as a springboard to other opportunities.

Impact Evaluation (12 weeks)

Self

The final evaluations identified that all participants thoroughly enjoyed the Program. They commented that it was more than what they expected and will be very useful in their day to day lives. Some participants commented that it wasn't what they expected, however, they gained so much from their participation because the topics were so relevant, valuable and meaningful, in particular the cultural information. It was well worth their time in attending and they learnt something new each week, to utilise new knowledge and skills into their own life styles and challenges. This was aligned to the social determinants of the CSEWB Program. Their journey was transformative and gave them a reality check. Other participants identified they had become stronger, more assertive and happier in themselves. This was noticed by their partners and family. Another participant learnt to control themselves in situations with other people and was now able to resolve issues, without getting out of control. Therefore, communication, not being so shy and building resilience has helped many participants during and after the Program.

Family

One of the participants commented they have gained a better understanding about self, culture, spirituality, physical, social and emotional wellbeing and about the community they live in. The Program has enabled participants to be more helpful with people in the community and family because it is very powerful and healing. This led to being more patient with family and friends and developed a better understanding of family social and emotional wellbeing. Some participants identified they were now able to talk/yarn more freely with their adult children, which has also brought others closer to their children. One participant commented that the Program provided a better understanding of their relationship with self and family because they have been able to find themselves again which was very hard for them before.

Community

Participants stated that the Program be delivered again for others to empower more of the community as well. Another participant identified they had made deeper connections with other community members and realised they needed to teach their Yamatji (Aboriginal people from the Geraldton region in WA) knowledge with family and community. These connections were important.

A significant number of participants suggested that the Program should be delivered to youth and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in prison. The Program has valuable topics to address issues that too many people face and struggle with.

Participants identified the CSEWB Program strengthens culture, family, knowledge of ancestors, emotional and physical wellbeing. It also builds confidence in knowledge. The Program is a good tool and resource for people looking for self-determination in life and being empowered to make changes to their lifestyles. Participating was all about being connected, reconnecting with others in the community and healing to help overcome life's obstacles, especially within families. One participant identified it was the first time they had completed a 12-week program because the content was amazing. Others identified the journaling was very useful and assisted individuals to reflect throughout this journey. Several participants identified those who would benefit from the Program. This included young working people, family and friends, job seekers to give them an incentive, clients of the participants and should be delivered in remote areas.

Participants who did not complete

Those who commenced but did not complete the Program, identified participating for several reasons:

“Looked amazing”

“Wanted to empower myself”

“Wanted to get out of the house...and wanted to build my skills up”

During their time the participants gained an understanding of empowerment, pride, developed better communication skills, patience, coping skills and understanding of others experiences.

Reasons for not completing the Program were a change in employment, clash in times to be able to attend, work demands, found employment with intensive pre-employment training, and had already completed similar training.

However, whilst attending the Program participants identified they enjoyed being around “like-minded people who were there for their own reasons and a common reason of empowerment”. The Program boosted self-esteem, relieved stress in doing the Program activities, whereby they felt a “weight lifted off my shoulders”. Many of the participants identified they were able to get out of their comfort zone and the Program enabled many to learn more about culture.

Although participants did not complete the program they said that participating helped them to develop confidence to be able to speak publicly about their situation. They gained an understanding of “contributing factors to support the community and put structures in place, and how to deal with people, i.e. the difference of clients” in their role.

Registered and did not attend

Community members who expressed an interest and registered for the CSEWB Program and did not commence were because of family reasons, stress, and crises occurring at the time. Additionally, they would consider attending if delivered in the future, because they received positive feedback from family and would attend if the Program could fit in with other obligations.

Additional Supports Offered

Within the Formative and Impact evaluation process, information was also ascertained regarding additional supports offered during the program implementation. This included the availability of a crèche service at the locations of LAA and Kwinana, transport at all three locations, catering, including, lunch or dinner and morning, afternoon tea, depending on times at all locations and the appropriateness of the venue and whether the reminders via text were of value.

At all locations the participants were 100% happy with the venue and with the catering. The participants at Kwinana and Wadjak also indicated that the reminders text messages were very useful.

The LAA Format and Impact evaluations did not include questions regarding transport, the crèche or reminder notices. The evaluations were thus amended for Kwinana and Wadjak program delivery. Anecdotally however the organisation representative from LAA said that transport was not requested by any LAA participants and the crèche was utilised by many participants, including grandparents caring for their grandchildren.

Crèche was not offered at Wadjak and the venue was not appropriate to be able to support a crèche service. Anecdotally it was evident that young Mum's who presented at the beginning of the program and did not return would have been supported in their attendance if a crèche was available.

In Kwinana the crèche was accessed by 38% of the participants and was a highly valued component of the program delivery. Crèche provision in Kwinana was supported by a CRG contributing organisation the Shire of Kwinana.

The provision of transport in Kwinana and Wadjak was utilised by approximately 35% of program participants. In Kwinana, the CRG contributing organisation, Australian Red Cross, assisted with transport and at Balga the partner organisation, Wadjak Northside, provided transport.

In support of the Program, Partner Organisations and Community Reference Groups were included in the data collection. Their input follows in the next section.

Summary of themes

The analysis of the data collected from the three (3) Perth sites emerged into key themes:

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

The SMSC stories were captured as a process of getting participants to reflect on their journey and the important issues that had an impact on them. The stories that emerged are aligned to the following seven key themes.

THEME 1: Personal Strengths

The outcomes of the data collection identified participants gained more confidence and therefore, were happier and felt better able to take control of their lives. Their improved self-esteem, enabled them to be mindful of other's needs and being more aware of situations that, in the past were perceived as negative. Their improved patience and tolerance enabled them to gain more respect for themselves and others, thus, strengthening their inner self to keep strong and resilient.

Title: Untitled

I have seen myself become more resilient than I was at the beginning of the program. At the time the program was starting I had been going through quite a sad time in my life and had been creeping into a dark place and feeling there was no light at the end of the tunnel as the sadness had taken over. Usually I am quite resilient and push through all things good and bad that come my way but due to several things happening in my life I found it very hard to pick myself up and carry on this year. So, I joined the program to see what it was about and to try and lift my spirits, as well as push myself to get out of the house and back doing something. This has shown me I am a lot stronger and more resilient than I was and I am able to once again help my family in any and all ways and be that person who can encourage and support them when they are not so strong like I was. We all get lost sometimes and that's okay it's important to have that support to get you through and every family needs that person who can be the rock in the family

and I like that I have come out of the program a lot stronger and can be that person I once was again.

Why: *Through my sister - Healing.*

Title: *All About Me – NOT!*

I am becoming more patient with everyone. My strategic planning has changed. I must stop, listen then decide when listening to others.

Why: *It made me realise that I need to be more mindful of others and their needs. It's not always all about me.*

Title: *Untitled*

The most significant change I've seen in myself is gaining more confidence, being a little bit more out spoken, not as shy as I was prior to starting this program/project/workshop. Also gaining stronger willpower.

Why: *Because I work in community and with people of the community meaning (should be confident and out spoken).*

Title: *Blooming Flower*

Before starting this Program, I was very shame and would get anxiety when I had to speak in front of people. By doing this course I can now say I feel more confident to get up and talk and use my words to hopefully empower people and make a change.

Why: *Because I won't to work in an industry where I need to be confident within myself to be able to help other people.*

THEME 2. Healthcare and Healthier Lifestyle Choices

Participants recognised that personal health was an important way to keep strong – physically, psychologically, emotionally and spiritually. Therefore, they commenced on a journey of healing, taking care of themselves to improve better ways of dealing with stresses and turning negatives into positives. Others were not drinking as much and spending more time with their kids. Many were now using the tools they gained from the Program in developing better relationships with their families.

Title: *It's me then you*

Re-addressed past history - family - community and health. Need to pass knowledge on to younger family members. - Health getting healthier to look after family, friends and help in community.

Why: *To allow me to get out of my comfort zone. Feel proud of who I am and connect with family more often. Be strong to help.*

Title: *The rise of me*

*Standing up for myself.
Loving my son.
Drinking too much.
Depression.
Not dealing with day to day stuff*

Why: *Because I was going through a hard time in life with drinking; arguing/ neglecting my son.
I have stopped drinking and focused on myself and my son's needs and I want to raise him right.
Going to the gym for endorphin to fix my brain.*

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

A particular positive outcome was the development of new friendships during the Program for the participants. This brought people closer together and connected people with similar situations.

This reconnection to community enabled the sharing of parenting tips and better management of social and emotional wellbeing with participants both young and old in the Program. Sharing of knowledge has been identified as an empowering process, enabling participants to learn how to not bottle things up. Some participants stated they are now more aware of partners' needs and wants.

Title: Awesome me!

I've become more confident, a lot more courage to be open about myself, learning more about my inner self. Self-determined.

Why: *Helping others, children, community, empowering myself*

Title: The trials and tribulations and challenges of my life

Me finding the love for myself again and finding my family again in a different way than through blood realising family can come through different ways and forms which I now embrace and love in community and learnt to communicate in a better way with people.

Why: *I lost all that during the past 2 half years through my break down and for me to find that again during this program was really amazing for me. Me changing into a better positive man.*

Title: Listen, listen and then speak

The most significant change has been a better connection to family. I have learnt to be a better person due to not being so worried about things that I can't change. To sit and listen and try to process before I speak - (really hard to do) Accept that we all have different opinions and we don't have to agree all the time.

Why: *I have become a more positive person. Learnt to not let the little things bog me down and to focus on what is important to me. To encourage family to be "black and proud" and embrace each other and our differences.*

Title: Building on Strengths and Respects

In attending the NEP this has enabled me to build a rapport with other community people - by coming together for these 12 weeks. I have known the community people - just by passing and saying "hello" but by spending the 12 sessions has given me more of an insight into the individual and my relationship / friendship with them, respect for each other.

Why: *Did not know others on a deeper level - now know them more and understanding each other's journey.*

Title: "Together"

I have enhanced my past knowledge and throughout SEWB training this has been revisited. I have enjoyed the "Togetherness" of the group and hope that we can all continue with this association. I cannot wait for us to start our "Project" All participants will be involved and work to one goal.

Why: *The most significant change for me doing this course is that it made me think about the happenings for me throughout my life.*

Title: The change in my life and community

Because of this program I have enrolled in a course that I enjoy doing. I have become more confident in myself and in the program and I'm more aware of the trauma intergenerational trauma about how it still effects our mob up to this generation. I've also learnt how to deal with conflict and how to avoid conflict.

Why: *To be better within myself and in the community and to be proud of myself when I look back on my life story.*

Title: Changes for a single mum going through Post Natal Depression

Before I started this course, I was going through postnatal depression and my kid wasn't going to school every day and my house was a mess all the time and I would just lay in bed all day away from everyone and everything. Then I found out about this course and thought of trying it out just to motivate myself from just drinking and hiding away from everyone and to get my life on track and start how I have always wanted my life to go.

Why: *Because I finally changed my life from being a "dead beat mum" to showing my kids that there's more to life than sitting there doing nothing. Plus, my house is clean and my kids goes to school every day. I am more happy and not as depressed as I use to be. I am looking forward to life and doing more course or*

getting a job if I can. My kids are happy and I'm happy. I think if I didn't do this course I would be where I was 12 weeks ago.

Title: Untitled

I have grown intellectually. I am able to stand tall and speak out for what I believe in - whether I am right/wrong. I am able to accept correctness. I have become assertive with communication at home, at work and in community. I have learnt to listen and not respond with negativity.

Why: *Work - Most significant change would be my new assertiveness and tamed my anger/rage and helped me respond to issues I have faced in positive effective manner. Home - At home I have noted change in my adult children manner. They have become assertive with domestic tasks. They no longer wait for me to come home to cook dinner. I am able to talk to them.*

THEME 4: Life Skills and Life Planning

The Program provided participants with the tools for change. Participants were all encouraged to speak up during the Program in front of the group and for some it was a new experience. All participants presented their outlook map (vision board) and delivered either a Welcome to Country or Acknowledgement of Country which was very empowering for them. Now they are more confident and some have gone on to do other public speaking roles. This encourages leadership and planning for the future with their families to have positive outcomes. Setting goals was an important component of the program and learning problem solving skills to make better choices and decisions.

Title: Untitled

I have always been shy, scared and nervous about speaking in front of people or / and speaking up: meetings, training, group sessions or workshops. I stressed a lot, worried that I might say the wrong thing or act out of context.

- *Presentation to a group setting.*
- *Public speaking in an open forum or training.*
- *Standing up in front of people.*
- *I am learning each week to SPEAK UP!*

Why: *Through the NEP, the exercises in groups, pairs and individuals has helped me to think more, talk about the content, speak up and present to our NEP family. The NEP has increased my confidence in speaking in front of people, including presenting a training session at work. I believe if you're PASSIONATE about your topics / subject it should/will come naturally.*

Title: *Move in the right direction*

My confidence has improved greatly, I can now put myself forward. I have volunteered myself to be co-chairperson of the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry in our local area, Rockingham, Baldivis. Before I would sit on the fence so to speak.

Why: *Putting myself forward, making changes in myself.*

THEME 5. Education, Training and Employment

Opportunities for education, training and employment occurred throughout the Program. Some participants became more educated and increased their knowledge from the content of the modules. One participant was very proud that the Program had helped them increase their literacy.

Participants noted they were more settled within their job roles and took on new challenges. Other participants obtained employment.

Five (5) young women at one site commenced Certificate II in Business and seeking a work placement. Other participants have since gone on to do other training and leadership courses. The outcomes for those who took on opportunities to increase their education and employment have proven the empowerment of this culturally relevant Program.

Title: *Volunteer in Little Peeps Ball.*

Attending the National Empowerment Project, I've built my confidence up since doing this program. I've put my hand up for volunteering in having to help in the Little Peeps Ball for NAIDOC. Also, now doing Cert II in Business.

Why: *It's given me an opportunity to be part of a community event in the community.*

Title: *Untitled*

I don't think the same way I used to think if someone pissed me off. They were a-holes but now I look at the person like nyorn - what happened in their life that turned you down jerk road.

Why: *I've gained employment with an NFP organisation WHFS. I think differently. I meditate more and look after myself more. I don't procrastinate.*

Title: *Many ways to survive*

The course has given me more awareness of experiences common to all Aboriginal peoples and a way of talking about it. This has strengthened my identity as an Aboriginal. Being the child of someone from the stolen generation means half the family tree is missing, parenting style was affected, as well as values.

Why: *Getting more involved in Aboriginal issues and events and even though I didn't grow up on my country and knowing language. I still have the Aboriginal identity and can still contribute. (I think this course has helped me get my job).*

Title: *I am more than a mother*

My story when I started this course - I was stay at home mum looking for something to do with my life. Doing this course helped me get into studying, I'm now studying Cert II in Business and completing the NEP course, learning how to improve myself and what do I want for my future and my kid's future.

Why: *The significant change throughout this course was building my story, learning new skills, becoming a positive role model in my kid's life and my family and for me.*

THEME 6. Cultural, Social and Emotional Wellbeing

Prior to the Program, participants faced many issues that prevented them from moving forward. Some of the participants were going through bad times and having issues with identity, cultural spirituality, socialising with others and mental health. The Program gave participants the tools to cope with social and emotional wellbeing, which they reported had changed things from bad to good. The isolation that some participants felt on commencing the Program, was now different with them feeling more culturally safe, with the cohesion of the group who supported them. Participants also gained an understanding of mental health issues that affect themselves and others.

Title: *Ripples in My Life*

There's really been no change with me, but I do have more of an understanding for empowerment I realised I've been doing this all along.

Why: *The change was significant for me cause it's the showing of in depth of the meaning for empowerment of becoming stronger, confident n being less powerlessness.*

Title: Untitled

The most significant change which I am seeing within myself is that I'm feeling much stronger and that I have learned much more to help me with attending my monthly meetings and my communication with people out in the community. I feel the program has given me more confidence, and more insight into my social, emotional wellbeing and cultural learnings on cultural stories.

Why: *Because it has given me more strength, confidence, insight, which I really need more of because I am on a few committees and Chairperson of one.*

Title: C's story

When I first started I was confused and didn't exactly know what I wanted or how to go by doing so, I got introduced to Cert II in Business and how have a more open mind to find what and who I want to be, I would love to work in the community to help others that struggle to get their self-up to achieve what they love the most. This course has changed the way I see people and also opened my mind to have a closer bond with my daughters and our conversations. I feel more relaxed in handling situations before I would break down and just bottle things up and push it aside on wishing it would resolve itself or disappear. I'm more content with me, I love me more now that I have accomplished another course.

Why: *Because I can do what I say I'm going to do now without hesitating, I feel confident more now in myself, me and my girls have a closer bond with each and our home is more happier and more relaxed, I deal with situations more calmer than before.*

Title: Things were never that bad anyway

I have pretty much felt as if I have been doing the same things year after year and pretty boring a lot of the time.

Why: *Now there is not enough time to sit around twiddling my thumbs thinking on the darker side of life sometimes. I have a bit of a better perspective.*

THEME 7: Cultural Reconnection, Identity, Pride and Community

This part of the Program resonated with participants because they either had knowledge about history or cultural business or, they were unaware of some history and the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lives. The participants highlighted they learnt about local history, more about culture and were now prouder of their culture. They also indicated as a result, they can talk and feed proud about their history and finding their cultural voice to cultural empowerment. Participants identified they are keen for the Program to be promoted to youth, co-workers, families,

friends and prisoners. They would like to see these groups have an opportunity to do the Program, to give them the resilience to cope with their future journeys.

Title: Yargarn: Noongar for turtle slowing down

I have embraced the learning and teachings from attending the SEWB course, I have learned how to sit still and listen, have empathy, compassion and respect for my fellow students. Significant change for me is listen, look and learn. Dadirri is listening to one another.

Why: *Healing myself and to put others before me. Sometimes I don't stop and listen or, take time to smell the roses. Listening to peoples' stories, Aboriginal history and have been inspirational, sad, happy and a privilege.*

Title: Cultural warriors as Aboriginal people. We are always dealing, supporting so many challenges of complex issues and become cultural warriors for ourselves and family

Single parent, youngest of six in siblings and always played a leading role in my family with supporting complex/cultural issues which can be very draining/stressful with work and family life.

Why: *The NEP assisted me to reinforcing the issues Aboriginal people face also deal with in many areas of work and personal life. It helped being in a culturally safe environment and lifted my confidence as I had low self-esteem worth which the NEP program empowered me.*

Title: Finding the potential leader

When I first started the NEP, I felt disconnected from my culture. I tried ways to connect to community and emerge my family in cultural activities. I lived away from my family, friends and felt isolated.

The first day I walked into the NEP program I was nervous but, I felt accepted and people wanted to learn about my background and I was seen as a strong proud Aboriginal woman.

I think what the program helped me do was remember who I was and became stronger in myself and family story.

It helped me be a proud Aboriginal woman and gave me hope that one day I could be a proud, strong Aboriginal Leader.

Why: *I needed to find my strength and spirit again.*

Title: Untitled

I was bitter and hurt about my childhood, adoption, being raised with no connection to my Aboriginality, no idea who I was or where I was from. I just wanted to fit in. I was always lonely. I am ok with things more now. I accept that I didn't grow up with my culture because it's never too late to learn. I am ok that I'm not learning my culture because I'm learning my children's culture and the culture of the land that I live. I also gained a strength and assertiveness that I didn't have before. I'll stick up for myself whereas before I wouldn't. I would just accept what was even if I disagreed. No more of that.

Why: *I was stuck in a hole feeling sad about the past. I couldn't see any change in my life no matter how hard I worked or how hard I tried or how many changes I made. Now I'm mostly ok with things. I can see a change happening and I have the courage to change things that I can but, I still have room to improve because I find it hard sometimes to get the support I need. I learnt a lot at the NEP and I will keep putting those things I learnt to use.*

Title: *Hope for the future*

The most significant change in my life NEP. I learnt how to stop and think before I say something and how I like to be a good leader in the community and use the smart model to pass it on to young people and be a good listener.

Why: *Lateral violence and family feuding and changing their views, bringing them together and talking good about each other.*

Title: *Untitled*

I feel I am able to take on a lot more. I have a new sense of self which is more powerful than ever. I am happier and stronger so the most significant change in me is I found my true self and I am worthy.

Why: *Self Worth, Be grateful, Strength in Connecting Stories.*

Title: Don't let history repeat.

I think that would be my title. One you have learnt the local history (not necessary to learn my history immediately.) You change how you view the items in front of you. Perhaps this could just be me, but the history of South West people seems so different to Eastern state people.

The most significant change for me was realising my almost total lack of understanding of local history and how it has shaped the local people and places here. I was under an impression of history is history however it shapes all items including the current events we live now.

SEWB Domains: Connection to Spirituality, connection to mental wellbeing, connection to kinship, connection to community, connection to culture and understanding of connection to land.

Goals: Look closely at local history and build upon it. The local history of Indigenous people - US!! Is wide and amazing to review. Don't throw it away by not learning from it.

Get Involved: I think that I will start to conduct some of my own paced learning and try and link in with some Elders to learn more.

Why: *It changed me totally in the way I deal with items. I am now looking at the history of items daily and if asked anything I feel that I can provide a somewhat better response after considering the history.*

Title: Speaking from the Heart

I have never done anything like this program in my life. I came in to this program with no understanding because of my upbringing and stolen generation. I had lost a lot of my precious time. To me it's like going forward now. It makes it easy for me to speak about culture, connection to land and family, try to teach my grandchildren and future generations to come. I always speak about respect for our old people.

Why: *Because I have never heard of this before. To me it's takes a lot off my shoulders and now I know it will get easy thank you all.*

Title: Opportunity

In the 12 weeks I have been in the program learnt to be on time. I have learnt about letting go and start to heal, I have learnt about tent embassy about Tony Coorey, Billie Craigie, Bertie Williams and Michael Anderson, set up a beach umbrella on the lawn of Australian parliament house Australia day.

Why: *To be better within myself and in the community and to be proud of myself when I look back on my life story.*

Title: No looking back!!!

I felt like before my course I was a little reserved, shy and now I feel confident to confront people and speak up for my family and making sure to tell my kids about our culture.

Why: *Because I would sit back and just not say nothing and just go and only say little things to my kids about our culture.*

Title: My goals are to stay involved in the community and to use social emotional wellbeing in my everyday life

I have learnt so much during this program some things I've learnt that's helped me:

- *Building my positive future*
- *Goal setting*
- *Map of my future*
- *Future dreams*
- *Finding more about myself*
- *Recognising my role in the community and in my family*
- *Learning more about our Elders as well as their stories*
- *I've also learnt to set the best example for our kids*
- *We are the ones raising and guiding them they are our future.*

Why: *Attending this program has strengthened my connection to the community. Going out bush camping and spending time with family. I have strengthened connection to the land and connection to family kinship. Implementing some strategies in my life with my kids make me a better person and mother. Getting back on my feet, proving to myself my peers my teachers and my children I can do it.*

Title: *Journey of my life / about all that I have achieved*

The most significant change I've seen in myself since attending the National Empowerment Project that I'm able to mix with others and learn about their lives. It has been a good journey for me because I have learnt a lot, I enjoyed all the videos that we watched, especially the ones about Eddy Mabo, Vincent Lingjari and also the one about the first tent embassy

Why: *It taught me to be myself and to care more for others and to be passionate about everyday life. Also, be available when someone needs support*

Title: *My journey*

More confident in myself. Thinking before I act. Dr Daryl Cross change negative to positive thinking. Cultural connection and to land, bring this more into life. Dadirri finding my new inner peace. Silent awareness.

Why: *More outspoken. Change the way I think to more positive connection to culture and land feel empowered at peace with myself. Dadirri - relaxing finding silent awareness when feeling down.*

Facilitators

The four (4) facilitators, observed changes in the participants from the time they commenced and during the Program. The most significant changes have been individual confidence, improvement in their communication skills, developing new relationships with people they haven't met before, overcoming anxiety and improvement in outlook of participants. A major indicator of change and commitment to the Program was the participants continued attendance. Key information regarding cultural, social and emotional wellbeing had a huge impact on participants' understanding. For some participants, cultural knowledge was new, and they soaked it up like a sponge. Elders' stories and their lived experience were crucial to share. Younger participants gained a better understanding of the specific impacts on individual lives because of intergenerational and transgenerational trauma.

All facilitators were excited and expected that the participants would take away so much from what they learnt during the 12 weeks and apply their new knowledge and skills in their lives. They envisaged that the participants would focus on self and then in turn, changes would flow onto family and community.

The primary facilitator for the three Program sites identified two key areas where improvement in the program could be made. There needed to be more review time put aside for the training of the facilitators and, there was not enough time allowed for

delivery of some components of the modules. In some cases, facilitators had to adapt certain sections and this caused frustration for some.

The facilitators identified a need to have male and female counselling support when sensitive issues arose and participants required one-on-one time. Another key issue identified was a need to have more localised content and local resources. Overall facilitators noticed participants were more active and getting out more in the community. Along with confidence, they were looking happier in themselves, losing weight, making better food choices, learning cultural protocols, and participating in events e.g. NAIDOC Week.

Community Reference Groups

Members of the three (3) NEP Community Reference Groups all identified that it was important to participate not only in the CRG but the program because they were all interested in Aboriginal issues and wellbeing and working with local Aboriginal organisations.

The two local councils who have a strong relationship with LAA were keen to support the NEP program. One Community Reference Group local council member commented “it is important that the sector invest in programs that don’t just tell Noongar, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples what is ‘lacking’ in their health and wellbeing but empower leadership in the community from within it.” In addition, they wished to “support LAA as they are the backbone of the Noongar, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in our area, and any value we can add to the brilliant work they do”.

Other council members were also very supportive and wanted to contribute to a really important initiative that addresses a need in the community. They were committed to their Strategic Plans and were interested in youth development, wanting to work with young Aboriginal women and it was a good opportunity to meet others on the Reference Group working in similar areas.

Other representatives on the Reference Group wanted to give back to the community and contribute on a personal level, provide information that would assist in things working well and connect more with the local Aboriginal community to provide more related support where needed.

Elders and other Aboriginal community members were committed to ensure that the NEP Program ran smoothly. One member commented that it would “help progress Noongars to benefit other Noongar people”. Some members were also participants of the Program and were able to provide a valuable insight into the Reference Group’s understanding and guidance.

Members believed the networking and sharing of information during the meetings was an unexpected benefit that will have a ripple effect on the services the community can access and benefit from. This was due to the mix of community organisations and service providers.

Partner Organisations

Members of the partner organisations identified their involvement with this Project as a great Program. Once they committed to the partnership, they ensured they promoted the Program to as many community members as possible. They all recognised that although their organisations were all different, they were also similar in servicing the needs of the Aboriginal community.

The implementation of the CSEWB Program was monitored closely by the partners to see what worked and what didn't work. Needless to say, the partnership with RAWA who obtained the funding and LAA as the NEP Perth site Partner Organisation (lead agency) did work well strategically.

A number of the partners commented on the Program itself, and although acknowledging differences in the community groups, there were similar issues and responses from the partners. They all agreed it is a great Program and very positive and powerful for community.

The partner organisations observed the support of the participants with each other. Another observation was the differences in the participants from when they commenced to when they finished. The participants had become empowered and are now contributing to the community in a variety of ways. This was a new phenomenon.

I saw participants become more confident in themselves and they were able to talk without feeling “shame”, able to try new things and become more culturally aware. They were learning and recognising the importance of Elders. Participants became more active, getting out more, more active in the community. They looked happier in themselves, losing weight, healthier and happier and this extended to the family, in making better food choices. They gained confidence – a lot of confidence and they learnt cultural protocols i.e. Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement.

Annette Dickie
Co-Facilitator



In the beginning many appeared to look worried and show physical signs of stress, which then slowly changed over time. Attendance highlighted the participants commitment to the program, they were excited and were learning so much. I also observed that participants presented more confidently. Many participants started to connect to being more positive and the differences that apply to positive vs negative behaviors and thoughts.

I was really excited to be delivering the program after four (4) years of development and preparation. The resources were excellent i.e. Facilitator Guide and Participant Handbooks and what I expected and what I got was “more than expected.”

Angela Ryder
Lead Facilitator



CONCLUSION

This Program is a “culturally appropriate: and innovative initiative, primarily driven by the Aboriginal individuals who were committed to seeing through and implementing change within the Aboriginal community, in their lifetime. These Aboriginal individuals have great experience and knowledge and continue to push for more culturally appropriate and relevant programs to create self-determination, to take action rather than empty rhetoric, ultimately to prevent further and unnecessary loss of Aboriginal lives.

This Program was designed for local communities, who, although diverse, face similar issues. Aboriginal people continue to face a multitude of barriers, on a daily basis and these challenges prevent the opportunity for a healing process to occur. Therefore, there is an impact on their families and communities for individuals. Therefore, there is an impact on their families and communities, the result being individuals having little self-confidence and low self-esteem. The content of the CSEWB Program enables people to grow, be nurtured in their journey to become culturally, socially and emotionally empowered.

An in-depth understanding was obtained through the methods of data collection which was both qualitative and quantitative. Participants shared their experience and the importance of continuing the Program in the future. Stakeholders’ voices provided different and invaluable insights of their positioning, commitment to the Program and the observations and knowledge of the people involved.

Participants from the Perth sites demonstrated significant changes in their lives, a renewed energy, to continue to make changes for improvement. This was made evident from the data collected. Through the provision of the many tools, designed to provide alternate ways of coping and for use in situations, they may find themselves in, has contributed to healthy individuals, families and communities. Many have advised that they have improved their physical and mental health. Consequently, that this is a driving force in how they will continue to change their future and continue to choose positive experiences as opposed to negative choice. This is vastly different from where they have come from in their experiences of high psychological distress and dealing with suicide in families and communities. These experiences take a huge toll on Aboriginal people who already have enormous family and cultural obligations.

The NEP Project and the CSEWB program has already changed individual lives by creating opportunities to grow in themselves. In fact, they may have taken a very different journey, if not for the Program. Healing has commenced within individuals, their families and the broader Aboriginal community in which they live. Participants have developed an improved “inner strength: and the resilience to take on new challenges. Increased confidence had led participants to make better choices, to

create a better life and to have the tools to resolve issues that impact on a personal level.

Participants have gained so much, and those who transitioned onto employment underwent training and shared the tools they took away, are a testament to the commitment by everyone involved. Many things worked well, whilst other things were identified as needing a tweak to encapsulate the learnings to make the Program more relevant to future participants.

This Program has the opportunity to “change the culture” of irrelevant and “culturally inappropriate programs” to support Aboriginal community led programs, that is inclusive of local Aboriginal people, local organisations and local stakeholders.

The NEP CSEWB Program can only be described as a fantastic initiative and key contributing factor to the Programs success, is attributed to the fact that it has been developed and designed by Aboriginal people, for Aboriginal people and delivered by Aboriginal people.

Much has been written of the journey of preparation and insights gained from previous evaluations, to have such a positive impact on individuals, family and community. A Program of this type is innovative and responsive to community distresses. For every success, the lives of many people have changed so that Aboriginal people can not only improve their position but, also look forward to new beginnings with their newly acquired confidence and personal empowerment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are recommended for future NEP CSEWB Programs which meet both the organisational operational requirements and community needs.

1. The Community Project (a component of the 12-month Program), be incorporated into the 12-modules of the Program instead of an additional demand on participants' time. The first site at LAA identified it was difficult to obtain the commitment for additional input due to family and work demands after the Program.
2. Spend less time on the CSEWB Program theme song which participants sang at their graduations. Preference is for participants to talk about their journey at the graduation.
3. To have available at each session consistent counsellors both male and female so that participants can build rapport and access counselling when required to deal with issues that arise and require immediate support.
4. Graduation ceremonies preparation to include an invitation be extended to community members so they can observe the profound changes in the participants and understand the Program through participants' testimonials i.e. promotion and encouragement for community members to attend future Programs. Graduates to present at the graduation ceremony.
5. Encourage and support an increased participation of males in future CSEWB Programs.
6. Undertake a review of the Program to identify the time allocated for each module and consideration of allowing more time for some sessions especially when sensitive issues are emerging or, participants are engaged and gaining valuable knowledge, skills and empowerment.
7. Crèche services to be available for parents/carers with young children at each Program site.
8. Source leadership training programs for participants to support their CSEWB Program learnings and continued development.
9. Continue to engage Aboriginal people to be Facilitators of the CSEWB Program due to the specific content and the sensitivity of module topics. It is

crucial for the success of the Program that the facilitation is done by, for, and with Aboriginal people.

10. Aboriginal evaluators continue to be engaged to undertake further evaluations of future Programs to ensure similar terms of reference are aligned with those of participants. Aboriginal evaluators are more able to obtain in-depth data.
11. Undertake a review of the training time required to orient CSEWB facilitators of the Program content to include in future budgets to prepare for future Program delivery. This is based on feedback from facilitators and participants.
12. For future evaluations of the NEP CSEWB Program it is recommended that facilitators participate in a focus group to share experiences and lessons learnt.
13. Additional resources be allocated to capture qualitative and quantitative data which is essential for a more comprehensive report.



“Graduating because pleased with 100% attendance. Absolutely loved the journaling scrap booking and the group. Did this with all supporting each other and encouraged one another. We were all at different levels. Retain confidentiality, trust with each other, listening to people who shared their stories. When I became confident my family gained. For the participants, they have learnt to empower themselves psychologically, emotionally and mentally because all the information was there. Better understanding of mental health issues and themselves”.

*Millie Penny
NEP CSEWB Participant*

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“Got more guts, stepped out of comfort zone and challenge zone. I am benefitting and I am bettering myself and leading the way for them (others) to catch up. My work colleagues noticed I am more assertive. ...because other people who did it all became better versions of ourselves and also did the garden project, and community benefit from the fruit and vegetables and LAA (Langford Aboriginal Association) programs. Everything was awesome!”

Carrie Milson
NEP CSEWB Participant

ATTACHMENT 1 – Interview Questions

Questions	
Group 1 (Participants)	
1.	Why did you participate in the program?
2.	In what ways, if any, did doing the program change things for you, have other people seen changes in you?
3.	How do you think participating in the program helped you?
4.	What was the most useful part of the program for you and your family?
5.	What was the least useful part of the program for you and your family?
6.	Do you think the program has helped the community and how?
7.	Did you tell others about the program?
8.	Did people comment about differences in you during or after the program?
9.	Was there anything you didn't like about the program?
10.	Is there anything else you would like to share about the program and how it has made a difference in your life?
11.	If this program was offered again who would you recommend to attend?

Group 2 (Non-completing Participants)	
1.	Why did you begin to participate in the program?
2.	What benefits do you think you got from the time you did participate?
3.	Was there any particular reason why you did not continue?
4.	Is there anything else you would like to share about the program and how it has made a difference in your life?
5.	If the program were to run again, would you like to attend?

Group 3 (Registrations)	
1.	We have your name as a registration for the NEP program, was there a reason you were unable to attend the program?
2.	Have you heard any feedback about the program?
3.	If the program were to run again, would you like to attend?

Group 4 (CSEWB Training Facilitators)	
1.	What changes did you see in individuals who were involved in the program?
2.	What was your expectation as your role as a facilitator?
3.	Do you have any suggestions on ways to improve the program?
4.	What pre-delivery training was provided, please explain?
5.	In what ways, if any, did delivering the program change things for you?
6.	What changes did you see in individuals who were involved in the program?

Group 5 (Community Reference Group (CRG) members)	
1.	Please tell us why you participated as a CRG member on the NEP?
2.	What has your experience been with the Project over this time?
3.	Have you noticed any difference in community since people completed of the program?
4.	Is there anything else you would like to share about the NEP CRG?

Group 6 (Partner Organisations)	
1.	What has your experience overall been with the NEP?
2.	Do you have any suggestions on ways to improve the implementation of the NEP?
3.	With regards to the partnership arrangements, please share your comments?

ATTACHMENT 2 – KESSLER 5 Pre and Post Questions

NATIONAL EMPOWERMENT PROJECT

Kessler Psychological Distress Scale - K5

(Pre)

Name: _____ Date: _____

Kessler Psychological Distress Scale K-5 (pre)					
For all questions, please fill in the appropriate response.					
	1	2	3	4	5
In the past 4 weeks	None of the time	A little of the time	Some of the time	Most of the time	All of the time
1. About how often did you feel nervous?					
2. About how often did you feel without hope?					
3. About how often did you feel restless or jumpy?					
4. About how often did you feel everything is an effort?					
5. About how often did you feel so sad that nothing could cheer you up?					

Total Score _____

Scoring for K-5

Minimum score 5, indicates no distress.

Low / moderate distress 5 - 11

High / very high distress 12 - 25

Maximum score 25, indicates severe distress

NATIONAL EMPOWERMENT PROJECT

Kessler Psychological Distress Scale - K5

(Post)

Name: _____ Date: _____

Kessler Psychological Distress Scale K-5 (post)					
For all questions, please fill in the appropriate response.					
	1	2	3	4	5
In the past 4 weeks	None of the time	A little of the time	Some of the time	Most of the time	All of the time
1. About how often did you feel nervous?					
2. About how often did you feel without hope?					
3. About how often did you feel restless or jumpy?					
4. About how often did you feel everything is an effort?					
5. About how often did you feel so sad that nothing could cheer you up?					

Total Score _____

Scoring for K-5

Minimum score 5, indicates no distress.

Low / moderate distress 5 - 11

High / very high distress 12 - 25

Maximum score 25, indicates severe distress

ATTACHMENT 3 – CSEWB Program Theme Song

Too Solid

Written and Produced by Fred Penny

Chorus

I'm too solid, you're too solid, we're too solid now
I'm too solid, you're too solid, we're too solid now
Too Solid, too solid, too solid, too solid, too solid now
Too solid, too solid, too solid, too solid, too solid now

Verse 1

I love my children ...they are my life
Without my family ...I can't get by, I can't get by
I need to show them ...right from wrong
So they will grow up to be ...smart, safe and strong ...safe and strong

Chorus

I'm too solid, you're too solid, we're too solid now
I'm too solid, you're too solid, we're too solid now
Too Solid, too solid, too solid, too solid, too solid now
Too solid, too solid, too solid, too solid, too solid now

Verse 2

And now I understand how strong I need to be
Because their little eyes ...are always watching me, ...watching me, ...watching me
I'll teach my children ...they're number one
They can be anything ...under the sun, under the sun

Final Chorus

I'm too solid, you're too solid, we're too solid now
I'm too solid, you're too solid, we're too solid now



Left to Right: Kathryn Ross, Annette Dickie, Millie Penny and Fred Penny

Cultural Outing Photos



Session Photos

