

## Section 5 - Case studies

The Commissioner has compiled this case study resource to highlight some practical examples of the processes outlined in this toolkit in action.

The examples included within this toolkit are a small sample of the great work occurring around Western Australia that involves Aboriginal children and young people.

The Commissioner will continue to build upon these examples to ensure the toolkit remains up-to-date and is reflective of current practice.

### Kununurra Empowering Youth (KEY)

In October 2016, the East Kimberley District Leadership Group (EKDLG) decided a priority for the group was to focus on children and young people in Kununurra, to ultimately reduce the significant youth incarceration rates during school holiday periods (particularly during Dec/Jan holidays), and to increase community and child safety during this same period.

#### Overview

The group adopted a collaborative approach and developed school holiday programs that aimed to engage children and young people during a time of the year when young people historically become vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and on occasions, incarceration. Part of the focus was to encourage the participation of family members in the activities and to ensure appropriate supports were in place for the 'at risk' youth who attended the program. In addition, the collaborative approach sought to identify and implement mutually reinforcing activities that enacted the East Kimberley Empowered Communities five social norms.

The Kununurra Empowering Youth (KEY) working party consisted of Government agencies (all levels), not for profit organisations, local Aboriginal community controlled organisations, and volunteers. The methodology was based on Collective Impact design principles with the underlying premise that no organisation can create large-scale lasting social change alone. The approach ensures there is partnership and leadership in the design, planning and implementation of community specific solutions and outcomes.

The common agenda of KEY includes:

- improving the content and coordination of programs available for young people in Kununurra, during school holiday periods
- ensuring programs encouraged children and young people to make good choices
- promoting positive family time and strengthen relationships between young people, their families and the wider community

- ensuring the views and ideas of local young people are included in the planning and implementation
- reducing anti-social behaviour, juvenile offences and periods of incarceration.

To develop the program and calendar of events, advice was sought from the young people, local Aboriginal leadership, and service providers. Feedback was specifically obtained from the identified 'youth at risk', mostly aged between 10 to 15 years and who are generally disengaged from education and other mainstream activities.

Activities offered as part of the program included basketball, football, pool parties, weaving, discos, movie and skate nights, indoor soccer, street art, bush tucker trips back to country visits, make up evenings and performing arts events.

The calendar of events document used to promote the activities incorporates artwork by a young person from the local community, who won a competition ran by the working group to design the logo for the KEY initiative. The [KEY social media](#) page for the program is also available.

### **Development of focus**

The success of KEY has been underpinned by a collective impact response to an issue that affects the whole of community. It quickly became a vehicle for the whole community to work together as one, for positive results.

Part of the focus needed to be on those young people with complex needs and who were already vulnerable to being further engaged in the criminal justice system. Often the young people had prior, as well as current, contact with police, justice and child protection systems, were disengaged from school and had already spent time in Banksia Hill Detention Centre. Young people in this high risk category were identified by government and non-government agencies and a deliberate effort was made to consult young people about how their time could be better spent during the holiday periods. It should be noted that for many, there was no difference between holiday and school term periods, as they were either partly engaged in the education system, or not at all.

The conversations between service workers and the young people aimed to ensure the young people were very much a part of the discussions around the construction of the school holiday activities and focus; and attempted to create a sense of ownership and responsibility for the outcomes, particularly for themselves, but also for their peers.

KEY was promoted through other mediums and agencies for their information, to ensure people were aware from a participatory point of view, and also to make a supporting contribution. KEY was re-enforced at a youth sector planning session, in which all organisations in Kununurra in the youth space were invited to attend. At the planning session, there were opportunities to learn about the aims and

objectives of KEY, to gain ideas and resource information from the broader sector and from Aboriginal Elders, and to develop conversations about future focus areas. The involvement of disengaged young people in the education system was one of the areas raised, and where there was an appetite for a collective focus on this issue, including the development of an education forum.

### **Engaging with at-risk children and young people**

KEY used the following process to engage with hard-to-reach children and young people.

- Speaking with young people in their familiar environments. i.e school or hang out places – pre the school holiday period.
- Ensuring those agency staff who have existing relationships and regular contact with young people were aware of the engagement required, and could undertake these conversations i.e. police, youth justice, Save the Children, Waringarri's One Family At A Time and back to Country programs.
- Holding community events that catered for the interests of 'at risk' youth, and where engagement with young people by agency staff could occur in an informal setting.
- Ensuring local Aboriginal community controlled organisations and not for profit organisations were engaged in the activities, as well as the planning and delivery work.

The themes of the conversations with young people included the why (the need), the how (what works/where best/interest based/incentives) and the what next (future possibilities/learnings). Conversations focused on activities that would engage families with their children, ideas of sporting related activities to release energy/team dynamics/mutual enjoyment for whole of family, activities that could cater for children of different ages and opportunities for older children to look after the younger ones, activities that could happen on country and activities where kids could learn and then replicate in their own homes. As a result, there was a marked increase in the number of parents and older siblings attending events with the younger children, to such a level that service providers running the events commented, saying they had never seen this level of engagement from families before.

Feedback from young people was obtained after the school holiday period, which will contribute to the next phase – many young people reported attending more than one event. They were positive about family/community involvement and felt more confident about talking to agency staff at these events.

## Lesson learnt

A number of learnings were taken from the project:

- A number of young people were identified as having leadership traits, potential and willingness to be strong role models for their peers, observed through behaviour exhibited during events, such as helping the organisers to assist in setting the events up, cooking food for the events, and speaking up.
- Gaps in youth services and coordination in Kununurra exist, despite the good intentions by agencies and their staff. The prospect of what 'shared responsibility' means and how service providers, community members and young people can work together better for shared outcomes is an ongoing conversation.
- The KEY Collective Impact project has demonstrated the effectiveness of achieving small social change by targeting mutually reinforcing activities for young people, their families, agencies and community. In Kununurra, it demonstrated the large-scale community appetite for better outcomes for young people in the community, and the recognition that everyone has a part to play.
- The positive engagement of children and young people in the program promotes ownership, positive energy and relationship building.
- People can do things with limited resourcing with the KEY project demonstrating the value of building relationships between agencies, organisations and other local stakeholders, to share resources.
- 'At risk' children are usually well known to service providers, but not necessarily engaged in discussions about what will work for them. Data received from the last school holiday program showed 23 out of 30 identified 'at risk' children and young people attended and engaged in the program.

## Next steps

Specific areas for improvement were highlighted following the conclusion of the project, including the next steps for Kununurra Empowering Youth.

- Explore the possibility of an allocated budget as this allows better security in the financial sustainability of the project.
- Ensure the results of the program and key information is circulated to community in an easy-to-read format, especially community Elders and leaders, to assist in developing other community priorities.
- Develop further strategies to address the needs of an identified 'very high risk' cohort.
- Expand the youth engagement to include either participation on the working group or a separate youth council or another structure.

- Address transport issues, which affects the ability of children and young people to participate in programs and access services.
- Develop youth leadership opportunities alongside other agencies/bodies.
- Develop the focus of KEY in accordance with the regional young people and families focused agenda, in partnership with key Aboriginal organisations and Empowered Communities.

## **Kids on Country program - Coolgardie**

What happens when you bring together Aboriginal Elders, children and young people aged 10 to 25 years and scientists on country in a citizen science program, and ask the kids what and how they want to learn?

Over a series of weekend-based day-trips and group discussions, young people explored various sites in the woodland, learnt how to monitor local malleefowl for Birdlife Australia, produced a book and a film of their activities and hosted an international citizen science field trip, sharing their knowledge with other young people from Indonesia and Malaysia and are now working towards developing a sustainable business model that includes the development of a smart mapping application and tours for tourists to the local area.

### **Overview**

Since 2008 Millennium Kids (MK) has been working with young people in the Goldfields' Great Western Woodland using a 'skills for life' learning process in a co-designed program addressing: what do you like about your community, what don't you like, and what would you change?

In 2014, a Ngadju Elder invited MK to extend the program to the Coolgardie Aboriginal community. This invitation stemmed from a Goldfields field trip which travelled through Coolgardie, where MK invited the Elder to come and meet with the students to introduce and welcome them to the country they were travelling through.

The program started with a picnic being held on Country, which was attended by fifty-two children and young people and their families. Of those who attended, 90 per cent had not been to Cave Hill, a nearby camping spot, before. The Elders were shocked. Parents involved stated the causes as being a lack of suitable vehicles for bush trips, and no fuel money. One of the issues identified by the parents and Elders was that children and young people were stuck in the small township on weekends, and there was a lot of anti-social behavior created out of boredom.

### **Community engagement**

The program was developed through conversations with Aboriginal children and young people held around a fire, starting from the first day trip. As the facilitators, MK arranged food and logistics and asked simple, open questions to determine the priorities of the young people involved: What do you like about your community, what don't you like and what would you change? There was strong consensus between the young people that they were bored on weekends and wanted more activities like weekend fieldtrips, where they could learn from Elders, reconnect with country, share stories and get to know more about their landscape and their culture.

The young people also said that they wanted a program which ran on weekends and which was different to learning in the classroom.

MK then started talking to stakeholders about the project. It was important to MK for stakeholders to understand the co-design process and the objectives of the project – kids leading and a sound understanding of the methodology was required. Kids' ideas form the basis of the next steps. MK scaffolds each step and supports with grant writing, seeking partnerships and training opportunities to upskill the whole team.

With support from stakeholders, Wyemando Bequest supported the language acquisition, IGO Holdings supported the field trips and on country experiences, ERM Foundation and Tellus Holdings funds were used for training adults to support the initiative, and Gondwana Link was used for expert land use and biodiversity. These stakeholders provided an opportunity for kids out on Country, to learn new skills and to reconnect with Ngadju language. Each stakeholder had a certain role in the project. The aim is to keep these partnerships alive so kids can see connection to real work opportunities in the future.

MK worked with Elders and kids (MK members aged 10 – 25 years) around a picnic table in the local park to design *Kids on Country* - a program based around the kids' desire to learn more about the woodland, centered on traditional culture. As part of the program, kids explored various local sites with scientific and technical equipment including binoculars, iPads and GPS, and participated in painting, writing poetry, managing the barbecue and playing with each other. During this time, the kids also participated in skill-building workshops. Importantly, some of the local Indigenous stakeholders are employed through the program.

## **Project development**

Using the Millennium Kids inquiry methodology, young people have been visiting the woodland alongside scientists and Elders, showcasing cultural knowledge through citizen science applications. In the program kids are allowed to explore the woodland to discover areas of interest to them. These areas of interest form the basis of program planning and development with MK, creating a youth led process. Through the program kids learn life skills that can be used in the school setting and in the workplace. Areas of interest for the kids included:

- Can we build a fire? - taught risk management and Department of Parks and Wildlife fire and firewood protocols
- Can we cook on the barbecue? – the kids learnt about food preparation, nutrition and hygiene protocols
- What bird is that? – the kids learnt how to use binoculars, cameras and a bird-identifying book, as well as learning Ngadju language by experience – seeing

objects and animals and learning their names from Elders, the kids also learnt from Elders about Malleefowl Dreaming

- Can you eat that plant? – the kids had the opportunity to develop their knowledge by sharing with scientists and Elders.
- Why do you need a GPS? – the kids had the opportunity to collect information to help us understand where we live and to contribute towards Birdlife Australia's tracking and understanding of the malleefowl around Coolgardie.

The kids were interested in malleefowl. They had seen them, knew where they crossed the road, and knew how to find their nests. Millennium Kids secured funding for a group of 30 young people from Coolgardie, based on their desire to learn more about the woodland, with a particular emphasis on traditional culture and protection of a threatened bird, the malleefowl. The program also gave the kids the opportunity to lead the program and found that with the recognition of their knowledge and skills and the opportunity to demonstrate leadership, they blossomed; keen to share their knowledge.

When the circus came to town, the kids met with the Chinese circus hands and decided that they wanted to take them out on country because they were from a different country and would not have experienced the bush that the children had become so familiar with. The circus moved on, but it gave birth to a new idea. Why couldn't the kids take tourists out bush and share their knowledge with them? The kids designed and hosted an international fieldtrip, starting with a list of important places and deciding what they wanted to teach their guests, before sharing their knowledge with other young people from Indonesia arranged through MK's partnerships. Each of the Indonesian participants paid their own way to the field trip, showing the local kids the value others place on their knowledge and country.

On a separate occasion, the kids also presented their work at the MK20 UNconference in Perth with over 150 young people and sustainability educators. They met with the previous Chief Scientist of WA and showcased the book they had created about their project. They reported to stakeholders from local, regional and international partnerships focusing on sustainability education.

At this event the kids also pitched new ideas for 2017. In 2017 we aim to meet indigenous rangers on country working at Credo Station. This opportunity has been facilitated by Department of Parks and Wildlife and will provide kids with invaluable interaction with indigenous role models.

## **Project outcomes**

Through the program, the kids developed real world skills that have application in the classroom and workforce. Indigenous adults participating in the program have also since been upskilled to lead part of the program, have achieved a formal



qualification in environmental work and found local employment, creating role models for the kids.

The kids also developed stronger relationships with local Elders and have developed from not knowing their cultural connections to proudly identifying with their language group, speaking confidently in public, and effectively communicating their project outcomes.

The kids have seen and experienced mutual respect between Elders and scientists and understand that their culture and ideas are important and have a place in the science world.

The kids are now independently reporting malleefowl sightings, contributing to the environmental knowledge and sustainability of their local area.

The kids have helped write a book, assisted in the production of a film about malleefowl and pitched new projects ideas as a result of their interest in the landscape and environmental health of their local community; they:

- want to help control feral cats
- are planning a revegetation project
- want to collect data on threatened species.

This shows the enthusiasm with which the kids have embraced the project and the potential opportunities to further develop their civil participation in the future.

### **Lessons learnt**

- It's important to be invited in to work with a community.
- It takes time and energy to connect with the families and guardians of children and young people to obtain their consent, we spent a lot of time going from door to door to introduce ourselves and the project to parents, carers and guardians and help them to understand our objectives.
- Support from local leaders is critical to the success of a project, the project would not be what it is without our local leadership team.
- When you listen to children and young people, innovative ideas can be generated. It was up to us to listen and work out how to respond to those ideas to put them in action.
- Upskilling local people, including young people, to implement the program is essential to its sustainability.

## Next steps

- When consent for a young person had not been obtained, or a young person was new to the group, the decision was to stay in town to ensure our duty of care needs were met. You need to learn to be flexible when operating in communities that experience transience.
- It is recommended that various communication tools are set up at the beginning of the program – whatsapp, instagram etc to ensure communication with kids.

## **Lore Law Project – Perth**

The total number of Aboriginal youth and Aboriginal Peoples participating in the Law Society of Western Australia's Francis Burt Law Education Programme (the FBLEP) in the average year is less than 1 per cent of total participants. With the high rates of engagement of Aboriginal youth and Aboriginal Peoples with the WA justice system the FBLEP determined that it had a responsibility to better engage with this audience.

### **Overview**

The Lore Law Project originated from a consultation with Aboriginal communities (252 young people and Elders in 27 group consultations) about a project to better engage with Aboriginal youth and Aboriginal peoples about their legal rights and responsibilities. Importantly, the consultations included young Aboriginal people with direct experience of the criminal justice system through the Banksia Hill Detention Centre. As a result of the desire to spread service delivery beyond the metro region, both regional and metro-based consultations were held. The project first commenced in April 2012 and is nearing its final stages of development prior to implementation.

From the outset of the project the FBLEP identified the need for Aboriginal peoples, representatives from Aboriginal organisations and representatives from organisations working with Aboriginal communities to oversee and be involved in the planning, development and implementation of the project, as these are the project's key stakeholders.

The project is intended to provide a means through which Aboriginal youth and Aboriginal communities can present and voice the local lore/law matters of interest and/or concern to them. In turn, this creates an opportunity for local stakeholders such as the police, the judiciary, the legal profession and relevant support services to engage with Aboriginal youth and Aboriginal communities through a two-way engagement process.

In the short term, the project aims to establish interest and relationships on lore/law issues amongst Aboriginal youth and in Aboriginal communities across Western Australia. In the long term, these relationships will inform the development of a framework from which the Indigenous Youth Leadership Team (IYLT), with the support of the Law Society and the Steering Group, can create and develop future lore/law projects.

### **Project development**

The IYLT, are a core element of the project as they are responsible for directly consulting and engaging with Aboriginal youth, Aboriginal communities and local justice related stakeholders. They will facilitate discussions around local lore/law

issues of significance and/or concern to the local Aboriginal youth and will work with the local youth to create short films focused on a local lore/law issue of significance and/or concern from the youth's perspective. The IYLT consists of young people who have previously worked on a series of youth to youth engagement processes and have the skills to facilitate the above processes. Their networks will form the basis of the first delivery pilot sites and will ensure the Project is invited by the community and culturally appropriate when engaging with Aboriginal youth in those communities. The IYLT is supported by a project facilitator, who also reports in to the Steering Group (made up of the projects stakeholders) and the project owner, the Law Society of WA.

After much discussion and research, the chosen methodology is one which uses a youth to youth focus for consultation. In choosing a process to facilitate a youth to youth focus, using familiar and engaging tools were deemed critical for soliciting open conversation, buy-in, storytelling and raising awareness. The Project utilises digital technology for storytelling, allowing Aboriginal youth in various communities to create screen-based stories (i.e. short films) about either local traditional Aboriginal lore or Australian law matters of significance and/or concern to them. The process of filming, using the camera as the conduit for interaction, is seen as an excellent tool to break down barriers and inspire positive interactions and engagement with the Project and local justice related stakeholders.

This methodology also provides training and upskilling in film production, and empowerment to control their own stories and messages for young people to participate and interact around the lore/law topic. We are also upskilling of IYLT team in project management, project implementation, advocacy skills, marketing/fund raising skills, business plan development, evaluation and assessment, and providing mentoring opportunities. We pay all of our team for their involvement in the project, and as the local community engagement process is transferrable and can be applied to any issue of interest and/or concern, we anticipate that it will lead to further employment opportunities.

The IYLT will first present the project and a pilot film to the Steering Group, the FBLEP Advisory Committee and the Law Society Council with the aim of having the project proposal approved and signed-off. From that point onwards the Law Society, with input from the project team, will facilitate sessions with the IYLT to promote and advocate the project to stakeholders. This ensures wider community participation and buy-in so the project does not develop in isolation, whilst also gaining project ambassadors from stakeholders in the wider community to support the project's sustainability. Inherent in that process is the raising of funds to deliver the project across Western Australia.

The project has also considered risk management and has arranged public liability and indemnity insurance and workers' compensation insurance, implemented

requirements for Working With Children checks, designed consent forms for parents and guardians, established a confidentiality process to manage the sensitive and serious issues being discussed with youth, and created a clear review and approval process for the ideas generated and filmed by youth.

### **Lessons learnt**

- Meaningful stakeholder engagement is vital to establishing stakeholder relationships and networks
- Meaningful stakeholder engagement takes a long time and the focus of engagement needs to be long term not short term

### **Next steps**

The project team discussed what could be done differently in the future and determined it would have been valuable to get funders and/or financial support to contribute earlier in the project as it is hard to retain the IYLT members when there is no money, or very little money, available.

## Theatre of Transformation Project – Halls Creek

The Theatre of Transformation project was community-based activity which aimed to create a safe space to support a group of young Aboriginal people 12 years and older to write, rehearse and present their own play for the Halls Creek community that captured and communicated their experiences of alcohol-related harm.

### Overview

The two-week project was conducted in Halls Creek by the following project partners:

- Kimberley Community Drug and Alcohol Service (KCADS)
- Melbourne based theatre director, Bryan Derrick
- the local Aboriginal Medical Service, Yura Yungi
- Halls Creek High School.

It was expected that the final product would be both compelling and confronting, and act as a trigger for parents, carers and the community to listen to their children's description of the profound and damaging impact alcohol was having on the younger members of the Halls Creek community.

Like many remote communities in the Kimberley Region, the incidence of alcohol-related harm in Halls Creek far exceeds state averages.

The project partners chose to work with this group of young Aboriginal people because they are deeply affected by alcohol-related harm but rarely have an opportunity to voice how it affects them or to exert any influence on how to prevent or treat it.

### Project development

Theatre of Transformation has a number of theatre models that aim to give voice to the lived experience of the voiceless. The forum model was adopted as it is a short and powerful style of play comprising a number of scenes where dialogue is kept to a minimum and, at the end of the play, audience members are invited to suggest how a better outcome could have been achieved and to act out their suggestions with the actors on stage.

A significant lead time was required to develop a joint program between the project partners.

Key considerations for the project included:

- Ensuring the young people had the full support of their primary carers to participate in and out of school hours
- Ensuring permission was given before photos and videos of the young people were taken and shared
- Providing a safe, quiet and secure space for rehearsals

- Identifying and managing cultural security - attention was given to what topics could be included and what may be contentious.

The project partners were also mindful that the content of the play may provoke strong emotional responses in participants, some of whom were considered at risk. The project partners identified these young people and developed a strategy to manage and mitigate this risk, which would include:

- Ensuring the students' teacher and an experienced, well-known personal helper and mentor from *Yura Yungi* attended all rehearsals and the public performance
- Ensuring an experienced drug and alcohol counsellor, and a team leader and psychologist from the Social and Emotional Wellbeing team at *Yura Yungi* was on call during the rehearsals, and attended the public performance
- Negotiating as a group, a code of conduct before rehearsals started based on zero tolerance, which would be applied equally and without exception
- Children attended the performance only if they were accompanied by a parent or adult carer
- Early warning signs were monitored, and early intervention, such as time out or break away groups with one or more students, were applied as required.

A number of initiatives were implemented to promote the project:

- Flyers were designed and posted among the community, town camps and outstations a month before the project start date
- Radio interviews with staff from the partner organisations and the director were conducted on local radio PRK. This provided the opportunity for the project partners to issue an invitation to interested actors and their families to attend a community barbeque
- Project partners visited stakeholders in town to introduce the director and talk about the forum theatre model. This included visits to the high school and Kimberley Training Institute, where the director entertained the students with storytelling and invited them to attend the community barbeque, and subsequent rehearsals
- The director met with local Aboriginal elders for dinner to talk about the project and listen to the elders' stories and advice.

The key lessons learnt during this phase included:

- Effective coordination and collaboration between partners is critically important during the lead up phase
- The importance of recognising and harnessing partner capacities (for example, Yura Yungi made valuable contributions regarding the risk of trauma and how best to respond)

- Being aware of the project partner's capacity gaps to avoid attributing a role to them that they are unable to fill.

## Implementation

Twenty male and female Aboriginal young people attended the first day of rehearsals but, over time, the young people in attendance ebbed and flowed. A core group of eight actors developed. Unexpectedly this group was made up of high school students whose academic performance and attendance were the lowest amongst their peers.

The rehearsal process included:

- Negotiating a code of conduct; the group identified unacceptable behaviour and agreed on consequences. While the project partners had planned on a zero tolerance approach, the group reshaped the policy and decided instead to take a 'three strikes and you're out' approach
- Ensuring the director, one of the personal helpers and mentors and the actors' high school teacher were present at each rehearsal
- Having the actors share their stories and using them to write the play
- Assigning the characters and agreeing on a running order
- Providing healthy lunches and drinks.

The play, which they called 'Given Half a Chance', told the story of a young Aboriginal boy who has a father who drinks heavily. The drinking leads to family violence directed at the boy's mother. The pressures at home causes the boy's poor performance at school, his subsequent drift into petty crime, a car theft, a fatal accident and a broken hearted mother.

On the day of the final rehearsal, the main actor developed stage fright and returned to his home on a station outside of the town. The group's response was a last minute reallocation of roles so the public performance could go ahead as planned.

The final performance was held on 4 June 2015 and the audience included family members, the principal and teachers from the high school, the local radio manager who operated the lights, and the KCADS and Yura Yungi teams.

The key lessons learnt during this phase included:

- A safe, secure, private space for rehearsals, shared only with their peers, the director, their teacher and one of the personal helpers and mentors, meant that actors who felt shy, ashamed or vulnerable had the support to work through these emotions.
- At the first rehearsal the director suggested that he call the group 'actors' rather than by their first names and all agreed. This moniker removed any negative connotations associated with their real names and encouraged participants to re-invent a more positive version of themselves.



## Follow up

After the public performance, a number of evaluations occurred:

- Project partners spoke to the actors and audience about the highlights and challenges of the project, and the courage and skills of the actors. This included the young actor who had stage fright and did not perform.
- Once the audience had departed, all involved in the production gathered to share their experiences, with feedback overwhelmingly positive and the actors inordinately proud of their achievements.
- Project partners met to debrief without the actors, focusing on critical success factors and constraints as well as lessons learnt.

The final performance was viewed as a remarkable and courageous achievement by the young actors, and the director gave one last radio interview to thank the community for their generosity and participation. A month after the performance, one teacher reported that the project had had a significant and positive effect on her high risk group of students.

“This project empowered students at educational risk to create and perform their own plays. Students responded exceptionally well, attending rehearsals during school and after school hours. This was an incredible surprise as some students who would rarely come to school whole-heartedly participated in the creation and performance of the play. The success of this project has empowered students to feel a strong sense of achievement and it has inevitably increased their confidence in themselves and in their learning.”

The participation of young Aboriginal people was critical to the success of the project, while the adults provided the space, cultural security, privacy and boundaries. In this context, young people produced and performed a play that was an honest and confronting representation of their lived experience of alcohol-related harm.

The project had high levels of community support, and the high school was a strong and willing partner, offering its Performing Art Centre for use by KCADS to stage the next Theatre of Transformation project.