NHMRC Capacity Building Grant
for Indigenous Mental Wealth Development Days
Fairbridge 16-17 September 2009
Research Projects Update
Lizzie Finn
2 RESEARCH PROJECTS:
Change of aims as research framework develops and changes take place on the ground

PROJECT 1:
- ‘Exploring ways of healing the impact of grief and loss on the emotional wellbeing of Indigenous families and communities: Development of community-based peer support groups’
  - Research in collaboration with SIDS and Kids WA with current proposal to work with Aboriginal community in Northam.
  - This study to be extended later work with Aboriginal community in Perth.
Project 1: Proposed framework

Phase 1:
- Strengths-based storytelling with voluntary Aboriginal participants (10 in each rural/metropolitan setting)
- Small focus group interviews with Aboriginal health workers (5 in each setting).
  - Initial focus on Aboriginal resilience: maintenance of links with family, community and the land
  - Asking what healthy Aboriginal family and community wellbeing looks like
  - How grief and loss may have impacted on family/community wellbeing
Project 1
Phase 2:

- Development of mutual help/peer support group or healing circle. Voluntary participation
  - Small group, maximum of 8 people
  - Lunch and yarning prior to weekly group session at location chosen by community
  - Consultation with community on appropriate group procedures/program informed by outcomes from Phase 1
  - Finding an Aboriginal group driver
  - Researcher as observer and collaborator
Project 1: Rationale

- Little research into grief and loss or mutual help/peer support healing circles for Aboriginal Australians
- Indigenous grief/trauma researcher Judy Atkinson, advocates storytelling and group healing
- Mutual help/peer support groups characterized by self-determination, empowerment, collective wisdom and lore.

Action research

- According to requirements of participant communities e.g. assistance with seeking funding, advocacy
Project 1: Progress to date

• Writing:
  • Completed 1 ethics submission and 3 funding applications. WAAHIEC ethics submission still to be written.
  • Memorandum of Understanding drafted with SIDS

• Networking:
  • SIDS and Kids WA Indigenous Project Worker, counselors and CEO.
  • Wheatbelt Aboriginal Health Service
  • Northam-based State mental health and public health staff, Aboriginal health service workers.
Project 1: Progress

- **Finding a research community**
  - SIDS and Kids WA Indigenous Project Worker negotiating protocol with Wheatbelt Aboriginal Health Service for asking Northam Aboriginal community if they wish to be involved in research
  - Would later introduce me as researcher. Familiarization period.
  - SIDS counselors planning grief and loss training workshop for Wheatbelt Aboriginal Health Service to provide culturally safe debriefing for volunteer Aboriginal participants.

- **WAAHIEC Ethics Submission due October 5**
  - Wheatbelt Aboriginal Health Service sees need for this project. Negotiations underway to write letter of support for research for WAAHIEC ethics submission
PROJECT 2

- ‘Development of an effective bi-cultural collaborative and partnership model between an Indigenous Women’s Cancer Support Group (IWCSG) and mainstream cancer and palliative care services’

  - Research evaluation of IWCSG in Geraldton last year indicated need to work on development of bi-cultural partnership

  - **Rationale**: Little evidence-based research to support model for development of bi-cultural health partnerships
Project 2: Progress to date

Writing:

- Completed 1 ethics submission and 3 funding applications. WAAHIEC ethics submission still to be written.
- Small grants award with West Australian Palliative Care Network 2009/2010 to support 3 research trips

Networking

- Good working relationship with IWCSG and health service providers established last year.
Project 2: Proposed framework

- 3 strengths-based partnership workshops
- Separate focus group interviews with IWCSG and then health service providers
- Bringing partners together to workshop issues raised

Action research
- Education to strengthen skills base of IWCSG as requested e.g. writing funding applications, undertaking presentations
Project 2 : Current status

- Working on development of direction for IWCSG
- Currently 2 main Indigenous women drivers
- Group or navigator model or both?
- Sustainability
- First workshop November
- **WAAHIEC Ethics Submission due October 5**
- Negotiations with Terry Brennan, CEO, Geraldton Aboriginal Medical Service to write letter of support