



Nottingham
Law School
Nottingham Trent University

'Addressing Powerlessness: *'Bagaraybang bagaraybang mayinygalang (BBM) Empowering & Alleviating: A Health Justice Partnership'* (Hume Riverine Community Legal Services & Albury Wodonga Community Health Service) (2022-2025)'.

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Presenter: Associate Professor Clinical Legal Education and School Research Impact Lead NLS.

Hon. Associate Professor, College of Law, Australian National University.

Liz.Curran02@ntu.ac.uk <https://www.ntu.ac.uk/staff-profiles/law/liz-curran>

Acknowledgment

In Ontario, I acknowledge the lands and people of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation. The lands we are situated on are covered under the Williams Treaties and the traditional territory of the Mississaugas, a branch of the greater Anishinaabeg Nation, including Algonquin, Ojibway, Odawa and Pottawatomi. These lands remain home to a number of Indigenous nations and people.

In Australia, The Traditional Owners of the lands, including the Dhudhuroa, Wavereoo, Wiradjuri and Yorta Yorta people. I pay my respects to their Elders, past, present, and emerging. I acknowledge that the research and the program to which it relates was undertaken on stolen land where sovereignty was never ceded. Thanks for these amazing participants in my research.

Presenter's Positionality Statement

I look through the lens of my work as researcher and practitioner in access to justice specifically work that focuses on those who experiencing inequality.

I have worked for legal aid, NGOs and legal assistance services as well as been a litigation lawyer, consumer lawyer and worked for private law firms. My research and evaluation work is around effective legal practice and impacts this can have if done well on the lives of community members.

As a white person my practice is to have Aboriginal cultural advisers, work with participatory methodologies for research and training, checking in at regular intervals to ensure process, conduct, behaviours, and practice are culturally appropriate and safe and to constantly recalibrate and learn. Ideally, were funding to permit, there would be an Aboriginal researcher as part of my team however as my work is often pro bono or for limited funding for research or evaluation this capability is not built in as I would like and try.

This paper limit is 9 minutes paper only, rather than get bogged down in methodology, this paper will share process, approach and lessons learned in a 'nutshell' only.

Ask questions+ references too for elaboration.

Around the world, colonised communities are still significantly impacted in terms of their life outcomes and ability to advance the sustainable development goals (SDGs), due to the impacts of colonisation on various minoritized populations. This includes ongoing poverty, inequality, poor mortality rates and negative health and well-being. The growing body of international research cannot be ignored.

This research and impact evaluation I am discussing today is over 3-4 years (hopefully longer subject to funding). It reports on and examines the effectiveness of this Health Justice Partnership (Hume Riverina Legal Service & Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service). The service program aims to improve justice and social determinant of health outcomes for Aboriginal community members experiencing poor mental health and well-being.

Some Theory: *Culturally Responsive and Equitable Evaluation Indigenous Evaluation Strategy of the Productivity Commission* (Australian Government Productivity Commission) and the *First Nations Cultural Safety Framework of the Australian Evaluation Society* (Australian Evaluation Society).

Grounded research and evaluation practice in [literature on Indigenous research](#) (this was broader than Aboriginal research as some of it was international best practice), the [on-the ground experience](#) and [advice from the Aboriginal community](#), including data sovereignty and decolonisation. *Culturally Responsive and Equitable Evaluation* requires evaluation before during and after to address bias, be transparent, relational, incorporate narratives and co-design and perspectives acknowledging culture, safety, history, diversity, non-western perspectives and systemic drivers. In my view it is a theory, philosophy, process, approach and recognises impacts of colonisation and works to ensure integrity, autonomy and self-determination. It is not easy.

(Adedoyin A. et al., 2024; Jill Chouinard and Fiona Cram, *Culturally Responsive Approaches to Evaluation: Empirical Implications for Theory and Practice* (SAGE Publications 2020); Evans and others, 'Decolonizing Research Practice: Indigenous Methodologies, Aboriginal Methods, and Knowledge/Knowing' in Patricia Leavy (ed), *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed Oxford Handbooks 2020); Ruth McCausland, 'I'm sorry but I can't take a photo of someone's capacity being built': Reflections on evaluation of Indigenous policy and programmes' (2019) 19(2) *Evaluation Journal of Australasia* 64; Street and others, 'A Culturally Adaptive Approach to First Nations evaluation consulting' (2022) 23(1) *Evaluation Journal of Australasia* 6)

Some Theory

Investment in people and communities, - shared moral desire for **social justice**

Trust: *'we always know you will come back...'*

Reciprocity: knowledge exchange, reciprocal mobility, and actions that are mutually beneficial to both partners

Cultural Appropriateness: I am because we are (Ubuntu); local & traditional knowledge & values

Sustaining Activities: Capacity building; foster local ownership

Transparency: within & between

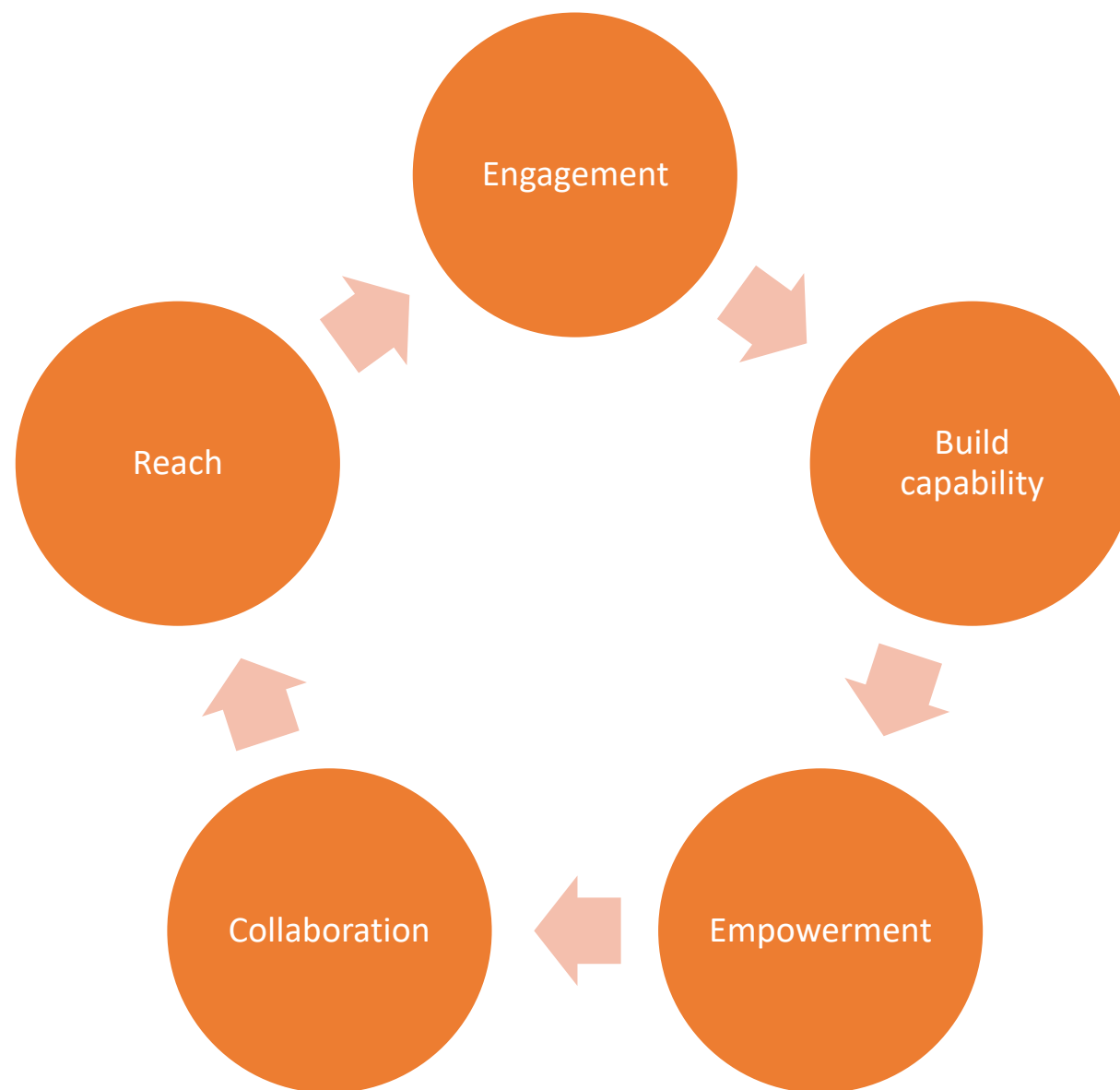
Global thinking *Turning the world upside down* (CRISP, 2010)

(Gibson, Musoke, Ikhile, Nyashanu (2023))

Curran Benchmarks (used in multiple research projects since 2011)

Reflective practice =
Continuous learning,
improvement and changes
in practice based on
evidence .

*Thanks for diagram design support from
HRCLS for this paper*



Method and Approach

- Co-designed
- Participatory
- Reflexive 'action' research
- Building on previous 7-year longitudinal study with same partners (Invisible Hurdles Program)
- Tools adapted for cultural safety and using trauma informed practice within a framing by *Culturally Responsive and Equitable Research and Evaluation*.
- Annual field trips data collection Annual Reports including Report to Community

Conclusions

Situation at project start-up 2023- For numerous and complex reasons Aboriginal inequality resulting in asymmetric poor legal capability in society miss out (here evidenced in Aboriginal population and views (Curran 2023). They and their professional supports (for example counselling, social, health and allied health supports whom they trust i.e. 'trusted intermediaries' are often unaware of the possible solutions legal help might offer.

Conclusions

Here through trust and approach of Invisible Hurdles fed into new BBM & meant lift off for BBM quicker than other HJPs This includes in fundamental areas such as housing, family cohesion, shelter, income security, safety from family violence and other things.

Conclusions -What research is saying & what this BBM research evidences for other replicable models worldwide

Approaches (integrated trauma informed, culturally safe advice, legal education policy) of BBM is client-centred and building legal capability and confidence have demonstrable impacts in improving legal empowerment and civic participation. (Curran 2024).

Research- Australia, UK Canada and elsewhere on value of health and justice (Curran 2001-24, Beardon 2024; Currie, 2022; Tobin-Tyler 2008, Lawton, 2014, Forell 2022)

Conclusions - What research is saying & what this BBM research evidences for other replicable models worldwide

BBM demonstrating significant impact on people's lives in justice outcomes, realisation of role of law for them, and social determinants of health (sustainable development goals) including, securing housing, preventing homelessness, enabling safety from family violence, providing income support and legally empowering people and their professional supports (through secondary consultation and professional development). BBM approach enabling trust increase pinned to capability factor enhancements, prevention of problems with models developing. Growing evidence of trusted intermediary and participants advocating for themselves, for others and improved decision making. Next field trip April-May 2025.

Conclusions - What research is saying & what this BBM research evidences for other replicable models worldwide

This research has provided a new evidence base for improved practice with insights into complexity of client experiences and how to better tailor and adapt services to make them more responsive, not only to client need but to also empower them, their trusted intermediaries and improve policy and funding responses accordingly. The research not only looks at client case work, client journey mapping and advice but examines what is effective in community development, legal capability and policy enhancements based on evidence, client experience which are all integrated with a feedback cycle informing each that is also examined for pact in this research.

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Conclusions - What research is saying & what this BBM research evidences for other replicable models worldwide

Working with health & justice with integrated multidisciplinary practice (IMDP) embedded in agencies where people are most likely to turn to for help works. This relies on establishing & retaining relationships of 'trust'. HJP such as this (careful design key) is an effective way of supporting people get legal help that they need.

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