

# Empowering Aboriginal families in parenting: *Jandu Yani U* 'For All Families'

**Cari McIllduff<sup>1</sup>, Catherine Ridley<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Marninwartikura – Marulu Strategy, WA

## Introduction

In the remote communities in the Fitzroy Valley in Western Australia, leaders recognized that significant numbers of children and families were suffering permanent effects on their physical and mental health from alcohol use. This led to an inquiry into the effects of alcohol on the community as a whole, and led to community-initiated alcohol restrictions in the Valley. Attention then turned to the effects of alcohol in pregnancy, including FASD. Following the population-based (*Lililwan*) study of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), FASD prevalence in the Fitzroy Valley was found to be 19% (Fitzpatrick et al., 2015). Families and teachers also reported challenging child behaviours as a major problem for all children at home and in school. In response, Marninwartikura Women's Resource Centre initiated a partnership with clinician-researchers to bring the evidence-based Triple P—Positive Parenting Program to the Valley. This paper discusses the resulting *Jandu Yani U Project* (for all families) which uses a partnership approach between the community, program developers and research team to enhance engagement, efficacy, and program sustainability.

Community partnerships are essential to effective and sustainable public health projects. Participation by key community stakeholders ensures the adapted intervention incorporates relevant cultural, structural, and process factors (Devieux, Malow, Rosenberg, & Dyer, 2004). In addition, the cultural adaptation of engagement strategies and services has been found to improve recruitment and retention rates (Botvin, Griffin, Diaz, Miller, & Ifill-Williams, 1999; Harachi, Catalano, & Hawkins, 1997; McCabe, Yeh, Garland, Lau, & Chavez, 2005; McKay, Stoewe, McCadam, & Gonzales, 1998). The current project began with significant time allocated to develop relationships with local elders and numerous community agencies. Through the use of this bottom-up approach, the collaboration helped to produce a culturally-adapted implementation process that was suitable to the community's needs. Community partners and academic researchers worked together in all phases of the project, including research design, program selection, training, program delivery and evaluation.

## Method

A strength of the *Jandu Yani U Project* is that it is community driven. Community-based participatory research (CBPR) strategies have been shown to increase culturally competent services and, in turn, increase the likelihood of implementation and effectiveness and sustainability (Horn et al., 2008). The social justice orientation of these strategies makes CBPR particularly appropriate for this project that addresses the needs of underserved, over-researched populations, such as Indigenous Australians. The project has built on the strengths and resources within the community by training 18 local residents to implement Triple P with families and by training three local community navigators/researchers. Collaboration among all partners has been a continuous process throughout the project, including consultation prior to training of parent coaches to adapt training and begin the adaptation of program implementation, consultation following training including the newly trained parent coaches in discussions of how to make the program work in communities in the Valley, involvement in the Fitzroy Futures Forum, and consultation with parents following program completion to gather general family feedback on the program.

### ***Initial community engagement process***

In August 2015, a meeting including the Marulu Manager, the Marninwarntikura CEO, community representatives, Chief Investigators from the University of Sydney and University of Queensland and an Indigenous Triple P Implementation Consultant was held in Broome (the Marulu Unit is a community initiative through Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre to overcome FASD and early life trauma in the Valley). The aim was to consult with the community on the adoption of an evidence-based parent support program, present the Triple P system and Indigenous Triple P adaptation, and share learnings from dissemination of the program in various Indigenous communities. An agreement was reached to work together to develop a locally accommodated adaptation of Triple P for the Fitzroy Valley. In April 2016, a workshop was held in Fitzroy Crossing with a local advisory group to ensure community understanding and consent for the program (Fitzpatrick et al., 2016). The group selected Indigenous Triple P, which includes all 17 core parenting skills, and a Stepping Stones Triple P extension which covers an additional seven skills relevant to children with complex needs. This was based on recognition of the complex needs of many children in the Valley. In July 2016, with the imperative to build community capacity, 20 women (18 residents, 12 Aboriginal, from 10 local organizations) were trained by an Indigenous Implementation Consultant and a Triple P Trainer with experience in diverse Indigenous communities. Following weekly support, consultation and team-building with the 18 local trainees, all were accredited as "parent coaches" in August 2016. In October 2016 a graduation was held to acknowledge and celebrate all the parent coaches' hard work.

### ***Advisory team as community experts***

The partners established an advisory group, which when fully formed, consisted of community leaders, educators and community family support workers. The group:

- reviewed the Triple P system of interventions and chose which would be most appropriate for the families in the valley;
- provided feedback on content, format and teaching strategies for both practitioner training in Triple P and the delivery of Triple P to families;
- reviewed family assessment measures and resources in various stages of development;
- made recommendations regarding parent coach and family recruitment, program activities, training and teaching format and objectives;
- established procedures for distributing findings back to the community;
- made recommendations of local community members to invited to be trained as Parent Coaches to deliver Triple P to local families;
- made recommendations on measures to be used to assess the effectiveness of the program;
- provided feedback and translation on wording of the assessment questionnaires;
- reflected community views and values about the research process, needs, and interests.

### ***Parent coaches as community experts***

Following the training of the 18 local parent coaches, weekly focus/support and consultation meetings were held for 4 months. Consultation consisted of training and program feedback from the parent coaches. They discussed ideas for how the program could be delivered most effectively with local

families, including how to engage families and promote the program, where to offer groups and sessions (e.g. child care centre, school), how to offer programs (e.g., in groups, in individual family home visits, with extended family groups), how to use program resources flexibly while maintaining program fidelity, as well as skills practice, feedback and personal goal setting.

### ***Intervention delivery adaptation***

Throughout the project, the research team has sought, received and incorporated the community feedback into the flexible delivery of Triple P to fit the local context. In the absence of any strong evidence suggesting fundamental changes to the original program, the research and advisory group together determined that “surface structure” changes in the recruitment and intervention procedures were most warranted in order to make it more appealing for Fitzroy Valley Indigenous families while still maintaining content fidelity. Our decision was consistent with Lau’s (2006) recommendation to alter only those aspects of evidence-based programs that are identified as being in need of adaptation by qualitative or quantitative data. Cultural factors that influence parenting practices were addressed more in terms of examples or cultural stories the parent coaches used for role playing or explaining a concept or strategy to parents that acknowledge the inherent need to recognise culture and history within parenting and family structure.

To conduct the adaptation, a collaborative team of program developers, university researchers, and local parents, practitioners and elders was formed. The goal of the adaptation was to improve receptivity to the program while maintaining the core components of Triple P. Acknowledging and respecting values and contextualising the content to the community guided this adaptation. Specific adaptation areas targeted were: (a) language, (b) recognition of family structure, (c) parent coach training and continued support (d) localisation which led to a parent booklet with photos of local families and children, (e) relationship development, (f) preferred learning style incorporating traditional stories, and (g) recognition of a lack of resources for families which led to the creation of parent packs as a take-away resource.

### ***Data collection***

The quantitative portion of the study was designed to understand the adapted community engagement and implementation of Triple P for a remote Indigenous communities through determining: (a) practitioner response to training, including satisfaction survey and change in confidence in parent consultation skills; (b) acceptability of the program for parent consumers (i.e. satisfaction survey relating to needs met and cultural fit); (c) change in parent skills (*Parenting Scale*), confidence (*Child and Parent Efficacy Scale for children with Developmental Disabilities (CAPES-DD)*), and wellbeing (*Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scales*); and (d) change in child behaviour (*Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory, CAPES-DD, Goal Achievement Scale*). This information is collected by community researchers interviewing families pre- and post-intervention and at 6 month follow up. Each questionnaire was reviewed by the advisory group as well as the community researchers to ensure accurate translation was available to explain questions to families as required. Interview procedures were flexible with respect to time and encouraged community researchers to engage families in discussion, building trust and relationships.

The qualitative portion of the study was designed to enhance the understanding of the cultural congruency of an adapted model of Triple P delivery, including exploration of: (a) overall impression of acceptability of the research project and Triple P; (b) importance of the aspects of the research project and program implementation that were modified to achieve cultural congruency; and (c) the empowerment of parent coaches and families to make a difference for the children in the community.

## Discussion

While research studies led by academic institutions in collaboration with community partners can provide evidence of effective approaches to increase implementation effectiveness and community engagement, examining grassroots efforts led by community organisations can also inform our understanding of what works in various contexts. For this reason, we have drawn on local knowledge, expertise, and preferences in how programs are disseminated. Moreover, remote communities need programs and service delivery models that can be put in place as rapidly as possible and easily adapted to a variety of needs and circumstances. Simultaneously, researchers are faced with issues involving scientific rigor, research protocol, university policies, and funding requirements in the context of limited time and resources. Community-research partnerships must continually balance these different needs and perspectives while focusing on the common agenda to serve the community effectively.

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## Presenters

Cari McIllduff was born in South Australia; however, she grew up in Canada, living and working with Indigenous Canadian friends and mentors. As a young woman she was given the responsibility of raising two of her younger cousins who had lost their Indigenous father to suicide. As a mother-figure, she has parented through trauma and chaos. While navigating a challenging family dynamic, she obtained a Bachelor degree in Psychology in Canada, has worked in early childhood intervention in a

rural Regional Office in Canada and has been teaching The Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) for more than five years in diverse cultures in both Canada and Australia. Cari is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Queensland where she is discovering how to best work with Indigenous communities to successfully implement evidence-based programs. After meeting team members of the Jandu Yani U (For All Families) Research project, Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre, the lead community organisation working with The University of Sydney, asked Cari to support project implementation in a way that is appropriate for the community context. Cari lived and worked in the Fitzroy Valley in the Kimberley region of Western Australia during 2016, supporting parent coaches to bring Triple P to a range of families. During 2017 she will continue to support parent coaches and work with the community to build capacity and sustainability as the program expands.

Catherine Ridley is a Wankajanka woman, born in Kalgoorli, who grew up on Christmas Creek Station on the edge of the Great Sandy Desert. She now lives with her husband and five children (four adult children and one in secondary school) in Fitzroy Crossing. Catherine has many skills in various areas, she is a qualified interpreter and obtained an Indigenous Community Management Degree and a Bachelor of Applied Science Degree through Curtin University of Technology. She is also in the process of starting a Masters Degree. Catherine is also a registered carer and has worked for various government departments in her career. She works as a Remote School Attendance Strategy (RSAS) Program Manager in which she leads the RSAS team in supporting and assisting families to have their kids attending school on a regular basis. This includes late student pick ups, family visits, keeping records of activities with the families, engaging families with the school, working with the department of education and various community programs, referring families to appropriate agencies, recognising the students attending school on a regular basis and their families' hard work to get them there. Catherine believes teaching parents skills like those in the Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) are key to the RSAS strategies. Catherine was trained in Triple P in May 2016 and joined the team of 18 newly trained local parent coaches in August. She has been a huge support and motivator to the team and has already taught four classes to families throughout the Fitzroy Valley. She is well known and respected throughout the Fitzroy Valley and is fast becoming known for her knowledge about parenting skills.