Youth Aware of Mental Health Cultural Review and Adaptation
## Contents

1. Executive Summary .................................................................................................................. 4
2. Consultants ............................................................................................................................... 4
3. Overview of YAM ..................................................................................................................... 4
4. Existing Literature ..................................................................................................................... 5
5. Phase 1: Initial Cultural Review ............................................................................................... 5
   Rationale ..................................................................................................................................... 5
   What happened .......................................................................................................................... 6
   Recommendations ..................................................................................................................... 6
6. Phase 2: Pilot Program .............................................................................................................. 6
   Rationale ..................................................................................................................................... 6
   What happened .......................................................................................................................... 7
   Results ......................................................................................................................................... 7
   Recommendations ..................................................................................................................... 7
7. Phase 3: Pilot Program (Rural and Remote) .......................................................................... 7
   Rationale ..................................................................................................................................... 7
   What happened .......................................................................................................................... 8
   Results ......................................................................................................................................... 8
   Recommendations ..................................................................................................................... 8
8. Future Evaluation ..................................................................................................................... 9
   Rationale ..................................................................................................................................... 9
   Key Considerations ................................................................................................................... 9
   Recommendations ..................................................................................................................... 10
9. Conclusion and Next Steps ..................................................................................................... 10

Appendix A: Phase 2 Evaluation Questionnaire Responses ....................................................... 11
Appendix B: Phase 3 Evaluation Questionnaire Responses ....................................................... 13
Appendix C: Phase 3 Teleconference Debrief ............................................................................ 17

*Suggested Citation*
We would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands we have worked on in creating this document: namely, the Gadigal, Bedegal, Meanjin, Wiradjuri and Awabakal peoples. We acknowledge the necessity of working alongside Traditional Custodians in devising solutions that address the substantial disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, in order to create a world where social determinants arising from colonial impacts no longer inform mental health and wellbeing.

The contributions of young Indigenous peoples have been at the heart of the process to improve on our youth mental health programs. We would like to thank those who were willing not only to participate in our pilot programs, but also willing to engage in feedback sessions and discussion following the programs. Your input has been instrumental in furthering the reach and relevance of this program for young people.
1. Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to document the process undertaken to review Youth Aware of Mental Health (YAM) in its cultural suitability for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people (herein Indigenous). In consultation with education bodies within Australia, YAM was endorsed by the Black Dog Institute as an appropriate universal evidence-based suicide prevention school program. However, the YAM program originated in Europe, and while it had previously been adapted for a broad range of audiences and communities, it had not been reviewed or adapted for Indigenous youth. This report provides a brief summary of the work undertaken to explore and improve the suitability and appropriateness of the program for this audience.

The Cultural Review and Adaptation was conducted in 3 Phases. The initial review of the language and terminology used (Phase 1) was submitted to Mental Health in Mind, the owners of the YAM program. Once approved, the first pilot of the program (Phase 2) was conducted in an urban setting with Indigenous YAM Instructors, with the participating youth then undergoing an informal evaluation. While a range of positive qualities were identified, the unique barriers that would be faced by young Indigenous people in rural and remote areas were also noted, and the awareness that these qualities might not transfer over to young people in rural and remote areas. This led to the second pilot (Phase 3) that took in place in 2018, which was similarly followed by an informal evaluation, informing the possibility of future work to roll-out YAM to a broader audience.

Further sections of the report highlight a proposed plan for further iterations of YAM to ensure it is culturally suitable, with the primary focus being that of a more structured and formalised evaluation.

2. Consultants

The program has been reviewed by Leilani Darwin and Julie Turner, both experts in suicide prevention and schools-based programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. It has also involved input from YAM Instructors working in the NSW Department of Education and employees of the Black Dog Institute.

3. Overview of YAM

Young people can be particularly vulnerable to mental health problems, self-harm or suicide. Schools are keen to support their students but often don’t know how to choose quality programs or integrate programs with other student wellbeing activities and referral pathways.

YAM is a universal evidence-based mental health promotion program for 14-16-year-olds. It is designed to raise awareness about suicidality and the factors that protect against it. It works by improving mental health literacy and explicitly teaching the skills necessary for coping with adverse life events and stress, so that young people get help before reaching crisis point.

YAM currently has the strongest evidence base of school programs with outcomes specific to suicidal behaviour, and the flexibility to be integrated into many school environments. In European trials, YAM has been shown to reduce depression and anxiety, suicide attempts, and severe suicidal ideation, facilitating healthy lifestyle choices among young people¹.

4. Existing Literature

The existing literature behind interventions that are culturally appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was consulted for the purposes of ensuring that any work assessing YAM for an Indigenous youth audience was suitable. Content covered was based on the recommendations for suicide prevention in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as per the landmark report ‘Solutions that work: What the evidence and our people tell us’. This process identified some issues regarding the content, with the main take away being that the program had not been developed by or for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with a lack of community consultation and engagement regarding program content and cultural relevance.

At the same time, the limited amount of literature on successfully designed and implemented suicide prevention programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was also noted as a barrier to consultation and comparison. Evidence in this area is still new, and slowly growing, with a notable example being the 2017 publication ‘Closing the Gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth Suicide: A social emotional wellbeing service innovation project’. This research highlighted and emphasised the importance of community-led initiatives, cultural governance and mainstream services working in partnership with local Elders to reduce suicide amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. A well-being program that was successfully run in the community and within Queensland Education schools, it was the first evaluated program to show a statistically significant reduction in suicidality amongst Aboriginal young people.

5. Phase 1: Initial Cultural Review

Rationale

The initial intention for the Cultural Review was to assess the suitability of YAM in terms of language and content for both the general Australian population and Indigenous young people, as well as the overall appropriateness of the program given the findings of several landmark reports into suicide prevention and social and emotional wellbeing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Some concerns were raised by the use of language and its context for Australian people, and were further complicated by the understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. As a universal program, it was therefore necessary to ascertain whether delivering YAM to an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander audience would be beneficial in the same way as to non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander audiences.

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What happened

Feedback was provided to LifeSpan regarding a first review of the program with minor changes to language of the YAM program and the inclusion of more culturally appropriate practices and examples, such as the insertion of an Acknowledgement of Country in the opening session of YAM, and ‘Yarn with Elders’ as one of the simple tricks to feel better. These changes were approved by the YAM developers Mental Health in Mind (MHiM) at the Karolinska Institute in Sweden.

Recommendations

Following the initial cultural changes, it was decided to proceed with a pilot program of accepted changes with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people delivered by Aboriginal YAM Instructors. This would be followed by an evaluation of the program that would be structured but informal to ascertain the suitability of the updated program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth.

6. Phase 2: Pilot Program

Rationale

Although changes had been made to the program, the adapted program had not been delivered to Indigenous youth, the key audience for these changes, highlighting a need for pilot delivery of the adaptation. The input of Aboriginal Instructors was also noted as a crucial component of the adaptation evaluation, as they would have an in-depth understanding of the program’s aims alongside knowledge of cultural sensitivity. It was decided that the adapted YAM program be delivered by Indigenous Instructors to a class with exclusively Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to explore the relevance and efficacy of the program for this audience. This evaluation would be conducted using a series of questions developed prior to program delivery.
What happened

A pilot delivery of YAM following a cultural adaptation by Leilani Darwin and Julie Turner was conducted at Wadalba Community School. Delivery was completed by Aboriginal YAM Instructors Ben Cheniart and Nigel Millgate over the course of 3 weeks. On completion of the program Leilani Darwin and Lyndal Halliday conducted a face-to-face debrief of the culturally adapted version to a group of both male and female Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants. The total number of participants who commenced the program was 10, and 100% of participants who commenced the program completed it.

Results

An overall analysis of the responses to the evaluation questions found that students felt positively towards the program. Notable themes from the debrief included:

- An open space for sharing was created
- Learning about help-seeking behaviours and where to seek help was valuable
- The information felt applicable to them as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth

The complete summary from the survey can be found in Appendix A: Phase 2 Evaluation Questionnaire Responses.

Recommendations

The pilot delivery yielded positive results from both youth and Instructors. A discussion with the two Instructors following the evaluation came with the recommendation to conduct a second pilot program with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth in remote/rural communities, to see whether the adaptation of the program would be applicable to students with a closer relationship to country and culture.

Another recommendation was that an additional question be added to the evaluation questionnaire ‘Do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth believe it is critical to the program’s success for the YAM Instructors to identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?’. This was to assess whether the relationship between youth and Instructors would be impacted by cultural connection, or whether the nature of the program itself would be sufficient in creating a space that felt non-judgemental and open.

7. Phase 3: Pilot Program (Rural and Remote)

Rationale

Following on from Phase 2 it was suggested that a further pilot take place delivering the adapted program in a rural and remote location to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. This was suggested for the following reasons:

1. The first pilot delivery occurred in an urbanised and accessible location, which was not reflective of some of the challenges which could be faced when delivering in a more rural or remote school where a significant proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth would be likely to encounter the program
2. A second pilot would be required to explore whether the success factors in the Phase 2 pilot would be attributable to circumstances unique to that delivery (e.g. competency of the Instructors or receptiveness of the participants) or to the program more broadly. Given the strong rapport that was already in place between Instructors and participants during the Phase 2 pilot it appears likely that this may have played at least some part in YAM's positive reception, again a factor which was unlikely to remain consistent in the delivery of YAM programs more broadly.

The pilot was to be delivered to a cohort of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Year 9 students by culturally identified Instructors, with Leilani Darwin and an additional Black Dog Institute team member conducting an after-program debrief with Instructors and participants similar to that performed in Phase 2. A report would be provided with outcomes, findings and any subsequent recommendations for a possible Phase 4 evaluation. It was intended that any feedback received regarding the cultural suitability of YAM would be reviewed, leading to agreement on further changes required to be submitted to the program. Feedback from both pilot programs was to be considered in the next iteration of revision requests with YAM developers and would include recommending any relevant changes to the YAM program to content owners, which would then be taken out to schools.

What happened

As a result of planning discussions in conjunction with the NSW Department of Education and Black Dog Institute which took account of timing, demographic, geographic and capacity constraints, Narrandera High School (a public school based in the Murrumbidgee region of NSW) was selected as the most feasible school in which to conduct the Phase 3 pilot.

The program was delivered in full by two experienced NSW Department of Education Instructors, Tanya Lancaster, a Gamilaraay woman, and Katherine Morris, who does not identify as Indigenous, to a class of solely Indigenous students. Delivered to a cohort of 9 Indigenous students in the school, the program had a 90% completion rate and was made up of 65% males and 35% females.

Results

The program was received positively by Instructors and participants in the second pilot delivery. The complete summary from the survey can be found in Appendix B: Phase 3 Evaluation Questionnaire Responses. Some of the responses consistent across the two pilot deliveries were:

- The openness that was encouraged through the sessions
- The lack of judgement that came with the structure and Instructors' approach
- That more time was needed for the program for what it aimed to do

One of the main takeaways came from a discussion around whether the sessions were delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Instructors. Youth raised that they felt it wasn’t necessary, as Instructors were able to deliver the program more as who they were, with Aboriginality not bearing on the success of the program or their engagement. The creation of an open, non-judgemental safe space was identified as a far more critical consideration.

Instructors also participated in a debrief that took place over teleconference (full summary found in Appendix C: Phase 3 Teleconference Debrief). Tanya Lancaster noted that YAM at its essence relates well to Aboriginal ways of learning and interacting due to its focus on stories and discussion. The main suggestion that arose from the debrief was to consider the space and location used to conduct sessions: for example, taking the sessions outside rather than within the classroom or adjusting where students sat to encourage open learning.
Recommendations

Given the small sample and singular delivery further review steps were recommended, as per the intentions outlined in the Phase 2: Recommendations and Phase 3: Rationale sections.

8. Future Evaluation

Rationale

Currently, there is a limited evidence-base for effective suicide prevention programs targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth. Given the overrepresentation of Indigenous suicides across the country, particularly amongst Indigenous youths⁴, it is important that formal evaluation of the effectiveness of YAM for Indigenous youth be explored. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to identify an appropriate evaluation methodology and conduct further trial deliveries of the program to ensure this work contributes to the much-needed evidence base regarding culturally appropriate and informed systems-based responses to suicide prevention for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Formal evaluation should identify the necessary factors and criteria to be put in place that will ensure the cultural safety and suitability of this program being used nationally.

Key Considerations

Based on the feedback and recommendations of the previous phases, the following key considerations should be taken into account in any future exploration and evaluation of the program:

- What evaluation structure would be most appropriate and informative?
- What kind of data do we want to collect from participants prior to delivery and post-delivery and why?
- What is the impact of Indigenous vs. non-Indigenous Instructors and Helpers in ensuring the effectiveness of the program for Indigenous youth?
- Given that pilots to-date have been run with cohorts made up entirely of Indigenous youth (i.e. not within normal class cohort structures), what is the impact of the program when delivered to normal class cohorts which are likely to consist of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth?
- What are the longer-term impacts of the program? What follow-up data collection can be conducted? Is it worthwhile to conduct a follow-up in the months following completion of the program? Is it feasible for this evaluation of necessary?
- How can we involve family groups of participating youth in the evaluation? Family group perceptions of the impact of the program may be particularly important in forming an accurate understanding of the program’s effectiveness. The collection of qualitative data could occur as part of some form of exciting graduation ceremony conducted at the conclusion of the program where family/guardians are invited to attend.

⁴ School of Indigenous Studies, University of Western Australia. What we know about suicide prevention for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Retrieved from
Recommendations

Further structured evaluation is necessary to more formally and conclusively assess the findings from the previous Phases in a way that contributes to the overall evidence-base for effective strategies in reducing the rate of suicide amongst Indigenous youth. It is recommended that the format this evaluation takes is decided by an advisory group that is formed to ensure appropriate cultural governance, with inclusion of relevant experts and stakeholders. This advisory group should provide guidance for evaluation design, data collection methods and interpretation of findings. The evaluation design should draw upon the key themes, feedback and recommendations from the earlier phases of this cultural review.

9. Conclusion and Next Steps

The first three Phases of the YAM Cultural Review and Adaptation provide a preliminary indication of the relevance and appropriateness of the program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth, though further exploration and formal evaluation is required with recommendations provided to guide this process. More broadly, this Review also highlights the importance of developing processes that formally assess the suitability of universal suicide prevention programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander audiences. It is critical that work continues in developing programs that help youth reach out and work through social and emotional wellbeing issues, and that these are made readily available as part of the evidence base informing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide prevention solutions.
## Appendix A: Phase 2 Evaluation Questionnaire Responses

### YAM – Evaluation with Participants

**Overall, Did you enjoy the program?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Unanimous</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**What did you like the most about YAM?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Should go for longer</th>
<th>Now know how to deal with stuff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How to help friends</td>
<td>Relaxed teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing who to contact for help</td>
<td>Openly speak and share thoughts without being judged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructors doing the first role play</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What was your least favourite part of YAM?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not going for long enough</th>
<th>More and longer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Did you think that YAM had good cultural content, so information relevant to Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander culture?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Unanimous</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**If you answered no, what could be done to improve it?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good because it helps with bullying, drugs and suicide rates which are a problem for Aboriginal people</th>
<th>Good doing the dilemmas in a bigger group and not splitting in two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helps to deal with big problems</td>
<td>Longer so we could learn more stuff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Overall, did you like working with Ben and Nigel during the program delivery?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Unanimous</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Creating a mentally healthier world

If you answered no, what would you have liked to be different with regards to the delivery?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The way they ran it</th>
<th>Their knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Made us feel comfortable</td>
<td>Felt safe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Would you recommend this program to your friends to do?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Unanimous</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Discussion with facilitators after:

- Would be good to trial it out in country. These kids don’t have much connection and knowledge with their culture so it would be good to trial it with communities and kids with stronger knowledge and connection.
- Small group of 10 is easier to facilitate and give each kid the attention they need.
- Smaller also means they talk more.
- Because it is different to the normal classroom experience the kids like it and it is easier to talk about things.
- Different type of program because it was not personal things are hypothetical and not directed at exact kid’s circumstances.
- Posters help. The kids can look at them if they are not sure of the answers and can keep going back to them.
- Need to be able to relate to kids. Wearing a teacher hat is a problem
- Role plays can be a bit hard but we demonstrated the first and the kids were ok after that.
- It was good for instructors to learn about how kids think and feel. Because we couldn’t ‘instruct’ or ‘teach’ and there was ‘no judgement’ means the kids were allowed to say anything and we had to listen to things like what they would do in a dilemma even if we felt that would be a poor choice. We were also able to unpack those choices and have them think about the consequences, but this takes time.
- Possibility of a refresher session a few months later
- Or adding in extra time to unpack consequences
- Dilemmas are better as a whole group, for both classroom management and getting the kids to think and talk.
- Young people with ASD can be a problem. Needs to be inclusive but also need to think about the dynamics created by different behavioural needs particularly when discussion sensitive emotional topics.
## Appendix B: Phase 3 Evaluation Questionnaire Responses

### YAM – Evaluation with Participants

**Overall, Did you enjoy the program?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Unanimous</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**What did you like the most about YAM?**

| We could talk about things we wouldn’t normally get a chance to discuss | Better than normal classes |
| Better than normal classes where you can be judged by others because of how well you do on that topic (e.g. Maths) – a separator from judgement that comes with normal school work | Not judged by others |

In particular liked the role-plays or what they described as the ‘games’ for the following reasons:
- Allowed for a different way of discussing/talking about things because the role-plays are ‘pretend’
- The boys in the class engaged well with the role plays. These boys in particular did not engage as strongly prior to the role plays

Scenarios were relevant/relatable for them. In particular the following role plays: (1) offered a lift by friend’s sister who has been drinking and (2) social media post about a party that a friend is upset about not being invited to

It was good that we weren’t just sitting around talking the whole time, the role-plays broke this up and made it more interesting

**What Improvements Would You Recommend?**

| Do more to help people open-up. In particular, allowing more time and having more sessions would allow people to open up. General feeling that the students were just getting to this open space towards the end of YAM | More role-plays |
| Incorporate outside time, potentially doing a role-play outside or playing a physical game/sport such as basketball | Have food at the last session/at the end. |

| Having food or playing a game at the end were seen as important as both would: bring people together to have conversations over. People talk more easily when they are talking over food or when playing a game | One student suggested some one on one time may be good, as people would have different conversations and might talk about things that were not even discussed during the program |

This recommendation supported by all students
All agreed that having more sessions would be good. They thought it would be good to do sessions every week for a month. Felt they were really starting to enjoy it and open it up but the program was already coming to an end.

What was your least favourite part of YAM?

| Talking about feelings | Opening up – though the non-judgemental, safe space created by Tanya and Kath made people more comfortable to do this |

Did you think that YAM had good cultural content, so information relevant to Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander culture?

| Yes | Mostly, passively, yes | No |

Generally ambiguous responses to this question. Mostly passive ‘yes’ responses.

If you answered no, what could be done to improve it?

| Not much cultural content was really covered. Maybe would be good to discuss cultural stuff more. In particular it would be good to talk more about how mental health impacts Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids in particular |

Overall, did you like working with Tanya and Kath during the program delivery?

| Yes | Unanimous | No |

Students felt like they had known Tanya and Kath for a long time, felt comfortable with them. Can talk to them, without judgement.

If you answered no, what would you have liked to be different with regards to the delivery?

| N/A |

Did it make a difference having an instructor who identified as an Aboriginal person?

| Yes, students felt like the instructor just understood them from the beginning, making them easier to talk to |

Did it make a difference having a helper who was not an Aboriginal person?

| No issue or concern with this, from student’s perspective this did not have any bearing on the success of the program or their engagement |
Would it be different if the people delivering the program were not Aboriginal?

"If Tanya wasn’t Aboriginal it wouldn’t matter, because she is still Tanya”. It is more important for them to be non-judgemental and easy to talk to. It doesn’t matter if they are Aboriginal or not.

What was it like having people you have never met before run the program with you? Would it be different if you knew the instructor or helper?

It was good to have instructors that we didn’t know, but it would be ok if it was someone that you know too, as long as it is someone that you trust.

What was it like being in a special group of just Aboriginal students completing the program, as opposed to being in your normal class groups?

Note: One student originally int his cohort requested to be moved to their normal class group to complete YAM, so that he could be with his close friends. This student therefore did not complete YAM with this cohort or participate in the final debrief session

It was good going through YAM with the other students in their group, as they all know each other and “are probably related”, aka have close existing ties.

It was a good separator from normal class (see earlier point about stepping out of normal classroom, academic performance dynamics). Less judgemental space.

However, when questioned more about these positive factors they identified that: It didn’t really matter that they were in a group with only Aboriginal students, it was more about having an open, non-judgemental space where they weren’t being judged on their normal school work. It didn’t really matter whether they were in a group of just Aboriginal students or in their normal classes.

Did it make a different having an instructor who identified as an Aboriginal person?

Yes Unanimous

No

One student only attended the last YAM session, but demonstrated a positive opinion of the program as well as extensive knowledge of its content, conveying that everyone else had been talking about it and encouraged her to come.

General Notes:
- One student who had a record of poor attendance at school, attended the second and third weeks as well as the debrief conversation. During this same time she continued to have poor attendance at all other classes except YAM, attending school only on Tuesdays, the days YAM was run. In discussions with school staff it appears this was a level of engagement they had not previously seen in this student. Furthermore, this student had previously demonstrated close ties to a friend who was also in this YAM cohort, such that she was
generally only attending classes with this friend present as a matter of comfort. This student continued to attend the final YAM session even when this close friend could not make it.

Session Notes from Instructor and Helper:
- Sessions 1 and 2:
  - Acknowledgement of Country
    - Non-verbal reactions from students suggested a very positive reaction to the Acknowledgement. Students smiled and seemed to show increased engagement in response.
  - Strengths: Engaged, respectful, listened well
  - Stressors:
    - Having to attend school
    - Teachers
    - Siblings
    - Expectations and pressure
  - Varying literacy levels, this was overcome by giving the students the option of their own group structure for dilemmas
- Sessions 3 and 4:
  - Students like to tell stories and talk
  - Appear engaged and having fun
  - 1 student went to other group as he wanted to be with his friends for the program. Heard back from other instructors that he participated well
  - Group came up with topics based on what stresses them:
    - Rules: from teachers and parents
    - Expectations: from teachers and parents
  - They also spoke about the difficulty of being between a child and an adult
  - Parent commented to Kath that she was happy that we were here and that it was making a difference. Also said that the students were seeing advisors/counsellors because we had encouraged them to.
- Session 5:
  - Really good conversation around when to see a counsellor, expectations about what to expect
  - Great role plays and conversation
  - Emotionally aware, great thoughts and great insight
  - Main themes:
    - Persistence (friends helping friends)
    - Keep trying (until you find someone who can help you and you are comfortable with)
Appendix C: Phase 3 Teleconference Debrief

Debrief conducted by Leilani Darwin with Instructor (Tanya Lancaster) and Helper (Kath Morris) on 10/12/2018

- YAM at its essence, relates well to Aboriginal ways of learning and interacting. A focus on stories (through role-play) and discussion
- Non-judgemental space remains key and useful for Aboriginal youth
- Main suggestion is to look at alternative’s locations and space, suggest incorporating time outside, using the outside area.
  o Even adjusting the classroom seating arrangements helps with this. Important to make sure that seats and desks moved to disturb normal classroom environment.
  o Ensuring students feel safe int hat space, this could be by sitting on desks, on the floor, etc
  o Helps engage with all senses from students
  o Logistics, planning and fidelity of doing this is the major barrier to explore and overcome: Potential of having a large number of groups trying to find outside spaces at the school, how to plan this with schools, ensuring fidelity as this is done
- Students engaged particularly well with:
  o Discussion
  o Role plays in particular
  o Impact of YAM appeared to flow on to students who were not present. For example, one student only attended during the final session but showed strong knowledge of the content that had been covered to-date. She lived with a student who had been through the earlier sessions and they had obviously discussed and engaged with the content outside of the classroom. This student when attending YAM for the first time showed a positive disposition to the content.
- Discussion is less about adapting the program, and more about ensuring fidelity and faith that the program as intended will work. This could best be achieved through improving peer support, supervision and shared learnings between instructors
  o It’s ok if students don’t talk or don’t engage in overt ways – they will be engaging in their own ways – silence is ok
- Was the cultural content easy to facilitate?
  o Easy to facilitate, this is down regardless of the background of students:
    ▪ Using culturally appropriate terms
    ▪ Acknowledgement of country
  o Helps make it feel like “Our YAM program”
- What improvements could be made to make it more culturally informed and appropriate:
  o More community involvement: relevant for all communities (regardless of Aboriginal or not)
  o How can we engage the community in this? Help them get something from this process as well
  o NSW Dept of Ed: Offer information sessions to parents, school staff, community groups that are connected to the school (e.g. AECG, Rotary). But may need to formalise this in some way. Not sure how we do this. Just because you hold a meeting doesn’t mean you’ll be able to engage the community.
  o Further engagement with AECG would be worthwhile. President interested in becoming a YAM instructor or helper.
  o Kath and Tanya have started recruiting more Aboriginal teachers from Murrumbidgee region who have been interested in the program
- Challenges in working with the group
  o Attendance:
- Week 1: 9 students
- Week 2: 6 students
- Week 3: 9 students
- Most of the drop-out due to suspension (reportedly 2 students in second week), as well as 1 student who changed to another YAM group to be with their friend groups
- Potential solutions: (1) explaining that YAM is different to schools, encouraging ways to ensure that students can attend, (2) running outside of the school, (3) running as a holiday program, (4) make YAM available through Aboriginal Community Hubs which target students who are not consistently attending school

- Issues in engaging with the school management itself:
  - No issues, but could be because they are only at/working with the school for brief periods

- Would you recommend this program to the community?
  - Yes

- Any other feedback you would like to share?
  - Had lots of fun delivering the program and working with each other (instructor/helper relationship)
  - Ability to build rapport with students in such a brief period of time is unique