

Using PhotoYarning to understand wellbeing for First Nations young people

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INTRODUCTION

Today’s youth face unprecedented social, environmental, and technological challenges that can significantly impact on their wellbeing. While First Nations Australian youth face additional obstacles associated with prevailing social and health inequities, they might also possess cultural, spiritual, family and community capital that promotes their wellbeing.

To date, little research has focused on understanding what fosters wellbeing for First Nations youth, which is important for informing and guiding effective policy, programs, and interventions to support their wellbeing.



OBJECTIVE

Our team undertook a national qualitative study, which forms part of a larger project to develop a wellbeing measure for First Nations youth, using a PhotoYarning method to explore, identify and describe the parts of life that are important to supporting youth’s wellbeing.

METHOD

We partnered with First Nations community organisations to conduct PhotoYarning with First Nations youth aged 12-17 years in 2021-22. Participants were gifted digital cameras and asked to take photographs of things in their life that are important to them and contribute to their wellbeing. Participants then joined in a Yarning Circle led by First Nations facilitators to share and discuss the photographs they had taken and Yarn about the elements of life that support their wellbeing. Sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed, and findings were analysed using a Collaborative Yarning Approach.

RESULTS

First Nations youth (n=178) from 17 sites across 6 Australian states and territories participated. Our analysis identified a range of key interrelated elements that contribute to their experience of wellbeing. Family emerged as a central aspect of wellbeing, with a variety of family members providing key support to First Nations youth. Other aspects of wellbeing included culture, friends, pets, nature, making art, music, playing sport, being healthy and having independence.

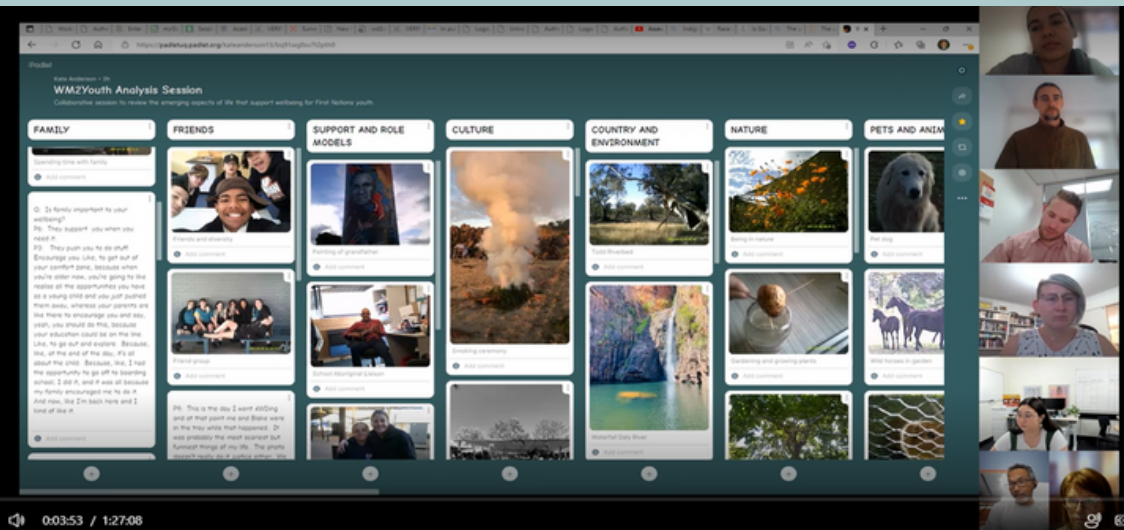
STUDY SITES



FIRST NATIONS FACILIATORS



COLLABORATIVE YARNING SESSIONS



CONCLUSION

Understanding the parts of life that are important to supporting First Nations youth’s wellbeing is critical in informing and guiding effective policy and practice. The findings of this study will be used to develop items for a wellbeing measure for First Nations youth, which will increase transparency, responsiveness and relevance of clinical and health policy decision making, ultimately improving mental health and wellbeing of First Nations youth.

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