Title:
Healthy bodies, strong minds: Indigenous youth talking about identity and wellbeing

Abstract:
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia are a young population, with the 2016 census data identifying that more than half of Indigenous Australians (53%) are under the age of 25 years. This paper will outline the findings from a broader study on Indigenous youth identity, wellbeing and schooling, with a focus on how Indigenous young people talk about health and describe from their perspectives what a healthy person looks like, incorporating aspects of health including physical, mental and cultural wellbeing.

There is an abundance of scholarship and media coverage about Indigenous ill health. However, there is now an emergence of Indigenous scholars who are conceptualising and undertaking research that privilege Indigenous ways of being, knowing and doing that are speaking back to these deficit discourses. In this study, we incorporated local Indigenous knowledges and wisdom through appointing local Indigenous researchers who worked with the research team to ensure the study was localised, recognised and respected the local Indigenous peoples, communities and cultures. This both enriched the experience for Indigenous young people and allowed for the concepts from the project to continue beyond the life of the project.

Indigenous constructs of identities in this study were explored first and foremost through story and creative expression from young people, with young people also exploring the ways in which their identities are also constructed and impacted on by external sources, such as the media, schooling and social, historical and political discourses. Through using creative, youth centred and culturally affirming ways of exploring the topic of health with Indigenous young people, we were able to gain insights from young people about their views, voices and visions on what health and wellbeing.

Presenters:
Dr Marnee Shay, University of Queensland
m.shay@uq.edu.au

Associate Professor Grace Sarra, Queensland University of Technology
grace.sarra@qut.edu.au