

Indigenous Birthing in an Urban Setting Study



PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a valued research method in health. It creates opportunity for us to start making changes that community want and have asked for without having to wait for the research project to be finished. We know that it is important to involve Indigenous people at every stage of Indigenous health research to ensure that the research is meaningful and useful to making positive changes in health outcomes for our mob.

This was our experience setting up a PAR team and mentoring two young Indigenous women working on the Indigenous Birthing in an Urban Setting Study (IBUS). Both women had no previous experience working in health or research, with the guidance from senior researchers they gained the skills needed to do high quality maternity care research.

1

IBUS PAR Research Team



Sarah Maidment and Kayla Heinemann

Indigenous community researchers

Sarah's (left) mob are Central Arrernte from Mparntwe (Alice Springs) where she was born and bred. Kayla's (right) mob are Bundjalung, she grew up on Mununjali country in Beaudesert. Both women learnt how to do research on the ground by being trained and mentored by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous mentors and trainers with experience in Indigenous health research.



Sue Kildea

Chief Investigator

Extensive experience with using PAR methods for health service change to improve maternal and infant health outcomes



Yvette Roe

Indigenous Research Mentor for the PAR team

Early career researcher and a Njikenja Jawuru woman from the Kimberley region, Western Australia



Sophie Hickey

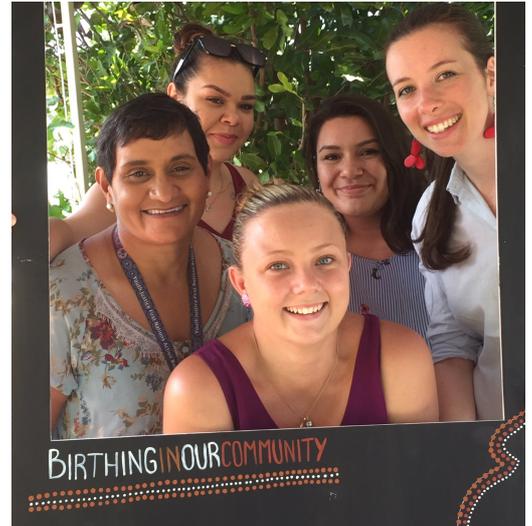
Trainer and Supervisor
Early career researcher with a social science and public health background and manages the day-to-day running of the IBUS study

..... Participatory Action Research

How does it work?

An important part of the research that made it possible for changes to be made was the monthly meetings. This was when Kayla and Sarah could come together with the other IBUS team members and discuss what they were hearing and seeing happening on the ground. Sharing the feedback and concerns coming from the community helped the research team get a better understanding of the broader issues women were facing and the research team could come up with ideas together on what can be done to help.

We did this using a Plan, Act, Reflect cycle



Above: Some of the IBUS team at the Mums and Bubs Hub Christmas party engaging with community



PLAN



The research team met monthly to talk about and reflect on progress, challenges and strengths of the research study, the maternity services being evaluated, and the women's stories.



ACT

The stories collected by Kayla and Sarah from the women in the study were presented to the Steering Committee to prompt changes to service based on the women's feedback on their maternity care experience.



COLLABORATE



This study was done in partnership with two key Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service (ATSICHS) and Institute for Urban Indigenous Health (IUIH) - and the Mater Mothers Hospital.

REFLECT



By feeding these stories higher up in a timely manner, Birthing in Our Community service were able to assess the care they provided the women and make change or additions to the service where needed.



Providing our researchers with **Training and Mentoring**

Kayla and Sarah both received **on-the-job training** to learn how to do the day to day tasks in their role and also to get a better understanding of the research and the impacts it could have in the women's care. Sophie provided training to learn:

Consenting process. The importance of letting the women know the details of the study so that they can make an informed decision to participate in the study.

Interview techniques. We used role-play to get Kayla and Sarah to practice doing **surveys** on each other to come up with solutions to hypothetical situations. For example, what to do if a women becomes distressed/upset.

Risk assessments. The surveys include some sensitive questions about social emotional health and wellbeing. Kayla and Sarah actively referred women (with women's consent) to the Indigenous health services and keep in mind other resources to offer when women had shared an issue they wanted help with - for example letting women who felt isolated know about mums and bubs groups.

Kayla and Sarah also took part in the below workshops for professional development.



Research Masterclass by SAHMRI

Hosted by the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health (IUIH) and presented by Wardliparingga, South Australian Health & Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI).

The two day workshop included: introduction to research, how to form a research question and how to create a research study around your research question, as well as an overview of ethics in research.

This masterclass helped Kayla and Sarah understand the bigger picture of how research works. By learning how research evolves from a research question and how findings can be implemented into health services.



Infant and Toddler Development – Third Edition (Bayley III) workshop.

Kayla and Sarah attended a 3 day workshop to learn how to administer the Bayley III assessment. The assessment was used on the bubbas in the study at around six months old.

The Bayley III is a comprehensive and interactive tool used to assess infant and toddler development focusing on cognitive, language, and motor skills. It was trialed on an American population of children to create the standards of infant and toddler developmental milestones.

We used the Bayley III assessment in this study to compare United States development standards with scores from urban Indigenous Australian infants to determine if this scale is appropriate and accurate to use in this setting.

Successful Outcomes using

Participatory Action Research



Maternity Service

OUTCOMES

Community based
mums and bubs hub

Full time Psychologist
& Social Worker at the
hub

Transport to hub,
hospital & home

This research was done in partnership with the local community to help health services understand what culturally safe care is for women birthing in an urban setting

Kayla and Sarah were regularly at the maternity clinics to recruit and complete **surveys** with the women and between appointments have a yarn with women about what is important to them when accessing maternity care. These yarns helped us understand more about their responses recorded in the surveys. Kayla and Sarah would also keep **field notes** on their experience doing on the ground research. The notes would have their observations of body language, tone of voice, and environment during yarning and doing surveys. We learnt that some social issues were affecting their access to care such as transport and other competing priorities like housing, financial stress, Child Safety and family obligations. Women also said that getting to and from the hospital was challenging and didn't like the busy environment.

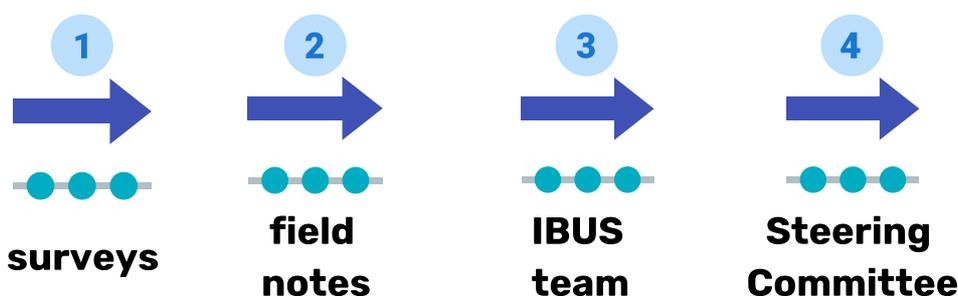
Kayla and Sarah flagged this feedback from the women with the rest of the **IBUS team** at the monthly PAR meetings.

Sue, Yvette and Sophie then focused on the social areas of the data and the field notes based on what women had told Kayla and Sarah; and fed this information up to the governance level at the **Steering Committee** meetings.

By providing evidence collected in the surveys and documented in the field notes. Birthing in Our Community maternity service were able to secure funding for a full-time **social worker**.

Example of Participatory Action Research

PROCESS



Full-time social
worker added to
hub team!

5

Click on the image below to read our published paper!



'I have grown socially and mentally since becoming a research assistant. I enjoy doing the surveys with mums knowing what we aim to get out of it. I have learnt so much about many different things. I like thinking that the health services and model of care will be improved over time step by step for when I start my own family. I have learnt more about this study and I still learn more and more about it every day whether it is from Sophie, Sarah or another person within the study.'

- Kayla Heinemann

'This role has made me reflect back on my own birthing experience in a hospital through the mainstream sector and how it could have been done better... Fortunately I had the ongoing support of a Family Partnership program to give me all the appropriate information to prepare me for the birth. I see that there is room for improvement when it comes to birthing and supporting women in birthing.'

- Sarah Maidment

Big thanks to all the women and community that participated in the IBUS study!

Follow us on social media!



[Molly Wardaguga Research Centre](#)



[@IBUS_SEQ](#)



[@MollyCentre](#)



<https://www.cdu.edu.au/mwrc>

