

Music to our Eyes

Presenters: Graham Bidstrup and Amy-Lee Shields, Uncle Jimmy Thumbs Up

Uncle Jimmy Thumbs Up! has been delivering nutrition education into remote Indigenous communities since 2007. Using music as the engagement tool the Thumbs Up! team encourage the participants (usually school children) to write song lyrics about a chosen topic EG eating fruit and Veg and drinking water. A song is written and recorded plus a video is made for the song. UJTU works with the whole of the community who take “ownership” of the song. The song and video become part of that communities drive for better nutrition all around.

In 2015, IEHU approached UJTU with a request to use their engagement method to increase awareness of Trachoma and to reinforce the simple methods to help stop the spread of the germ. Thumbs Up! has since delivered Trachoma awareness programs to several communities including in the APY lands, Tennant Creek and Barkly regions. UJTU also wrote a song and produced a video in collaboration with 6 schools, called “the 5 step song” outlining the steps that many schools are using to conduct a morning face washing and general cleanliness routine.

The practical lessons learned from using our delivery method plus the ongoing work by UJTU in remote communities makes for a very interesting discussion topic. The level of awareness in the communities where the songs were generated and videos produced is still evident years after the program was delivered. The songs and videos remain visible in the communities and are also regularly featured on ICTV and Aboriginal TV broadcasts expanding the reach of the videos into many more communities.