



*Healing Foundation  
Gathering 2010*

*“Let’s Talk Healing”*



## Contents

From the Chair	2
About the Healing Foundation	3
“Let’s Talk Healing” Recommendations	4
The Gathering	5
The Importance of Healing	6
Presentations	8
Featured Presenters	16
Yarning Circles	26
Board Members	28
“Let’s Talk Healing” Program	32
Participant Feedback	34

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### Florence Onus

As Chairperson of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation it is a great honour to present the report of the first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation Gathering "Let's Talk Healing".

I am a Berrigubba woman from Queensland and the fourth generation of my family who has suffered removal from land, culture and each other. My great grandparents, my grandparents, my mother and my generation including myself have all suffered institutionalisation. So I've walked that journey. I've walked that road.

I am someone who has initiated my own healing and assisted my family and community in healing. There are people like me and other Board members who have a commitment to healing and it's a lifetime commitment. It's not something that we've just taken up now. We've been on this journey for generations and the torch has been handed to us. We are committed to the healing of our people.

Our Gathering, held at James Cook University in Townsville, brought together community healing programs and initiatives from around the nation and showcased best practice in healing.

The event commenced with the official launch of the Healing



HEALING FOUNDATION  
gathering 2010  
"let's talk healing"

Foundation and concluded with a healing corroboree and cultural festivities. A special feature of the Gathering was the personal reflections from members of the Stolen Generations.

I would like to thank the participants and exhibitors and pay a special tribute to the volunteers who assisted over the three days.

The Board and I are committed to the healing of our people - this is about our own journey as survivors of the Stolen Generations and facilitators of healing in our own communities.

— Florence Onus

### Strong Spirit, Strong Culture, Strong People

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation supports and promotes Indigenous healing initiatives throughout Australia.

Established on the first anniversary of the Apology to Australia's Indigenous peoples on 13 February 2009 we aim to improve the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through:

- developing the story of healing
- raising the profile and documenting the importance of culturally strong healing programs
- building the skills of communities and workers to deal with trauma

Governed by an Indigenous board whose members have a strong connection with community and come from diverse backgrounds including members of the Stolen Generation and people working in the areas of youth affairs, health, justice, healing and trauma the Healing Foundation funds community projects, facilitates skills training and research and evaluation.



### Aunty May O'Brien

Aunty May O'Brien began her association with the Healing Foundation in 2009 as Co-Chair of the Healing Foundation Development Team. In May 2010 she agreed to become the Healing Foundation's patron.

Aunty May was born in Patricia, Western Australia. She is a Wongatha person and at six years of age was placed at Mt Margaret Mission. She worked for 22 years as a teacher and 14 years in senior positions in the Western Australian Education Department. Although May is now retired she continues in her role as an Education

Ambassador for the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

Aunty May has worked tirelessly for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples over many years. She has demonstrated her resilience and strength through overcoming many obstacles in her personal journey and as an advocate for others. Aunty May is a respected elder, stateswoman and role model and we are honoured that she has agreed to be our patron.

## “Let’s Talk Healing” Recommendations

*The following recommendations came from the Gathering. These recommendations will guide the work of the Healing Foundation.*

### Recommendation 1

#### Definitions of Healing

That the Healing Foundation take every opportunity to listen to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and individuals and develop an understanding of how they perceive the concept of healing.

Definitions of healing emerging from the Gathering focused on recovery from trauma, coming to terms with events of the past, sharing stories and building notions of self beyond the traumas we have experienced. Healing can take place at the level of the individual, the community and culture. Healing was described as a process of returning to physical, emotional, spiritual and cultural wellbeing.

### Recommendation 2

#### Intergenerational Trauma

That the Healing Foundation promotes the acknowledgement of the far reaching nature of the legacy of trauma and its intergenerational impact on families and communities.

### Recommendation 3

#### Developing Links Between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Healing Models

That the Healing Foundation includes in its research agenda the promotion of traditional healing practices in mainstream health services and the provision of cultural awareness training to mainstream health service providers to ensure health measures and practices better reflect the needs of Indigenous Australians.

### Recommendation 4

#### Young People are the Future of Our Communities

That the Healing Foundation prioritises work in relation to Indigenous young people, building strong spirits and connections to culture.

### Recommendation 5

#### Stolen Generation Survivors

That the Healing Foundation supports Stolen Generations survivors on their journey of healing.

### Recommendation 6

#### Men and Healing

That the Healing Foundation prioritises work related to men and healing.

### Recommendation 7

#### Women and Healing

That the Healing Foundation recognises Indigenous women for their work to unite and heal families and communities and continues to build on this work.

## The Gathering

*The historic inaugural Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation Gathering was held at James Cook University in Townsville, North Queensland on 25, 26 and 27 June 2010.*

The Gathering brought together community healing programs and initiatives from around the nation, showcasing best practice healing programs and provided the opportunity for networking and sharing information.

Participants had the opportunity to meet the people who deliver these programs and to discuss the diverse models available to adopt in their own community to assist with the journey.

The three-day event began with the official launch of the Healing Foundation and concluded with a Healing Coroboree and cultural festivities.

The Gathering involved a range of forums, presentations, ceremonial events, and speakers as well as a marquee exhibiting healing programs and organisations.

A special feature of the first national Australian Healing Foundation

Gathering - Lets Talk Healing - focused on gathering personal reflections from members of the Stolen Generations.

Over the three day Gathering participants were presented with an assortment of Indigenous cultural food, dance, displays and stories.

The art exhibition featured art healing and bush medicine by local Aboriginal artists Donna Ives, Karen Doolan and Billy Doolan.

Lexine Solomon provided healing songs that inspired participants at the Gathering dinner and Palm Island Aboriginal poet Maggie Walsh shared her poem about her experience as a child growing up in the children’s dormitory on Palm Island.

We were proud to secure celebrity chef Mark Olive (aka the Black Olive) as the chef of honour for the gala dinner held at Jupiter’s Casino. Mark was born in Wollongong, New South Wales, a Bundjalung man originating from the Northern Rivers. His interest in food, cooking and his Indigenous heritage has seen him progress into an internationally renowned Indigenous celebrity chef.

We would like to acknowledge the assistance of Indigenous

Community Volunteers and the local volunteers who worked tirelessly over the three days. We would also like to acknowledge and thank the Traditional Owners - the Bindal and Wulgurukaba people, James Cook University for hosting the event, local volunteers, and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural performances including our MC Kalat Wano and the Doomadgee dancers.

The Healing Foundation would like to thank all those who contributed to making this a memorable and inspirational event.





## The Importance of Healing

*Since proclamation of Australia in 1836 successive governments introduced a range of laws to address issues regarding Aboriginal people who were considered 'primitives' and 'uncivilised'.*

The emphasis of the respective laws brought about the systematic removal of thousands of Aboriginal children from their families, traumatising many generations.

Healing is needed to overcome the trauma of removal, the impact of colonisation and other associated intergenerational effects. Healing can result in positive changes in peoples' lives if practices have strong roots in Indigenous traditions, values and culture while also incorporating western and mainstream practices.

The journey of healing provides a pathway for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be restored to wellbeing and wholeness. It is a spiritual process that can involve recovery from addiction as well as therapeutic change and cultural renewal activities such as strengthening and reconnecting with identity, language, land, dance, and song. The Healing Foundation

has been established to facilitate this process by providing opportunities and resources for healing initiatives, promoting awareness of healing issues and needs, and by fostering a supportive public environment.

The Foundation supports communities and individuals to address trauma, grief and healing needs in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It supports holistic and innovative healing through funding support, community education and documenting what practices work.

By making strategic investments in the resources entrusted to us, and by contributing to a climate of care, safety, goodwill and understanding, we can support the full participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in effective healing processes relevant to the diversity of their communities and circumstances.

The Foundation acknowledges those who have walked the healing journey before us, those still walking and those yet to come.

*“Sometimes our fate resembles a fruit tree in winter – who would think that those branches would turn green again and blossom, but we hope it, we know it.”*

*– Brian Butler, inaugural Member of the Board*





# Presentations

## *An Awakening on the Journey to Wellness* Professor Judy Atkinson



Director of Gribi College of Indigenous Australian Peoples and Board Member of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation, Professor Judy Atkinson's heritage derives from the Jiman people of the Upper Dawson in Central West Queensland and the Bundjalung people of Northern New South Wales. Judy has focused most of her community and academic life working in the field of violence, trauma and healing. At the professional level in this field, she has followed the oral tradition through her presentations as an invited keynote speaker at numerous conferences, many of which have been published.

Judy presented a personal story and the voices of people who have participated in the We al-li Program, 'a celebration of life, a process of healing, sharing and regeneration'. The We Al-li program is an Indigenous community therapeutic response to the individual, family and community pain many people carry as part of their life experiences. For Aboriginal peoples, this pain is more specifically defined as the traumatic impacts of the multiple intergenerational experiences of colonisation, resulting in ill-health, individual, family and community dysfunction (dys - Latin from the Greek - painful or difficult

*“The Healing Foundation is about touching heart to heart! It will focus on the grassroots, picking people up when they are down, giving them a caring hand.”*

- Thursday Island workshop

functioning), alcohol and drug misuse, personal, inter- and intra-family violence, rape, child abuse and neglect, youth and adult suicide and suicide attempts, and self injury. These are all major health issues impacting on the health care and criminal justice systems of Australia.

Trauma recovery (or healing programs) is a demonstrated need within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities nationally, and within Australian society generally.

The We Al-li program is built on the principles of integrating Indigenous cultural processes for conflict management and group healing, Eastern and Western therapeutic skills for trauma recovery, with action or experiential learning practices. Under Western academic definitions, the approach is cross disciplinary, in other words, an integration of a number of disciplines. Under Indigenous definitions the approach is holistic.

These approaches have been blended into workshop programs which provide cognitive learning, reflection and emotional release within a

training syllabus for multi-skilling of workers in the trauma recovery field, including healing from domestic violence, sexual assault, childhood trauma, and alcohol, drugs and other addictions. These skills would be equally applicable for Indigenous and non-Indigenous workers.

## *Healing Wounds That Break Their Stitches Every Morning*

Associate Professor  
Dennis McDermott



A Koori Psychologist, academic and poet, Dennis leads Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health teaching, curriculum development and research at Flinders University. Although he grew up in Tamworth, on Gamilaroi land, his mother is from inner Sydney, Gadigal country, and his father's mob is from Donegal. As a registered Psychologist with over 25 years experience, Dennis has worked in such diverse fields as alcohol and drug education and counselling, private therapeutic practice, community health and men's health research.

Dennis' presentation firstly outlined, and then described the workings of, a number of challenges to healing. The first, 'Healing in a hostile/racist environment' reminds us that it's not just the programmes that we direct at Indigenous Australia that are important – that all services are delivered within a wider context.

Where that context is hostile, even racist, it can undermine otherwise good initiatives.

The second speaks of a 'Need to de-Other ourselves'. This was described as relating to a long-standing practice within Gubba Australia of making Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples the 'exotics' of our own land – somehow 'bad' or 'wrong'. The process needs reversing. We need to find ways to come in from the margins, to make Indigenous cultural perspectives a core component of the lived life of all Australia.

Yet, the third challenge reminds us, whether we're focusing on changes within Indigenous or Non-Indigenous Australia, that we're dealing with complex, provocative, often painful issues. If genuine healing is to occur, we 'Need to honour the complexity of the process' – and tailor our programmes, and related training, accordingly.

Finally, resilience is an acknowledged strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia, yet is chipped-away at by the burden of stressful life events. Thus a major challenge is that the 'Roles of personal and cultural resilience – and how to foster them' are under-researched and insufficiently-supported.

Dennis emphasized that healing was about changing the context in which Indigenous lives were lived. He

questioned what healing would take, and proposed that:

"Healing would take an Australia where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and insights were such a part of the national identity that things didn't make sense without them - cultural imbrication - an Australia where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were no longer 'Other', but felt at home ... once again."

The challenges for healing can be categorised under three headings:

- Need to honour the complexity of the healing process.
- Need to de-other ourselves, stop the divide of races.
- Role of personal and cultural resilience and how to foster them.

"We need to build personal resilience; we need to reduce the burden of stressful life events."

# Presentations



## Winangali-Marumali

### Ms Lorraine Peeters

Lorraine Peeters developed the Marumali model of healing, and in response to great demand, established a healing program called Winangali-Marumali in 2000 to support survivors of the Stolen Generations.

Over the last ten years the program has trained many workers who are working with Stolen Generations survivors to ensure they have good quality care. Lorraine's target groups are Link-Up Caseworkers, Counsellors, Bringing Them Home Counsellors, Psychologists, Mental Health

Workers, Health Workers, non-Indigenous Mental Health Workers, and Policy Writers. The key outcomes for Lorraine's presentation were categorised into these audiences:

#### Indigenous Workers

The Marumali Program helps Indigenous Workers to be in tune with an individual's own experience, and how the Stolen Generations has touched their lives and also helps them as workers to provide good quality care.

#### Non-Indigenous Workers

The Marumali Program helps to improve non-Indigenous Workers' understanding of Stolen Generations issues and the impact of their removal from family, and also encourages a better ability to improve culturally safe counselling or write policy that is mindful of the impact of the past.

#### Stolen Generations Survivors

The Marumali Program has a framework to guide Stolen

Generations survivors through their healing journey and how they can access appropriate support.

#### Prison Workshops

Recognizing that those removed from their families are twice as likely to be incarcerated from the long lasting effects of removal, she has delivered the Marumali program in Victorian prisons since 2002 with huge success.



## Gallang Place

### Mrs Noeleen Lopes

A Ghungalou woman born in Brisbane, Queensland, Noeleen Lopes graduated with a Bachelor of Social Work from the University of Queensland in 1991. She then went on to establish Gallang Place Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation, a highly respected organisation that provides counselling and support services to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and community organisations in Brisbane. Noeleen is also the

Founder of Ghungalou Aboriginal Corporation and Gearing Up Investment Pty Ltd and has held a position on the Southern Queensland Regional Parole Board since 2001.

Gallang is a Jaggera word meaning healing. Gallang Place was established in 1994 to address the trauma and emotional and social health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Brisbane area. Staff also provide counselling support to families in regional centres such as Caboolture, Logan, Ipswich and Stradbroke Island. They have also travelled further afield to Toowoomba, Cherbourg, Mackay, and Woorabinda to deliver services on occasions.

"Gallang Place Board and staff are passionate about delivering quality healing services to our community. The organisation encourages a culture of learning, sharing, teamwork and support. Debriefing and mentoring is a regular practice. Our counsellors are trained in many therapies and procedures, such as but not limited to Art Therapy, Sand-Tray Therapy, Body Based Therapy, Suicide Risk Assessment, Personality Disorders, Group Facilitation, Inner Child, Play Therapy, Narrative, Cognitive, Mediation, Supervision etc."



## Healing Children and Keeping them Safe, Through Culture

### Ms Eileen Cummings

A Member of the Stolen Generations, Eileen has the distinction of being the first Aboriginal person to qualify as a pre-school teacher in the Northern Territory. She has dedicated much of her time to addressing Aboriginal community issues. Eileen was a State Member of the Committee on Discrimination, Employment, Occupation and Equal Rights, and is a member of numerous committees and taskforces that are addressing issues such as discrimination, family violence, education, substance abuse, and community development and education.

Eileen's presentation explored the ways in which children today learn by observation and examples set by the community. Children are often denied their culture and heritage and need to know about ceremonies and traditions to ensure they learn from

a young age the importance of the culture of their own people. Eileen says children should learn to follow things at a young age to feel part of their clan:

- Loyalty to families and clans: being involved in family crisis, attending ceremonies and other cultural activities. Helping aged and other family members.
- Respect for Elders: Accepting directions with little questioning, caring for Elders, always addressing the correct title.
- Knowledge of names and relationships: Knowing who one is and where one belongs in clan structure for positive identity.
- Physical Contact: Very little verbal interaction, constant love and reassurance between adults and children and other family members.
- Sharing: Common ownership of materials and money. Sharing is very important to Aboriginal people.

"If children are learning by observation, what do you think they're learning in our communities today?"

*“Over the last ten years the program has trained many workers who are working with Stolen Generations survivors to ensure they have good quality care.”*

- Winangali-Marumali



# Presentations



## Survivor's Journey

Ms Debra Hocking

Debra Anne Hocking is from the South East of Tasmania and belongs to the peoples of the Mouheneenner language group and is also a Stolen Generations survivor. She is the Deputy Chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation and is a member of the World Council for Dignity, Forgiveness and Reconciliation. Debra's presentation, 'Survivors Journey' is included in the Featured Presenters on p18.

*"My presentation was of a personal nature which took the audience through a journey of survival. I talked about healing and how it is possible even with the most challenging forces against you. This journey has been over several decades beginning from the age of one. I shared with the audience my experience of being taken away and the challenges faced with that on a lifetime scale, and how I overcame challenges later in my life. This*

*"This journey has been over several decades beginning from the age of one. I shared with the audience my experience of being taken away and the challenges faced with that on a lifetime scale, and how I overcame challenges later in my life."*

- Ms Debra Hocking

*sharing of information was intended to be an inspirational speech, one of hardship, but also survival."*



## Bush Medicine

Mr Russell Butler

Russell is a descendant of the Warrgamay/Bandjin people of the Herbert River and Hinchinbrook Island region of Queensland. Born in 1948, he was taught the skills of shield, spear, stone axe and fishhook making and painting by his grandmother. He is represented

in the permanent collection of the Museum of Tropical Queensland and was a featured artist in the 2001 'Gatherings, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art from Queensland Australia' exhibition in Brisbane.

In his presentation, Russell explains that he had to go back to his roots before he could move forward. Speaking to the audience about his knowledge on bush medicine and tucker, Russell emphasised the need for health and spirit and mental wellbeing to be based around healthy eating and lifestyle. He wants to integrate bush medicine into schools and educate others about the importance of sharing cultural knowledge.



## Healing the Torres Straits

Mr Charles Passi

Charles is a Meriam man from the Eastern Island Group of the Torres Strait Islands. Charles lives on Thursday Island where he plays a leading role in the community including being a member of the Thursday Island Men's Shed, an Ambassador for the Prostate Cancer Foundation, an Executive Member of the Thursday Island Health Management Committee, and an Executive Member of Kaziw Asesered Le Inc. He has qualifications in Indigenous Leadership from the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre and currently works as a Community Development and Promotions Officer at Queensland Health. Charles is also known for his acting work on Australian drama series, RAN.

Speaking from the heart without cues or electronic aide, Charles had much to say about the Torres Strait Islander people and their need for healing. "The Torres Strait seems to be behind the times," he said.

Charles noted the need for the Torres Strait to begin to understand the healing process before anything can be accomplished.

"We seem to pride ourselves that we have a deep and rich culture. The sad thing is, we're not practising it. Healing starts with the will to heal, we've got to recognise that we have problems. Paddles can only stand up if they lean together".



## Voices of the Youth

Ms Jasmin Onus

As a 21 year old Aboriginal youth and daughter of a Stolen Generations member, Jasmin was invited to facilitate the Voices of the Youth session at the Healing Gathering alongside two other Indigenous young men.

Jasmin is a fourth year law and business student at James Cook University and is also under the National Indigenous Cadetship Program with the Department of Transport and Main Roads. She is a Bindal, Birri and Gunditjamara descendant from North Queensland, Central Queensland and Southern Victorian regions. Jasmin aspires to use her academic experience in law to make a positive change for Indigenous people Australia-wide.

Youth Voices' provided an opportunity for Indigenous youth to share their personal stories and outlook regarding the healing process from a youth perspective. The speakers also shared the local healing programs that they have been involved in, as well as the positive and negative points of such programs. In their presentation, they highlighted that the Stolen Generations has had a profound impact on Indigenous youth and emphasised the importance of healing programs and initiatives for younger generations.

*"Youth Voices' provided an opportunity for Indigenous youth to share their personal stories and outlook regarding the healing process from a youth perspective."*

- Voices of the Youth



## Presentations



### *Elders and Youth Healing Together*

**Aunty Phyllis Pitchford**

Aunty Phyllis is a respected Aboriginal Elder who is a proud advocate for her people. As a poet and author, her writing explores Aboriginal history, traditions, culture and identity. She has also written academic papers for state and national Aboriginal education programs and has been the Elder in Residence, a speaker and a Board Member for Riawunna, the University of Tasmania's Centre for Aboriginal Education.

For the past 35 years, she has served on boards for a diverse range of Aboriginal institutions, often in a voluntary capacity. Aunty Phyllis was a founding

member of the Flinders Island Aboriginal Association, the Babel Island Aboriginal Corporation and the Tasmanian Aboriginal Childcare Association and has been extensively involved with the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre.

She is a committed mentor for young Aboriginal people, Chair and mentor with Meenah Mienne (My Dream), an art-based project for Aboriginal youth in the justice system, and also visits and mentors young Aboriginal people in the Ashley Youth Detention Centre. Aunty Phyllis was recently inducted into the Tasmanian Honour Roll of Women in recognition of her work.

Aunty Phyllis presented from the heart about her passion in working with young people at risk in the justice system and the establishment of Meenah Mienne in Tasmania. Meenah Mienne is a way of helping young people to find themselves, their culture, self-respect, and self-confidence, and get back to family, community, education and a good life. Aunty Phyllis's presentation is included in the Featured Presenters section on p22.

*“We need to heal ourselves first before we begin to address other traumas,”*

- Ms Glenis Grogan



### *Minya Mulla Cultural Healing Therapy*

**Ms Glenis Grogan**

Glenis lives in Kuranda, Far North Queensland and is named after her grandmother, a Kuku Yalani woman who was removed from her tribal lands of Maytown and taken to Mona Mona Mission, 18kms outside of Kuranda. Since growing up in Kuranda and with close links to Mona Mona Mission, Glenis visited her traditional lands and kin of both her parents as well as travelled and worked across Australia. She has been painting and assisting other artists over the years and, in more recent times, fulfilled her wish to further develop her interest in Indigenous Australian art and the various art mediums.

Glenis explained the establishment of P.E.A.C.E, the Program for Economic Art and Cultural Experience. Her presentation and yarning circle covered topics such as racism, education, drugs and alcohol, and mental health.

“We need to heal ourselves first before we begin to address other traumas,” Glenis said. The healing process is about:

- Cultural protocol
- Maintaining unity
- Letting the anger out
- Stopping the blame

Glenis said, “We need to find the tools, develop the tools, then introduce them to our communities. We need to do this ourselves, money can't buy healing”.



### *Balanu*

**Mr David Cole**

David Cole is the Founder and Director of the Balanu Foundation in Darwin, which works with young at-risk Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to give them a sense of purpose and pride. Balanu uses a holistic approach to help youth reconnect with their true identity and deal with the underlying issues they face, and equips them with the necessary

tools to make strong choices. David's own experience has led him into his current pathway and he was recognised as NAIDOC Person of The Year in 2009. His presentation about efforts in healing youth is documented in an article featured in this publication.



### *Contemporary Healers*

**Ms Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann**

Miriam-Rose believes that education is a matter for the whole community, extending far beyond the classroom. When she was very young, the whole bush was her school and she learnt to read the country as well as understand textbooks.

*“Balanu uses a holistic approach to help youth reconnect with their true identity and deal with the underlying issues they face, and equips them with the necessary tools to make strong choices.”*

- Balanu

In 1968, Miriam-Rose studied to become a teacher's aid and started at the St Francis Xavier mission school at Daly River, where she has been principal since 1993. She became the Northern Territory's first fully qualified Aboriginal teacher and for many years was the Northern Territory's Education Department's art consultant.

In 1998, Miriam-Rose was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for her services to Aboriginal education and art, and for services to the Nauiyu community. Her credentials include a Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Education and a Masters of Education awarded by Deakin University. She was also awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Northern Territory University for her outstanding service and contribution in Aboriginal education and visual arts.

## Presentations



### Authentic Community Training

Mr Colin Moore and Mr Mark Williams

Colin and Mark presented their work with the Authentic Community Training (ACT) organisation. ACT was established by Mark and Bronte Brodie in July 2005 in response to the ever-increasing need for programs and services to specifically address Indigenous men's health and wellbeing. The goal of ACT is "To Empower Indigenous men's healing and wellbeing".

ACT programs and services focus strongly on the emotional and spiritual areas of wellbeing and ACT believes this provides a solid foundation for reconnection, empowerment and healing to take place.

The program aims to provide effective and culturally sound training programs for Indigenous men and young men in the areas of emotional and spiritual wellbeing.

*"The goal of ACT is "To Empower Indigenous men's healing and wellbeing".*

*- Authentic Community Training*

ACT assists Indigenous men and young men to live a more empowered, fulfilled, productive and healthier life by:

- Providing a culturally safe and sound space and time for healing.
- Designing and delivering programs based on individual and participant group needs which could be topical such as addressing specific issues including violence, suicide prevention, addictions, etc.
- Providing participants with the necessary tools and strategies to support them to identify and address their own healing needs and issues through applying traditional Indigenous practice and contemporary mainstream clinical therapies and processes.
- Building individual and group leadership contributing to healthier individuals, families and communities.
- Improving access to and participation in healing type programs by Indigenous men and young men.

- Providing mentoring and support to participants who choose to continue with the ACT program as a program facilitator.
- Continual development of programs to address emerging needs and trends as required, for example, development of a specific program dedicated to Indigenous women.
- Direct delivery and/or referral of program participants into other services providers as needed.

ACT programs uphold the following values and principles:

- Culturally and emotionally safe practices and delivery methods.
- Follow through and ongoing client support.
- Client safety and empowerment.
- Workshop and personal confidentiality.



### Healing Our Way Mr Ash Dargan

An Australian Indigenous recording artist world renowned for his mastery on the Didgeridoo, Ash has been pushing the boundaries of contemporary world music for

the last eight years. A member of the Larrakia Nation, the traditional land owners of Darwin in the Northern Territory, he is an ambassador of his culture through music, storytelling and live performances. Ash was classically trained in music from the age of eight on trumpet and came back to his cultural roots at the age of 22. His grandmother and great uncle, both traditional Elders of the Larrakia people were instrumental in his musical adoption of the Didgeridoo and its deeper cultural significance.

Ash is involved with Healing Our Way, which works with Tasmanian Aboriginal males who have been in the prison system. The program supports participants with healing their body, mind and spirit through reconnection with country, culture and community- the Tasmanian Aboriginal cultural way.

Healing Our Way works by bringing men back into country and experiencing healing through stillness of the country; reconnecting with themselves by reconnecting with the land.





## Featured Presenters

### A Survivor's Journey

Debra Hocking

My role as Deputy Chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation is extremely important to me as I have spent the last two decades advocating for Stolen Generations and worked in Aboriginal health in various capacities. I have experienced first-hand the wrath of previous government policies which led to the forcible removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, spanning from the early 1920s through to the 1970s.

I was born in South East Tasmania in 1959. My great-great grandmother was Fanny Cochrane Smith, the last full-blood Tasmanian Aboriginal, a fact established in the Tasmanian Parliament.

When I was just 18 months old, the welfare authorities removed my three siblings and I from my parents and family home. Our mother was Aboriginal and she - like many others in Tasmania - had come under the radar of the local welfare authority. In the early 1960s, the authorities performed a kind of 'blitz', removing many Aboriginal children, some removed purely on racial grounds. When my sisters and brothers and I were removed,

we were split up and fostered into different homes and institutions; that in itself, was against the law.

I was apparently placed into several foster homes. Given my young age at the time, though I have no memory of it, but I'm guided by information I've accessed as an adult in my official welfare file and by what my family tells me, the two versions, as you'd imagine, sometimes differ markedly.

I was eventually placed with a non-Aboriginal foster family where I would remain for the next fifteen years. I experienced physical, sexual and emotional abuse within that family situation pretty much on a daily basis.

Within several years after our removal, my siblings were returned to our parents. That did not happen for me, but the authorities never gave me an explanation as to why they left me with my foster family for so long. They did make promises during those fifteen years that I would be returned to my mother and my home, but they were never fulfilled. I remember being told by authorities at some meetings I had to attend with my foster mother that I would one day go home to be with my family. This was taunting and I felt a sense of frustration that these promises were not honoured.

From as young as I can remember, I knew my foster family was not my real family, but

when I asked where my biological family was, I was constantly told that 'they were no good' and this family would give me a better life. During those early years, I had no knowledge of who my family was let alone that I had brothers and sisters.

My life, between 16 and 19 years of age, was extremely difficult. Just before my 16th birthday, the

welfare authorities asked me to consent to be adopted by my foster family. After I signed the adoption papers in 1974, I left my foster home and was on the streets for a while, feeling relieved that I no longer would experience the abuse I was subjected to within foster 'care'. Initially, I did feel a real sense of freedom but soon realised that I did not know where I would sleep or how I would eat.

'check-ups'. With great trepidation, I approached the authorities only to learn that they would provide me with absolutely nothing. My file was considered 'privileged' government information. Naturally this seemed unfair, since this was the very government department responsible for my removal and nature of life up until this point.

So, in my own way, I challenged the department and eventually

gained permission to view my file and the information that would lead me to my family. I was confused and traumatised when I saw this information for the first time, and felt very much alone, but I got the strength to start on my own journey to find

my family, checking electoral roles, using the phonebook and even door knocking in the neighborhood to try and find out where my family used to live.

Finally, I got the address of where they may be. I did this again in isolation and it took me almost two years to find out that they lived only five minutes from where I lived. I

*“My hope is that the Healing Foundation will support the levels of healing required to provide many with a sense of restoration, cultural renewal, and reparation. We cannot heal people ourselves but our aim is to provide financial and moral support to those who are experienced in the issues of healing practice.”*

At the age of 20, the urge to find my mother became so strong that I decided to do something about it. But I had no information to go on, or anybody to turn to for help. After giving it some thought, I decided to go to the very authorities that removed me! They were still in the same building which I remember being taken to as a child for





## Featured Presenters

### Debra Hocking (continued)

arrived at their house and sat outside, my body trembling; there were so many emotions going through my body. Eventually, I gathered the strength and headed towards the door. I questioned myself, 'should I be doing this?' 'What if they don't want to see me?' But I was in too deep now; I had to follow through. When the door opened I saw my mum. I just knew it was her and she knew it was me. We just stood there; it was hard to know what to do. We went inside and I met some of my siblings, but my father was not there. Hardly anyone said anything; it was so hard to know what to say.

Thinking that this had now reinitiated our reunion, I left all my questions for later. Sadly there would be no later: two weeks after I met my mother, she passed away. I was stolen from her, and now she was taken from me. The best thing to come out of the meeting with my mother was learning of my heritage. When I was told of my bloodline, I was completely at ease with my newfound identity but I also realised what I had lost. The question was, could I get it back?

For the next 25 years, I immersed myself in my culture and spent much time talking to Elders and family. I knew I had to accept that there would be aspects of my

own identity that would never be restored. The years of abuse left me with a difficult past to build myself up and just in some cases, survive.

I now have four beautiful children who have also suffered because of my removal. They have no bitterness or resentment, which I think would be understandable given the circumstances. But as part of my story of healing and survival, I have taken myself off to university and gained three academic degrees, which has allowed me to pursue my work in the area of Aboriginal health and the restoration of identity for the Stolen Generations.

Since the reunion of at least a portion of my natural family, my journey in life has had many interesting twists and turns. My survival instincts were challenged last year when I was diagnosed with a rare form of leukemia. I survived a punishing regime of chemotherapy and I'm now in remission.

Sadly, this good news was short lived; as soon after, my husband passed away suddenly. The Healing Gathering was ironically held a few days before the first anniversary of his passing. I could not think of a better way to reflect on our lives together than at such an event. We often wonder how

we survive these hurdles. I think of the hardships my great-great grandmother experienced in the early 1800's in Tasmania and how she lived through those hardships. Is there some inherent resilience that keeps us surviving?

My work over the past few decades, advocating for the people of the Stolen Generations around the nation, has been challenging and rewarding. We still have a long way to go to restore what previous government policy has burdened upon us but I believe the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation will continue to support many others to make that first step, or continue, on our journeys of healing.

My hope is that the Healing Foundation will support the levels of healing required to provide many with a sense of restoration, cultural renewal, and reparation. We cannot heal people ourselves but our aim is to provide financial and moral support to those who are experienced in the issues of healing practice."





## Featured Presenters

### Balunu

#### David Cole

David Cole is the Founder and Director of the Balunu Foundation in Darwin, which works with young at-risk Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to give them a sense of purpose and pride.

The name Balunu comes from the Luritja language of Central Australia. It means creation; the creation of strong youth, strong culture, strong leaders, for a strong future by breaking negative cycles and creating positive ones. Our youth can no longer wait! The time has come to nurture, to love and to offer spiritual healing to guide them on their journey toward harmony and balance.

The Balunu Foundation is a not-for-profit, charitable organisation focused on the healing of Indigenous youth based in Darwin. Balunu seeks to instil a cultural identity among Indigenous youth at risk through a culturally appropriate healing program which builds self belief and self esteem, while assisting them to overcome the wide range of challenges they face as young Indigenous people in today's society.

Balunu currently operates a nine-day healing camp and accommodates ten participants per camp. The program is focused on addressing

the social challenges faced by Indigenous people and youth through a holistic healing approach. Although it is Indigenous specific, the program has achieved great success with non-Indigenous youth who have also attended.

The loss of cultural identity, language barriers, war trauma, family breakdown and destruction of traditional ways have resulted in various forms of social suffering that youth face today. This, combined with the various forms of substance abuse, has led to the detriment of physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing.

Balunu's target participants have historically been disadvantaged Indigenous female and male at risk youth, typically teenagers who have been demonstrating anti-social behaviour including offending behaviour between the ages of 14-17 with consideration given to 11-13 year olds in exceptional circumstances.

The eligibility criteria for participants includes:

- Experiencing problems surrounding family life
- Personal abuse
- Alcoholism
- Domestic violence
- Drugs
- Criminal activity
- Identity issues

- Poor personal choices
- Incarceration

Balunu strives to deliver services that:

- Provide positive cultural experiences for participating youth.
- Provide positive outdoor activities for participating youth.
- Identify and address individual issues.
- Build relationships between youth and adults.
- Develop youth's sense of responsibility.

The program is founded on the basis of healing through traditional Aboriginal culture including the wisdom and guidance of traditional Elders. It works from a community based, grass roots approach of issues and is driven by this understanding. The principles of going back in order to move forward, building the individual's self belief and confidence through strengthening identity, building self-dignity and pride are integral elements of the program.

The aim of Balanu is to provide the necessary tools for youth to address their personal trauma and deal with the external challenges they face in their daily lives, enabling them to maintain their uniqueness whilst walking in the new world as we know it.



The key outcome for healing initiative includes a 9-day Indigenous youth cultural healing camp using Balunu's ten-step methodology: mapping out barriers, concerns, needs, desires, aspirations and dreams, and supporting young people to deal with the issues that hold them from reaching their full potential.

The youth participate in a number of cultural activities such as making their own spears and woomeras, painting their own yiddaki's (didgeridoos), painting, land management, storytelling and bush tucker preparation.

The goals of the camp program are:

- Increased self-esteem, confidence, empowerment and respect of young people.
- Re-engagement with education and youth services targeting improved life pathways and the cessation of anti-social and criminal activities.
- Building community considerate young people who have greater life and employment opportunities.
- Building the emotional resilience, and cultural spirituality and wellbeing of Indigenous young people.

The goals are achieved through operating the camps from a holistic approach, reconnecting young

people to their identity, dealing with underlying issues, and equipping them with tools, skills and support to make strong choices.

The Balunu healing program endeavours to:

- Promote the development of positive relationships and encourage young people to 'slow down' and reflect on their lives without the distractions of modern life.
- Provide structure, routine, consistency and predictability for young people.
- Focus on young people's strengths and positive behavior.
- Include participation in activities that reconnect young people with their culture, promote healthy lifestyles and facilitate skill/knowledge development.
- Teach young people new ways to express their needs and cope with their emotions and life experiences.

*“The program is founded on the basis of healing through traditional Aboriginal culture including the wisdom and guidance of traditional Elders.”*



## Featured Presenters

### *Elders and Youth Healing Together*

#### Aunty Phyllis Pitchford

Meenah Mienne ('My Dream') is an art based project for Aboriginal youth in the justice system. Aunty Phyllis Pitchford was involved in its establishment and is now a committed mentor.

Prior to Meenah Mienne's establishment, Aunty Phyllis and a friend visited the Ashley Youth Detention Centre on a voluntary basis to help youth re-establish their place in the community. They conducted workshops on Saturdays so the youth didn't miss any school. The youth opened up about their lives, however, often after their court appearance would disappear on the streets or with peer pressure groups instead of going to their bail address.

A gap was identified in the system which needed to be closed to intercept young Aboriginal people's engagement with the juvenile justice system. When the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission closed, \$4,000 was made available for a pilot program involving a three day camp at Pater Beach in Northern Tasmania where Aboriginal artist mentors and young Aboriginal people met and exchanged cultural and art based skills.

The pilot was successful in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of arts-based intervention programs. A voluntary reference group was then established including members of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community and government to develop a model of best practice, using the arts and mentoring between Aboriginal Artists and young Aboriginal people as a process for early intervention. Four years later, in 2008, funding was made available to establish Meenah Mienne which was named by Lola Greeno, Program Officer for Aboriginal Arts Tasmania.

Meenah Mienne is a way of helping young people to find themselves, their culture, self-respect, and self-confidence, and get back to family, community, education and a good life. Open five days a week from 9.00am to 5.00pm, Meenah Mienne takes a one-to-one 'buddy' approach rather than mentor and mentee. It was found that a group approach didn't work as the youth 'mucked around' too much.

Buddies generally come from broken homes or homes where there is conflict and this causes them to seek refuge on the street. When attending Meenah Mienne, some are living with people, some are in the Ashley Youth Detention Centre or other homes, and some are living on the streets or sleeping on a couch at a friend's place.

Aunty Phyllis has always said, "Don't tell the youth what to do, that's all they've heard their whole lives; we need to ask them what they want to do and invite them into our space". She says Meenah Mienne is theirs, not ours, and they need to make the decision whether they will stay. The youth are matched to an 'older buddy' (mentor) and have the opportunity to change buddies, but that's never happened in the two years of operation.

A lot of youth begin to find themselves at Meenah Mienne and discover hidden talents and passions. Aunty Phyllis said one of her young buddies wanted to build a dolls house and in the process it was discovered that he was a natural photographer and he has since staged his own exhibition at Headspace. Another buddy, who painted an artwork for his Mum for Christmas called the Bird of Phoenix, is now painting commissioned works whilst another made a ceramic piece of a turtle laying eggs after looking at a book. Buddies undertake various forms of art depending on what they want to do. Aunty Phyllis said, "It's up to these kids to use their imagination to explore their innerselves".

Meenah Mienne has received good support from Youth Justice and the basis of its success is the youth

themselves. Eighteen youth at risk from the ages of 8 to 23 currently attend Meenah Mienne and each have their own 'older buddy' who are screened and purposely chosen. Aunty Phyllis said mentors have to be committed for the right reasons as young people can sense your intentions anyway. "The kids sense these things, they sense the mutual respect and the love and support; they decide whether they will call someone Aunty or Uncle."

At 73 years of age, there is no stopping Aunty Phyllis Pitchford. She's as healthy as ever and claims that her health and good spirits come from being busy and helping others. "You start to get old when you stop being busy and have nothing to do. I keep busy and active and my Doctor tells me I am quite young for my age".

The key outcome for Meenah Mienne is reconnecting youth with their family and getting them back into education and/or the workforce with confidence, knowing they have support. "As long as these kids know that there is someone walking alongside them throughout their life's journey, that's the important thing. To put a smile back on a young person's face is worth more than a million dollars; we've seen all our young people grow, it's so lovely to see."

### *Sad Memories*

Aunty Phyllis Pitchford - nunarng

*I'm an Aboriginal Woman so proud of my race,  
But I carry sad memories which I cannot erase,  
Of so many things from back in the past,  
Though some are forgotten, there are others that last.  
When I was a small girl at my mother's knee,  
I heard 'Old Ones' talking of what used to be.  
At times there was laughter but then they'd grow sad,  
As they dredged up old memories of times that were bad.  
I was too young to know then, so could not relate,  
To the blows that were dealt by the cruel hand of fate.  
The shame, degradation, the anger and scorn,  
That was heaped on my people, long before I was born.  
Now today I still question, which was the worst kind?  
The rape of the body, or that of the mind?  
They never told all that was hidden inside,  
And though deeply wounded, they salvaged their pride.  
And this they passed on, where it's proven today,  
In the pride that we carry as we pave the way.  
For our children, our future, we must try and erase,  
Those sad bitter memories of long bygone days.  
Recognition is happening though advancement is slow,  
And we all are aware there's a long way to go.  
In the move to step forward, away from the past,  
Give us back our Identity to walk free at last.  
As I think of the 'Old Ones' I now understand,  
The pain that they carried for the loss of their land.  
Though I live with their memories of things that were wrong,  
As an Aboriginal woman, I am proud, I am strong.*



## Featured Presenters

### A Reflection

Extract from Dadirri - By  
Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-  
Baumann

NGANGIKURUNGKURR means 'Deep Water Sounds'. Ngangikurungkurr is the name of my tribe. The word can be broken up into three parts: Ngangi means word or sound, Kuri means water, and Kurr means deep. So the name of my people means 'the Deep Water Sounds' or 'Sounds of the Deep'. This talk is about tapping into that deep spring that is within us.

Many Australians understand that Aboriginal people have a special respect for Nature. The identity we have with the land is sacred and unique. Many people are

beginning to understand this more. Also there are many Australians who appreciate that Aboriginal people have a very strong sense of community. All persons matter. All of us belong. And there are many more Australians now, who understand that we are a people who celebrate together.

What I want to talk about is another special quality of my people. I believe it is the most important. It is our most unique gift. It is perhaps the greatest gift we can give to our fellow Australians. In our language this quality is called dadirri. It is inner, deep listening and quiet, still awareness.

Dadirri recognises the deep spring that is inside us. We call on it and it

calls to us. This is the gift that Australia is thirsting for. It is something like what you call 'contemplation'.

When I experience dadirri, I am made whole again. I can sit on the riverbank or walk through the trees; even if someone close to me has passed away, I can find my peace in this silent awareness. There is no need for words. A big part of dadirri is listening. Through the years, we have listened to our stories. They are told and sung, over and over, as the seasons go by. Today we still gather around the campfires and together we hear the sacred stories. As we grow older, we ourselves become the storytellers. We pass on to the young ones all they must know. The stories and songs sink

quietly into our minds and we hold them deep inside. In the ceremonies we celebrate the awareness of our lives as sacred.

The contemplative way of dadirri spreads over our whole life. It renews us and brings us peace. It makes us feel whole again...

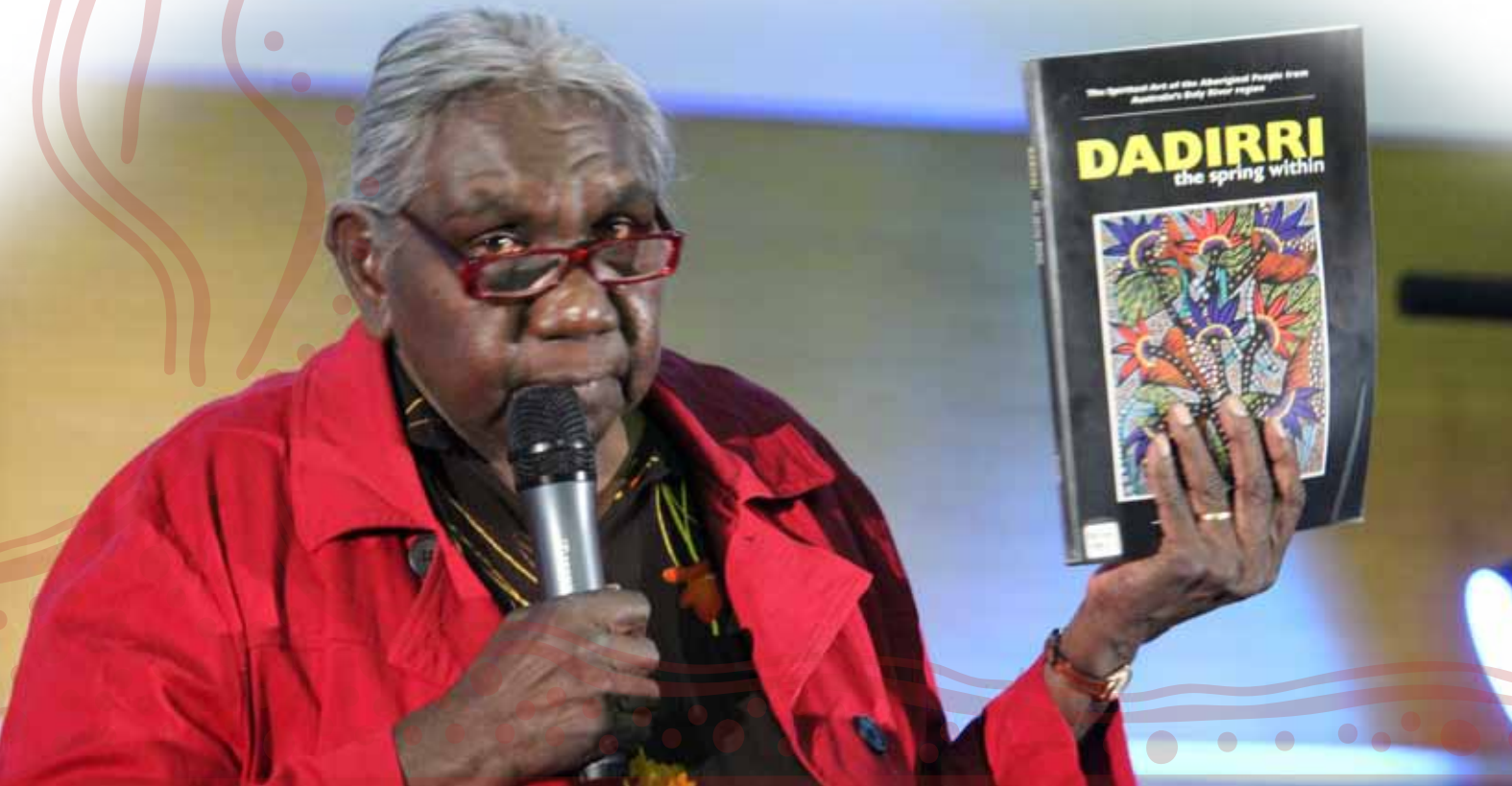
In our Aboriginal way, we learnt to listen from our earliest days. We could not live good and useful lives unless we listened. This was the normal way for us to learn - not by asking questions. We learnt by watching and listening, waiting and then acting. Our people have passed on this way of listening for over 40,000 years... There is no need to reflect too much and to do a lot of thinking. It is just being aware.

My people are not threatened by silence. They are completely at home in it. They have lived for thousands of years with Nature's quietness. My people today, recognise and experience in this quietness, the great Life-Giving Spirit, the Father of us all. It is easy for me to experience God's presence. When I am out hunting, when I am in the bush, among the trees, on a hill or by a billabong; these are the times when I can simply be in God's presence. My people have been so aware of Nature. It is natural that we will feel close to the Creator.

And now I would like to talk about the other part of dadirri, which is the quiet stillness and the waiting.

Our Aboriginal culture has taught us to be still and to wait. We do not try to hurry things up. We let them follow their natural course - like the seasons. We watch the moon in each of its phases. We wait for the rain to fill our rivers and water the thirsty earth... When twilight comes, we prepare for the night. At dawn we rise with the sun.

We watch the bush foods and wait for them to ripen before we gather them. We wait for our young people as they grow, stage by stage, through their initiation ceremonies. When a relation dies, we wait a long time with the sorrow. We own our grief and allow it to heal slowly..."



*“We are the tree standing in the middle of a bushfire sweeping through the timber. The leaves are scorched and the tough bark is scarred and burnt, but inside the tree the sap is still flowing and under the ground the roots are still strong. Like that tree we have endured the flames and we still have the power to be re-born.”* - Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Bauman



# Yarning Circles

*The Yarning Circle is a contemporary adaptation of a traditional method of discussion and decision making. Yarning Circles provide the opportunity for people to sit together in equal status and share stories and perspectives in a supportive environment.*

In recent years, the concept of the Yarning Circle has gained popularity in the health, community and education sectors as a form of healing intervention and a framework for sharing and discussing issues. However, its roots may be traced back to Indigenous cultures around the world where it has been used as a mode of cultural transmission, sharing, learning and dreaming.

In the Native American context, the tradition of the Talking Circle is attributed to the tribes of the Midwestern United States where it was used as a method of consensus decision-making. Individuals were given the opportunity to express their thoughts on an issue by going around the circle and giving each person the opportunity to speak until a collaborative consensus was reached. In a respectful

manner, all the participants in the circle practice 'listening with the heart' to each speaker. This concept is similar to the Indigenous Australian idea of Dadirri, which translates as inner deep listening or contemplation, as shared by Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann.

The Yarning Circle in contemporary Australia draws on traditional models of communal gathering, sharing and learning used by many Australian Indigenous communities as well as incorporating elements of the Talking Circle. The circle itself is a sacred space, representing the interconnectedness of all things, the relatedness of people to land and spirit. The process of listening and sharing stories has a cathartic effect and assists us to make meaning of our collective and individual experiences.

In a 1997 presentation entitled Dynamic Wisdom of the Healing Circle, Debra Bennet-McLean explained that the Yarning Circle framework she has developed facilitates the development of understanding 'in ever deepening concentric layers of experience as we move toward the meaning we make of our lives'.

In essence, the ceremony of the Yarning Circle may be seen

as a process of sharing stories and developing understanding that helps to make meaning of our individual and collective experience. The process of 'uniting hearts and establishing order' has been explained by Professor Judy Atkinson as "the essence of the healing process".

Yarning Circles at the Gathering covered a number of themes including Wee Al Li (Fire and Water Healing), rites of passage, setting up our young people for life, health, nutrition and healing, and reviving traditional knowledge. While there were no prescribed outcomes from the Yarning Circles, the opportunity to listen and share resulted in one group coming to a decision to develop a national network for men to support each other in healing work. Another group explored ideas about providing support to Stolen Generations survivors and resolved to seek support from the Healing Foundation in this regard.

Overall comments from participants indicated that the Yarning Circles were one of the most useful and meaningful aspects of the Gathering and the Foundation looks forward to continuing to develop this at future events.





## Board Members

### Florence Onus - Chairperson

Florence Onus is a descendant of the Birri-Gubba and Kairi/Bidjara clans of Queensland and is an overcomer of the Stolen Generations. Florence is currently employed as an Indigenous Support Coordinator at James Cook University. She is a keen advocate for social justice and is currently Co-Chair of the Townsville Indigenous Human Rights Group. Florence sits on local and state Indigenous reference committees to address homelessness and alcoholism. As a mother and grandmother, Florence supports young Indigenous mums who have had their children removed through current child protection policies. Florence is currently working towards a Masters in Dispute Resolution and is looking forward to a PhD to research in the area of 'Healing'.

### Debra Hocking - Deputy Chairperson

Debra Hocking is from Tasmania and is a member of the Stolen Generations and descendant of the Mouheneener people. She is a recipient of the United Nations Award for the International Year of the Culture of Peace and the Human Rights Award for Humanitarian Activities in

Tasmania. Debra holds a Masters degree in Indigenous Health and was the Indigenous Co-Chair of the Stolen Generations Alliance. She is currently the Project Coordinator of the Demonstration Grants Program with the Sax Institute and Deputy Chairperson of the Healing Foundation.

### Professor Judy Atkinson - Secretary

Judy Atkinson is Director of Gnibi College of Indigenous Australian Peoples and Board Member of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation. Her heritage derives from the Jiman people of the Upper Dawson in Central West Queensland and the Bundjalung people of Northern New South Wales. Judy has focused most of her community and academic life working in the field of violence, trauma and healing. At the professional level, in this field, she has followed the oral tradition through her presentations as an invited keynote speaker at numerous conferences, many of which have been published. Judy is serving on the scientific research advisory committee for Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

### Noeleen Lopes - Treasurer

Noeleen Lopes is a Ghungalou woman born in Brisbane, Queensland. After graduating with a Bachelor of Social Work from the University of Queensland in 1991, Noeleen went on to establish Gallang Place Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation in 1994. Gallang Place is a highly respected organisation that provides counselling and support services to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and community organisations in the Brisbane area. Noeleen is also the Founder of Ghungalou Aboriginal Corporation and Gearing Up Investment Pty Ltd and has held a position on the Southern Queensland Regional Parole Board since 2001.

### Graham Gee

Graham Gee is a descendent of the Garawa nation and grew up in Darwin, Northern Territory. He has a teaching background in education and worked for some years in the area of Native Title and Land Justice. After completing a Postgraduate Diploma in Psychology, Graham began working as a counsellor at the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service while also undertaking a combined Masters/PhD degree in

Clinical Psychology at Melbourne University. His work primarily involves counselling clients who have experienced trauma, grief and loss. The focus of Graham's PhD research is on trauma and resilience in urban Koori communities.

### Hannah McGlade

Hannah McGlade is a Noongar woman living in Perth with family from the Kurin Minang people of the south-east of Western Australia. Hannah holds a Bachelor of Laws (Murdoch University 1995), a Masters in Law (Murdoch University 2001) and is completing a PhD at Curtin University. Admitted as a Barrister and Solicitor to the Supreme Court of Western Australia in 1996, Hannah went on to specialise in human rights law. Hannah's work has been the subject of many publications concerning Aboriginal human rights. She is currently a member of the State Administrative Tribunal – Human Rights stream and an Adjunct Researcher at the Curtin Centre for Human Rights Education. As Chief Executive Officer of the Western Australian Family Violence Prevention Legal Service, Hannah works to improve legal responses and services for Aboriginal survivors of family violence and child sexual assault. She is also a member of the WA

Attorney General's Victims of Crime Reference Group where she identifies systemic issues facing Aboriginal people in relation to violence and the legal system.

### Tracey Currie

Tracey Currie is a Badtjala woman from the Fraser Coast in Queensland. She has held numerous positions on boards and advisory committees including the Alcohol and Drug Council of Australia Policy Council, National Co-Morbidity Forum, the Weetapoon Aboriginal Corporation, the National Aboriginal Workforce Committee for the Department of Education, Science and Training and the Department of Health and Ageing. Tracie holds a Bachelor of Social Science from Southern Cross University. She has completed postgraduate studies in Journalism and Public Sector Management. As the Chief Executive Officer of Awabakal Newcastle Aboriginal Co-operative, Tracie is responsible for managing the Aboriginal Medical Service and the Early Childhood, Aged Care, Disability, Housing and Transport programs. Prior to this Tracie was the Chief Executive Officer of the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Council of Tasmania and has experience as a Manager in Australian government departments.

### Shaun Coade

Shaun Coade is a Windajeri man from Monaro country. He sits on the Committee of Management for Education and Training of Aboriginal Health Workers in Victoria, the partnership committee between the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency and Take Two, the Committee of Management for Child Abuse in Victoria, and is the Chair of the Walking Together group. With 15 years experience in Indigenous mental health and trauma, Sean holds a Bachelor of Nursing Degree from Deakin University and a Graduate Certificate in Family Therapy from La Trobe University. Shaun has held positions as a psychiatric nurse, grief and trauma counsellor, policy officer and cross-cultural educator. He is the author of 'Yarning Up on Trauma: healing ourselves, healing our children and families, healing our communities'; and 'Purro birik Koori mental health policy project' in partnership with the VACCHO. Shaun is the Manager of Aboriginal Service Development at Berry Street Victoria and is employed by La Trobe University in the area of Indigenous curriculum development.



## Board Members

### Charles Passi

Charles Passi is a Meriam man from the Eastern Island Group of the Torres Strait Islands. Charles lives on Thursday Island where he plays a leading role in the

community. He is a member of the Thursday Island Men's Shed, an Ambassador for the Prostate Cancer Foundation, an Executive Member of the Thursday Island Health Management Committee, and an Executive Member of

Kaziw Asesered Le Inc. Charles has qualifications in Indigenous Leadership from the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre and currently works as a Community Development and Promotions Officer at Queensland Health.





## “Let’s Talk Healing” Program

Date	Session Times	Speaker	Facilitator
24 June	3.30pm-6.30pm	Registration	
	6.30pm-9.30pm	Participants welcome, light refreshments and entertainment	
		Start	
	8:30am-10.30am	Official Launch and Welcome to Country	
	10.30am-11.00am	Morning Tea	
	11.00am-11.30am	Prof. Judy Atkinson - An Awakening on the Journey to Wellness	
	11.30am-12.00pm	Dennis McDermott - Healing Wounds That Break Their Stitches Every Morning	
	12.00pm-12.30pm	3x10 Minute Bites	
		Lorraine Peeters - Winangali-Marumali	
		Noeleen Lopes - Gallang Place	
		Eilileen Cummings - Healing Children and Keeping Them Safe, Through Culture	
	12.10pm-1.30pm	Lunch	
	1.30pm-2.00pm	Deb Hocking - Survivors Journey	
	2.00pm-3.00pm	“Let’s Talk Healing” Panel	
		Helen Moran - National Sorry Day Committee	
		James Morrison - Stolen Generations Alliance	
		Helen Brads - Link-Up	
		Florence Onus - ATSI Healing Foundation Ltd	
	3.00pm-3.30pm	John Close - Goori House	
	3.30pm-4.00pm	Art Exhibition Launch and Afternoon Tea	
	4.15pm-4.30pm	Healing Expo	
	6.30pm-11.30pm	Gathering Dinner	
26 June	9.00am-9.30am	Russel Butler - Bush Medicine	
	9.30am-10.00am	Pantjiti McKenzie - Traditional Healer	
	10.00am-10.30am	Charles Passi - Healing the Torres Straits	
	10.30am-10.45am	Morning Tea	
	10.45am-11.45am	Yarning Circles	
	11.45am-12.15pm	Gathering of Information from Yarning Circles	

Date	Session Times	Speaker	Facilitator
	12.15pm-1.15pm	Lunch	
	1.15pm-1.30pm	Voices of the Youth	Jasmin Onus
	1.30pm-2.10pm	4x10 Minute Bites - Healing Programs	Adrian Miller
		Aunty Phyllis Pitchford - Elders and Youth Healing Together	
		Russel Butler Jr - Connecting Youth to Country	
		Dardi Munworro - Strong Spirit Building, Strong Communities	
		Glenis Grogan - Minya Mulla Cultural Healing Therapy Program	
	2.10pm-2.40pm	David Cole - Balanu	
	2.40pm-3.10pm	Miriam Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann and Yalmay Yunipingu - Contemporary Healers	
		Afternoon Tea	
	3.30pm-4.30pm	Panel Discussion on Critical Healing Issues	
		Graham Gee - Psychology	
		Dr Pat Dudgeon - Australian Indigenous Psychologists Association (AIPA)	
		Dr Mark Wenitong - Australian Indigenous Doctors Association (AIDA)	
		Royanne West - Nursing Director Indigenous Health Queensland	
	4.30pm-5.00pm	Art Exhibition and Healing Expo	
27 June	9.00am-9.30am	Ash Dargon - Healing Our Way	
	9.30am-10.00am	Final Words - Florence Onus (Chair ATSI Healing Foundation)	
	10.00am-10.30am	Morning Tea	
	10.30am-11.00am	Healing Corroboree	
	11.00am-4.00pm	Cultural Markets and Kup Murri Traditional Feast	



## Participant Feedback

*Following the Gathering, participants were asked for feedback. Overall, the Gathering was a valuable experience with participants rating their experience as good or above. 50% reported that their overall experience was excellent, and a further 31% reported that the experience was very good.*

Participants were asked to rate different aspects of the Gathering including keynote speakers, presentations on healing initiatives, yarning circles, cultural activities and panel discussions. Around 70-80% of respondents ranked all aspects of the Gathering as very good or excellent. Comments provided a more detailed insight into respondent's experiences,

suggesting that the presentations on healing programs were considered particularly relevant and inspiring. Yarning circles were also extremely popular while comments suggested that the panel sessions could have been improved with firmer structure and management.

Participants were asked to rank the extent to which their knowledge and understanding had increased during the Gathering in the areas of healing programs, healing issues, cultural identity, and working with men, women, Elders, youth and Stolen Generations survivors. Around 50-60% of respondents indicated that their knowledge and understanding had increased a lot or quite a lot. Comments suggested that participants were pleased to see a focus on healing work with men and youth at the event.

Questions participants were asked included: What did you like most about the Gathering? What new ideas about healing have you learnt that will be of benefit to your community? What was the facilitation standard? How did you find the venue? Would you attend future Gatherings? Do you have any suggestions to help us improve future Gatherings?

Participant feedback suggests that the Gathering was a positive and relevant experience. They found it useful at both a personal and professional level, as a networking opportunity and as a source of information and inspiration.

Participants described their experience as:

*“Beautiful, emotional, stirring. Touched my soul and heart.”*

*“It’s an amazing opportunity to witness the journey continue and progress.”*

*“This was one very amazing Gathering. Thank you for all your hard work.”*

*“Deadly conference.”*

*“I appreciate very much the effort and hard work that everyone put into this conference.”*

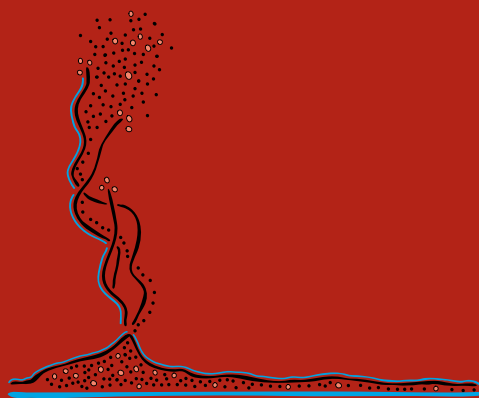
*“Best conference I have ever been to and that really applies to us.”*

*“Presentations have been very inspiring, thank you.”*

*“Ash Dargan, Dave Cole and Charles Passi sparked my thought processes.”*







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