

HEALING



IN PRACTICE

*Promising Practices in Healing Programs for Aboriginal
and Torres Strait Islander Children and Families*

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The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) is the national non-government peak body in Australia representing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. The SNAICC Resource Service works across the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family and children's service sector to produce and distribute practical resources and information.

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"Aboriginal Map of Canberra" mural Weetangera Primary School, Ngunnawal Country, ACT.
Photograph by Stefan Kussy. Full photo page 3.

HEALING IN PRACTICE

Promising Practices in Healing Programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Families



Lewis KNUCKU (Wise Man) Langton, Wakka Wakka Guugu Yimithirr man explaining his "Aboriginal Map of Canberra" mural to students at Weetangera Primary School, ACT. Weetangera Primary School, Weetangera, Ngannawal Country, ACT. Photograph by Stefan Kussy.

Contents

About this resource	5
How to use this resource	5

PART 1: THE NEED FOR HEALING 6

Introduction	6
SNAICC National Executive: Healing Our Children	7
Healing Our Way: the need for healing	11
A healing framework	13
Reclaiming History – Knowing, telling & acknowledgement of one's story	14
Cultural Interventions and Connections – Renewing culture and identity	14
Therapeutic healing approaches – Intervening with cultural remembering	16
Principal elements of promising healing practices and models	20

PART 2: HEALING IN PRACTICE 25

PROMISING PRACTICE PROFILE: <i>Take Two, Victoria</i>	27
Introduction	27
PRINCIPLE 1: Address the causes	27
PRINCIPLE 2: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ownership.	28
PRINCIPLE 3: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldview	28
PRINCIPLE 4: Strength based approach ...	29

PROMISING PRACTICE PROFILE: <i>Healthy Family Circle Program, NSW</i>	30
--	----

PRINCIPLE 1: Address the causes	30
PRINCIPLE 2: Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander ownership	31
PRINCIPLE 3: Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander worldview	31
PRINCIPLE 4: Strength based approach ...	31

PROMISING PRACTICE PROFILE: <i>Yorgum Aboriginal Family Counselling Service, Western Australia</i>	32
---	----

PRINCIPLE 1: Address the causes	32
PRINCIPLE 2: Aboriginal & Torres Islander ownership	33
PRINCIPLE 3: Aboriginal & Torres Islander worldview	34
PRINCIPLE 4: Strength based approach ...	35

HEALING SNAPSHOTS: <i>Intergenerational Trauma Initiatives</i>	36
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Healing Resources	39
References for the SNAICC National Executive: Healing our Children	40
References for Healing Our Way: the Need for Healing	41

About this resource

The project aims to scope and showcase a few promising practices in the area of healing with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. These promising practices programs profiles will provide communities with inspiration, ideas and examples that they can adapt to their local needs and circumstances. This work also builds on the practice-based evidence of what works and why, enabling community-organisations to refine their practices and services, build their capacity to develop new ones, and to seek financial support.

In particular, this resource intends to showcase how services incorporate culturally appropriate,

community controlled healing approaches and highlight practices from which mainstream and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services can learn.

The resource is divided into two sections:

PART 1: The need for Healing

Discusses the meaning of, and need for, healing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the critical elements required.

PART 2: Healing in Practice

Documents promising practices in healing programs from around the country.

How to use this resource

This resource highlights programs that enhance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families capacity for healing, to assist services that are looking to establish a new healing service or program, or strengthen an existing one.

This document is intended to be a practical and informative resource. It is not, however, a catalogue where programs can simply be plucked from its pages and expected to be relevant and effective in any situation or context. This resource illustrates that effective and sustainable programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families draw upon the local communities' strengths and requires community leadership, community ownership and community knowledge.

In part 2 all programs have been profiled under the four primary principles listed by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation as essential for successful healing. Each profile aims provide the reader with an example of how these principles can be applied in different settings.

The four key principles are:

- 1 Address the causes**
- 2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ownership**
- 3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldview**
- 4 Strength based approach**

More information on these principles is explained in Part I: Healing Our Way.



Two Girls at Grandmothers House By Becky Bligh at Ration Shed, Cherbourg, Qld.

THE NEED FOR HEALING

Introduction

Healing Programs offer a fundamentally different approach to what has come before them. The healing approach is innovative in method and scope, yet always has traditional wisdom at its core.

The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) acknowledges that healing plays an important role for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to reach their full potential. Moving forward, the application of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing practices to social and emotional wellbeing and family support services offered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family welfare services, have the potential to improve outcomes for the health and wellbeing of their communities.

“Good quality community-run child and family welfare services covering child abuse prevention, early childhood development, parenting and family support, early intervention, alternative care for children at risk and therapeutic healing for victims are essential services for every family in every community. Without them children will suffer.”¹

~ CHILD WELFARE REPRESENTATIVE,
SNAICC NATIONAL EXECUTIVE

There is little information that is readily accessible and reliable on how child and family welfare services can effectively draw on evidence-informed healing approaches to provide culturally appropriate therapeutic practices and social and emotional wellbeing services to children and families using their services.

In order to support the pursuit of healing and to illustrate the diverse ways of approaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing, SNAICC has produced this resource on promising practices in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing programs.

By documenting the promising practice profiles of services already experiencing success, SNAICC hopes that other services will be able to draw inspiration and information to assist the development in this work.

¹ Sharron Williams, CEO, Aboriginal Family Support Services (South Australia) and SNAICC National Executive member, quoted in SNAICC Media Statement 'Working with Aboriginal communities

is the way to stop child abuse', 7 May 2008, SNAICC, <http://www.snaicc.asn.au/news/view_article.cfm?id=72&loadref=8>

SNAICC National Executive: Healing Our Children



SHARRON WILLIAMS

Over recent years, there has been increased national attention on the need for healing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people feel

that the then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's 2008 National Apology to the Stolen Generations made a significant contribution to healing the scars of those who were removed, and their families. The establishment in 2009 and continued progress of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation helped put healing at the forefront of the national conversation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and for the federal government who agreed to back the Foundation in its formative years. Both these developments are significant for the healing journeys of Stolen Generations, their families, the wider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, and potentially of the nation as a whole.

As the national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families, SNAICC welcomed these important steps. Today, SNAICC calls for a renewed focus on the integral place of healing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is generally poorer than that of their non-Indigenous peers, corresponding with other indicators of disadvantage where our children are over-represented (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, 2009).

Significantly the progress of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation indicates a wider shift in perceptions around

trauma and healing. It has provided an opportunity to re-invigorate a space where culture holds a valued position. A space where children can learn that there's a different version of colonisation. A space where children can learn about a population that thrived on the land for thousands of years. Where children can learn about language, tradition and a rich culture that knows how to nurture the land. However for children who have a tenuous relationship with their culture, the need for cultural connection requires ongoing and concerted attention.

Children and healing

At the core of healing for our children is strengthening their bonds to – and where necessary re-connecting them to – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culture.

Our culture is 70,000 years old yet there are some of our children that are not proud to be a part of that culture. That brings tears to my eyes. Children often don't realise that they are part of a broader story. Some children are unaware of the connection to their own country and their family lines. This is the story that needs to be started.

So, while healing for parents requires giving back a place that they have lost, for children, healing requires teaching us that there is a place.

Of course, cultural connection is only one of the things our children need to improve their wellbeing. They also need adequate housing, good nutrition, education, health and other services, and to live in families and communities that are safe from harm, and where there are good job prospects and hope for the future.

Culture for tomorrow

"Culture is about touching yesterday as well as tomorrow."

When we teach our children to walk and talk and read, we also need to teach them about culture. We need to develop programs that are built around positive cultural perceptions, around children seeing themselves immersed in their own culture in a contemporary context, so that children don't see culture as something that was all about yesterday's generation, they see it as something that is their responsibility to take into tomorrow.

Cultural resilience

Establishing a strong connection to family, culture and community provides children with a sense of identity. Cultural resilience occurs when children are immersed in their culture, family and community and are part of a country where they have connections to the rivers, the rocks and the land. Cultural resilience is about feeling connected to a larger process and supporting children's sense of belonging.

Cultural healing, and 'cultural intervention', has been identified alongside reclaiming history and therapeutic interventions as one of the three central pillars of healing by our Canadian First Nations brothers and sisters, and subsequently by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (AHF, 2006; ATSIJJC, 2008; ATSIHFDT, 2009). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and spirituality are increasingly recognised as a strength and protective factor for our families and children (Kelly et al, 2009; McEwan et al, 2009; Grieves, 2009; Zubrick et al, 2005; also SNAICC, 2005).

Families

Culture, land and spirit are tied together so closely that you can't have one without the other, but it's not a complete story without family – it's like building a house without mortar, it makes the right shape but there's nothing to hold it together.

Our families are essential to our children's experience of, and connection with, their culture and thus their healing. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people learn and experience our culture and spirituality through our families: whether through knowledge, stories, and songs from parents, grandparents, Elders, and uncles and aunts, and through the everyday lived experience of shared values, meaning, language, custom, behaviour, and ceremonies. We also learn through our growing understanding of our place in the world – in our family, our community and our country – and through our relationship with the environment and the land. Strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families make for strong culture, and communities (Walker & Shepherd, 2008), and strong culture and communities in turn strengthen families – especially their children.²

It's also teaching people that it's okay to be sad and it's okay to grieve and it's okay to forgive yourself if you haven't been able to be all you can in the past to your family. It's about helping parents to actually feel proud to teach their children about what it means to be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

Connections to culture

It is a terrible contradiction that one of the most important things that helps strengthen and protect our children – and contribute to their healing – is so under threat. Our children are losing their connection to their culture. This stems from colonisation and the subsequent fragmentation of our families, communities, cultural knowledge and practice, the competing influences and appeals of Western and global popular cultures, and also from contemporary child removals through the child protection system.

Where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's connections to culture, community or family are weakened or threatened, they are

² As indicated in the early findings of the Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children (LSIC), (FaHCSIA, 2009).

at risk of not only being lost to their culture but also to themselves. This is particularly the case when a child is removed from his or her family, including extended family. As Bamblett and Lewis (2007: p. 49) state: "Culture is central to identity. Culture defines who we are, how we think, how we communicate, what we value and what is important to us". The trauma experienced by Stolen Generations demonstrates the devastating impacts of severing or weakening children's cultural and family connections.

To know who they are, our children need to know their land, their ancestors, their mob, and their correct language. Knowing your family and your community is a vital part of the healing journey. Everything Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and children need to start this journey is within us: spirituality and culture still flows strongly in our people. However, a one-size-fits-all approach to healing our children — including reconnecting them to culture — will not work.

True healing for our people is not just about knowing 'Aboriginal' or 'Torres Strait Islander' culture generically. It is important to identify where you belong: to know your mob, your stories and your songlines, and to know where you fit in the environment.

Community controlled organisations

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled child and family organisations undertake these vital cultural interventions with children and their families across the country, often without much fanfare or recognition. Local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations are rooted in their communities, cultures and country. As such, they play a significant role in supporting families and communities to raise children strong in culture. Large national or state-wide non-Indigenous child and family services cannot provide the appropriate support and cultural education to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to reconnect and stay connected



Every time there is painting and dancing, kids are included to help them learn important knowledge. Christmas Birrimbirr Launch, Chan Contemporary Art Space, Darwin, Larrakia Country, NT. Photography by Lyn Fasoli.

with their culture, their mob and their family in ways that uphold the integrity of the child's particular culture or community. Generalised, almost 'aggregated' hotch-potches of 'Aboriginal' or 'Torres Strait Islander' cultures that cater to service provision across a state or broad sub-regions cannot stay true to the specific cultural needs of a child from a specific Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultural group.

Healing services and programs, whether based on cultural interventions or therapeutic services, need to be locally-specific — the more local the better — to not only meet the community's needs but to be effective. As Dr. Melisah Feeney from Queensland's Link-Up service points out:

“Aboriginal people seeking healing come from a variety of cultures and nations... healing practices need to go beyond stereotypical and sometimes romantic views that Indigenous people have the same values and needs...”
(Feeney, 2009: p. 19).

“We need it owned by the community, for the community.”

When Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are providing services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, then we really are healing ourselves. Accessing key services through an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned and controlled organisation ensures culturally appropriate practices and empowers the community.

SNAICC advocates and supports community self determination. This resource showcases successful healing practices, to share what is working well in communities with others across the country. These profiles provide communities with inspiration, ideas and examples that they can adapt to their particular needs and

circumstances. This work also builds up the practice-based evidence of what works and why, enabling our community organisations to refine their practices and services, build their capacity to develop new ones, and to seek financial support.

Conclusion

Healing through cultural strength is a key that unlocks the whole health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. It is essential not only to their social and emotional wellbeing, but in building the capacity of families and communities to respond to children’s needs, and to raise children healthy and strong in culture. When Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children see their people and culture held in high esteem in the general community, this does wonders for their self-image as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. When our children are strong in their identity and strong in culture, they have the strength and resilience to deal more positively with life’s stresses and demands, and to become more optimistic about themselves and their futures.

Healing Our Way: the need for healing

This paper is not a critical literature review as such but a summary of the themes found from a thorough search of relevant literature. This section discusses the meaning of, and need for, healing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the necessary elements required for promising healing practices.

What is healing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

“Healing gives us back to ourselves. Not to hide or fight anymore. But to sit still, calm our minds, listen to the universe and allow our spirits to dance on the wind. It lets us enjoy the sunshine and be bathed by the golden glow of the moon as we drift into our dreamtime. Healing ultimately gives us back to our country. To stand once again in our rightful place, eternal and generational”³

~ HELEN MILROY

“Healing means to be or make whole. To put together the broken or damaged bits so that one can feel good again and be more resilient in the future. Healing often is painful as a process but results in learning more about myself and what I need to be well in myself.”⁴

Dictionaries commonly define the noun *healing* as ‘the process of making or becoming sound or healthy again’ (Stevenson 2010); and the verb *heal* ‘to restore or be restored to health’ (McLeod 1986:392). The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation (2010:9) states that the ‘journey of healing is one that enables people to be restored to wellbeing and wholeness’. Yet healing is a non-linear process and movement towards a *hoped-for* state of balance, a journey that may never reach an endpoint.

As noted in the Social Justice Report (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2007:52), healing is ‘a broad, context driven concept’ that is difficult to define and cannot be prescribed. In the context of the trauma of colonisation wrought on Australia’s First Peoples and its continuing effects, healing attempts to mend two inseparable layers of hurt – ‘the harms of the past, as well as contemporary manifestations of trauma’ (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2007:53; also Koolmatrie & Williams 2000).

‘Trauma is when something happens that is so terrible it overwhelms our ability to cope’ (Coade, Downey & McClung 2008:9, following Herman 1992). ‘Where trauma is left unresolved, people can begin to internalise shame and guilt and, in more severe and sustained cases, whole communities can begin to think that pain and chaos is normal’ (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation Development Team 2009:4). Nonetheless, ‘trauma is an experience, not a culture’ (Coade & de Wolf 2010).

Continuing experiences of trauma, such as violence and neglect, affect the brain, the way we think and process information, language development, physical health, relationships, self-esteem and more (Coade, Downey & McClung 2008:9-12).

Coade, Downey & McClung (2008:4-9) explain how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are impacted by layers of trauma, which include:

- * Historical/cultural trauma – Stolen Generations, racism, poverty
- * Community trauma – substance abuse, violence, multiple deaths
- * Family trauma – intergenerational trauma, domestic violence, loss of parenting skills

3 Milroy in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation Development Team 2009:16.

4 Submission 26e in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation Development Team 2009:11.

- * Individual trauma – child abuse and neglect affecting development, attachment to others and culture.

The trauma and loss experienced by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is not homogenous and thus not open to preconceived ideas or broad healing initiatives (Koolmatrerie & Williams 2000: 165). Brian McCoy (2008) is also concerned about the dangers of essentialising Aboriginal experiences of trauma. Stereotyped trauma can ignore varying experiences and circumstances, along with important resilience factors and cultural resources (McCoy 2008:199).

Yet despite the diversity of experience, themes recur on what healing means for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Participants in the *Voices from the Campfires* report (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation Development Team 2009:11) described healing as:

- * Holistic
- * A journey that involves time and pain
- * A 'therapeutic dialogue with people who are listening'
- * Recognition of pain, issues and how individual stories fit 'into the collective story of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trauma'
- * A change involving: personal renewal; evolving cultural traditions
- * Hope for the future
- * Connecting with your identity and spiritual self.

Healing 'is linked to individual and community empowerment...[therefore] it is crucial that the meaning is ultimately set by those involved in the process' (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2007:52). 'Indigenous concepts of healing are based on addressing the relationship between the spiritual, emotional and physical in a holistic manner' (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2004:57). Using the analogy of a tree Yorgum Aboriginal Family

Counselling Service explains how 'you must treat the whole tree as well as the soil within which it grows' to restore it to health (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2004:66).

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander way of being in the world, or sense of self, is a permeable model of relationships, culture, spirituality and identity. Permeable in that those relationships – with family, land, community and ancestors/history – flow in and between culture, spirituality and identity. This moving current builds and strengthens one as the other. When the flow is hampered or blocked the sense of self is also reduced or incomplete. Vicki Grieves (2009: 42) explains that for Aboriginal people 'wellbeing is a sense of being in a right relationship with all aspects of one's social and material environment'. This holistic worldview means 'that for many Indigenous peoples, mental, social, emotional, spiritual and physical health are integrated, interdependent and inseparable' (Libesman 2004:25).

"Without culture we have no self-identity or sense of who we are and where we belong."

~ DEBBIE BOND,
SNAICC NATIONAL EXECUTIVE

Disconnection from culture and the relationships and spirituality therein must also be understood as a disconnection from identity. Bamblett and Lewis (2007: 49) state: 'Culture is central to identity. Culture defines who we are, how we think, how we communicate, what we value and what is important to us'.

"...what it means to be Aboriginal is determined by our culture and the way to culture is through family and community."

~ GERALDINE ATKINSON,
SNAICC NATIONAL EXECUTIVE

"Everybody needs to know that they belong somewhere, come from somewhere and have somewhere to go back to."

~ DONNA KLEIN-KANAWA,
SNAICC NATIONAL EXECUTIVE

People who are disconnected from their culture are less likely to be motivated to achieve their potential or go beyond their survival needs (Gorman 2010, in reference to Maslow's hierarchy of needs). The context of culture provides the way in which we define our identity; how we live and achieve happiness; how we find meaning (Gorman 2010). Culture therefore directly influences an individual's sense and attainment of social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB).

Michael Halloran's (2004: 4) theory of cultural trauma proposes that the 'cultural knowledge and practices [of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people] have been weakened to the extent that they fail in their capacity to imbue individual existence with meaning and value'. Halloran argues that cultural recovery and reinvigoration is needed to address cultural trauma.

A healing framework

The Canadian Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF 2006:12) provides a well evaluated framework for understanding historic trauma and healing under the three pillars of healing: reclaiming history, cultural interventions, and therapeutic healing.

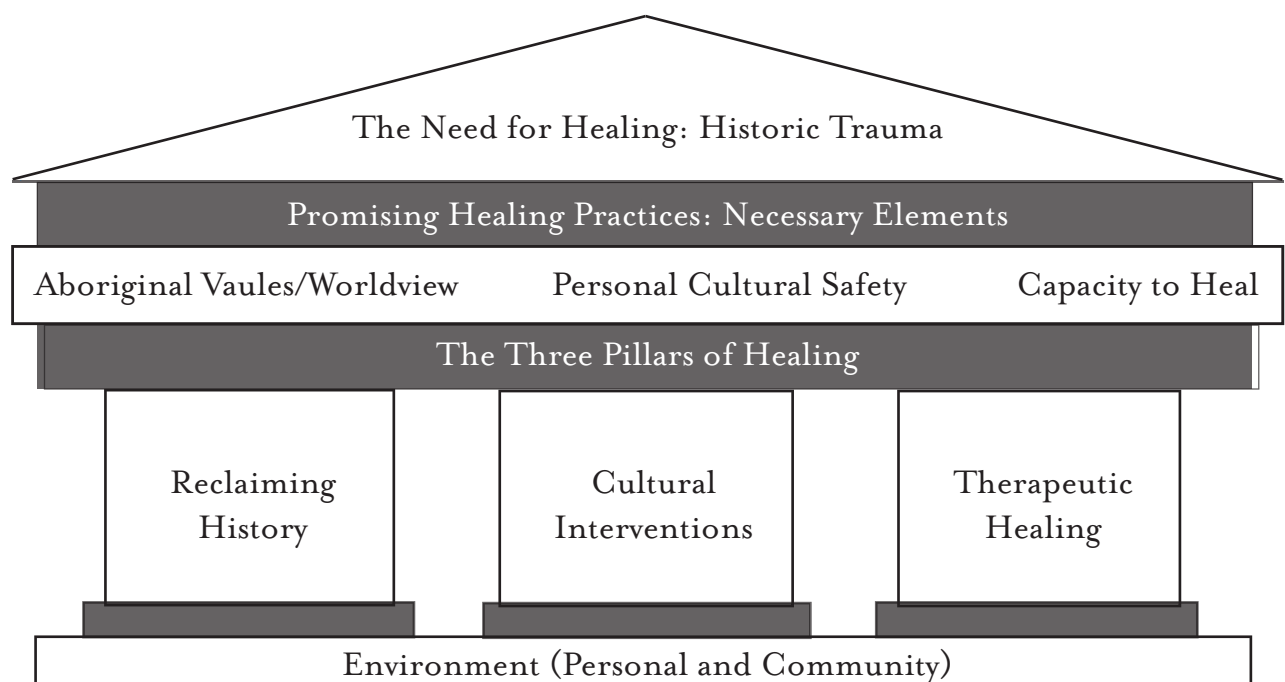


DIAGRAM SOURCE: ABORIGINAL HEALING FOUNDATION CANADA

Reclaiming History – Knowing, telling & acknowledging one's story

Reclaiming history is a recognition and awareness of Aboriginal history and its stories of intergenerational trauma and loss (AHF 2006:12). It involves a learning and understanding of the wider social events that have influenced one's personal story, such as forcible removal. Coade, Downey & McClung (2008:13) also note that: 'Making sense of our history and current life empowers us to take responsibility and make changes'.

Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski (2004:83) explain the vital importance of understanding 'the mechanisms by which practice (Aboriginal peoples' lives, today and in the past) and identities (how Aboriginal people interpret themselves and their positions in the world outside their communities) are linked with past events and past experiences'.

Reclaiming history is also the telling and acknowledgment of one's story (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2008: 167). *The Bringing them home Report* (HREOC, 1997) provided an avenue for awareness and acknowledgement of history, as can group therapies, and on a broader level the formal apology offered by the Australian Parliament to Australia's Indigenous peoples in 2008. Understanding the past 'can be a catalyst for healing and can also lead to mourning what was lost- a recognised stage in the healing

process' (AHF 2006:12).

Garvey (2008:9) uses the term 'projected loss' in reference to Indigenous people's questioning and mourning of 'what could have been?' or 'if only?', especially if 'their ability to re-establish their connections is difficult or impossible'. Koolmatrrie and Williams (2000:163) further explain that 'in the stories of the removal this theme recurs - regret for the life that was not lived, for the cultural identity compromised or entirely lost in the institutions where a white identity was to be aspired to, but never achieved'.

Examples of healing initiatives that reclaim history:

- * A beginning stage of Aunty Lorraine Peeters' (2009: 18) Marumali Model of Healing similarly understands the importance of reclaiming of history as a 'realisation of reality' that hopefully enables a retelling of one's story, mourning for things lost and a process of 'getting to know the Aboriginal person we would have been'.
- * A stage of Atkinson's (2002: 263) We-Al-li model of healing also helps participants to understand how the past and various cultures impact and contribute 'to making us who we are in the present'. During this stage of healing it is important to 'make sense of their own lives in relationship to the collective, communal story' (Atkinson 2002:248). c

Cultural Interventions and Connections – Renewing culture and identity

"Culture is knowledge, belonging and ownership of your own stories."

~ DESLEY THOMPSON,
SNAICC NATIONAL EXECUTIVE

"Culture is about touching yesterday as well as tomorrow."

~ SHARRON WILLIAMS,
SNAICC NATIONAL EXECUTIVE

Cultural recovery and reinvigoration, or renewal, is needed to address cultural trauma (Halloran 2004:13; also ATSIHF 2010:9). Cultural interventions involve a recovery and connection with culture that promotes healing and feelings of belonging (AHF 2006:12). Cultural connections through family, Elders, country and language are some of the areas that inform culturally based healing programs (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2008: 168; Feeney 2009:15). 'Where culture is strong and cultural practices are an everyday occurrence, there is a buffer from the impact of trauma, as well as a context for healing from traumas of the past' (Coade, Downey & McClung 2008:13).

Peters (1996 in Quinn 2007:77), citing a North American Indian community leader, states: 'Recovering our cultural identity will contribute to healing ourselves. Our healing will require us to rediscover who we are. We cannot look outside for self-image; we need to rededicate ourselves to understanding our traditional ways. In our songs, ceremony, language and relationships lie the instructions and directions for recovery'. Healing identity therefore requires cultural healing- a process that also heals family and community. In the Native American context healing occurs by: 'Empowering the family and community through re-traditionalization of Native American values, beliefs, spirituality and traditions' (Yellow Horse & Yellow Horse Brave Heart in VACCA 2006:17).

Clark et al (1999) describe how productive 'activity settings', such as culture days, create a space for community communication and strengthening of identity. They also argue that wellbeing and resilience is enhanced if interventions integrate the individual, family and community. Feeney (2009:17) explains that cultural renewal activities can also provide a space for people to initially engage with healing and thus build their capacity and readiness to heal.

Cultural activities re-tell 'a story of cultural strength, survival and pride' (Towney 2005:42). Cultural activities include celebrations, ritual and ceremonies, remembering and mourning,

land, and education (Feeney 2009:15). Programs that acknowledge and explore how 'traditional practices, morals, values and principals...fit into today's society' (Bradford 2008: 14) validate the contemporary importance of Indigenous culture. SNAICC's *Growing up our way* practices matrix is a resource which 'details some of the values, beliefs and practices that inform the "growing up" of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children... with a particular focus in documenting how children are raised strong in self, and proud in culture' (SNAICC 2012).

Strengthening culture strengthens identity, for culture provides a way to value self. Culture lays down 'valued social roles, personal qualities and standards of behaviour, culture also generates opportunities for deriving a sense of personal value' (Halloran 2004:3). SNAICC chose the theme "Value My Culture, Value Me" to highlight the importance of this issue during the annual celebration of National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day in 2010. The theme is 'about the need for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to know they are loved and valued; and to have every opportunity to nurture and explore a healthy and strong sense of self and community. "Value My Culture, Value Me" is also about promoting new attitudes and forging a new pathway of understanding for the benefit of all Australians' (SNAICC 2011).

Examples of cultural initiatives – connecting kids with culture:

- * 'Good Grief Camps' – National Association for Loss and Grief (NALAG) Outdoor adventure based camp to educate about loss and grief and ways to cope. Ends with a 'Love Wrap' ritual- a blanket, symbolising their unique grief, is taken home to keep them safe on their grief journey. Developing new rituals is '...finding ways for healing for modern-day Aboriginal people' (Hanson na:12).
- * 'Stories of Hope' – Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health (CRAH) Enhancing SEWB of Indigenous people living in a remote community by

documenting positive stories. Bringing Elders and youth together in storytelling and maintaining culture.

Through Elders

"We need Elders from the community to yarn with kids (in out of home care) tell them stories and take them home (for a visit)."

~ DESLEY THOMPSON,
SNAICC NATIONAL EXECUTIVE

"So many of our Elders here in South Australia are honoured to be asked to speak to people who are working for the community. A Kurna Elder, for example, said, 'I have so much to say and no one to tell it to'.

~ SHARRON WILLIAMS,
SNAICC NATIONAL EXECUTIVE

- * 'Making links between generations...by taking older and younger men out together, older men share their skills and experience with younger ones, while young ones gain respect for the older ones when they hear their stories or learn about their skills' (Towney 2005:43).

- * Participants in a young women's camp appreciated the contribution made by Elders who 'brought us together as a whole...By an Elder, on her ground- this brought the women together with the land' (Galloway and Moylan 2005:87).



Yanyuwa and Waradgeri Children learn traditional basket coiling techniques from Elder Aunty Dot Peters who was recently inducted on to the Victorian Women's Honour Roll (2011) and the Victorian Indigenous Honour Roll (2012) for her amazing work supporting and strengthening Aboriginal communities. Healesville, Wurundjeri Country, Vic. Photograph by Stephanie Grubb, Healesville Indigenous Services Association.

Therapeutic healing approaches — Intervening with cultural remembering

The Canadian Aboriginal Healing Foundation's (AHF) therapeutic pillar of healing understands healing in holistic and culturally appropriate ways using traditional, Western or alternative therapies, or a combination of these healing practices. Calma adds that successful healing approaches meld therapeutic practices and cultural interventions (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2008:169). Reclaiming history is also a part of some promising healing approaches and practices outlined below, which create an opportunity for healing to occur.

Narrative therapy

Narrative therapy is a renegotiation of identity and the dominant story that has shaped a person's identity. Problems are seen as distinct from identity, which allows critical reflection from a new and separate viewpoint. Preferred alternative stories can be found and strengthened that enable people to rename their 'dominant story as one about survival in the face of tyranny, injustice and exploitation' (AHC/Dulwich Centre 1994:17). Galloway & Moylan (2005: 85) explain that narrative therapy helps people learn how to recognise and defy the demands that

issues and problems, such as violence, make on them. People can then start 'living in ways which more truly conform to our heart stories'.

- * The *Reclaiming our stories, reclaiming our lives* counselling project, for Aboriginal families who had lost someone by a death in custody, found that a culturally sensitive narrative therapy approach to healing was seen as 'honouring and re-empowering Aboriginal ways of being on a number of levels, including on the level of spirituality' (Aboriginal Health Council of SA (AHC) 1994: 4). Healing practices/themes found to be helpful were: naming the injustice, caring and sharing through listening groups/teams built on community connections, and journey metaphors which enabled a journey from one identity to another.
- * The *Take Two Program* at Berry Street in Victoria, for children referred by Child Protection, understands the importance of telling, sharing and making sense of one's story. The recovery phase of 'Telling your story' creates opportunities for children to explore and talk about their feelings, trauma, grief and loss (Coade, Downey & McClung 2008: 16). Assisting traumatised children in developing a story about what has happened to them 'can relieve them of a burden of guilt and shame' (Coade, Downey & McClung 2008: 17-18).
- * Mungalli Falls Indigenous Women's Healing Camp drew on narrative therapy and the work of *Reclaiming our stories, reclaiming our lives* (AHC 1994) to help Indigenous women in Cairns find their true stories through connecting with the land, ancestors, and each other (Galloway & Moylan 2005). Contemporary healing practices of guided meditation that linked women to land; connecting circles linking participants with their departed; healing circles that focused on sharing and re-telling stories and interviewing violence; yarning; art and having fun were held on beautiful local Women's Country. Some practices included traditional elements and others were led by traditional owners.

Sharing stories together

Atkinson (2002:217) explains that 'within an Aboriginal context, people do not heal alone'. Others concur that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people heal and measure their wellbeing in relation to their connection to others in their family and community. Atkinson (2002:248) stresses 'the importance of allowing people collectively to tell and to make sense of their own stories' thereby allowing them to become experts of their stories and lives. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities have always connected through the sharing of stories. 'These stories are a source of pride. When people become disconnected from them, life can be much harder to live' (Wingard in Wingard & Lester 2001:v).

Some issues, such as suicide and violence, can be difficult or shameful to talk about within Aboriginal families and communities. Wingard's Introduction to *Telling our stories in ways that make us stronger* explains how Aboriginal people need 'to be able to tell their stories in ways that are right for them...[which might be] just talking together under the trees' (Wingard in Wingard & Lester 2001:vi).

- * 'Yarning is a very special and powerful way in which Aboriginal people connect to each other...a unique part of our culture which...connects us to our spirituality'; yarning 'means talking, telling and sharing stories' (Towney 2005:40). Towney (2005:42) utilises 'the yarn' as a form of narrative therapy that can heal and restore relationships with individuals, culture and land, by the reclaiming and retelling of culturally strong stories 'of strength, survival and pride'. Yarning provides an opportunity to talk about values, beliefs, and what is important. Towney (2005:43) concludes:
To me, acknowledging our history and talking together about our values is a form of spirituality. We are reconnecting with what we have been grieving for. There is a power of healing in the yarn.
- * A Canadian cross cultural Aboriginal mental health program found that a 'key

means of Aboriginal healing in a healing circle is the voice. Listening to one another, sharing their stories, and hearing their authentic voice is healing in itself' (Thomas & Bellefeuille 2006:10).

- * Exchanging stories between Aboriginal communities who are experiencing hard times proved to be 'like a healing, like a medicine' for those involved in community work conducted in association with the Dulwich Centre (Denborough et al. 2006:36; also Denborough, Wingard, & White 2009). Narrative ideas were used to engage communities in ways that would strengthen their own initiatives, knowledge, skills, values and dreams and link them back to culture. Sharing stories in this way enables conversations in a non-threatening or shaming way. Stories are told in one community and then witnessed in another who reflect back and add their own stories in an exchange that then grows to include more communities. Listening and learning from each other also enables links between young and old and between communities.

Activities in safe spaces

Activity itself can provide and become a safe space to explore new ideas and alternative strategies away from normal life – creating an opportunity to heal. Fun activities in a safe environment provide a space to listen, learn, gain support and reinforce strengths (Kowanko & Power 2008:33). The following are

examples of activities that are recognised as potential conduits for healing to take place:

On Country, caring for Country, visiting and learning about one's own Country:

- * The digital storytelling project 'Stories of Hope' is a partnership with Hope Vale Aboriginal Elders and Pelican Expeditions, which aims to document positive stories, reconnect Elders and the community to culture, enhance SEWB, bring Elders and youth together in storytelling and undertake caring for country activities. (CRAH 2009; Davey & Goudie 2009).
- * The Balanu Foundation runs a program where: 'Young people are taken on Country to remote cultural camps where they learn about traditional culture and law from Elders and program workers. This knowledge is used to build self respect and respect for others' (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 2008: 169).

In art, drama, music, dance, drums:

- * The 'Tree of life' activity 'enables children to speak about their lives in ways that make them stronger. It involves children drawing their own 'tree of life' in which they get to speak of their 'roots' (where they come from), their skills and knowledges, their hopes and dreams, as well as the special people in their lives' (Dulwich Centre).
- * An evaluation of the Family and Community Healing Program in Adelaide found that

Gangga Marrang Dancers preparing for the dancing about to take place (L-R): Chris Andrews, Michael Slater, Aaron Morcome, Shaun Ridgeway, Shane Morcome, Wayne Paulson, Gordon Morcome (behind), Adam Russell. Saltwater, Old Bar, Biripi Country, NSW. Photography by Rebecca Adams.



while an Aboriginal women's group worked on crafts they were also 'learning how to manage stress, manage their emotions and learning new behaviours. These new skills then impact on how they deal with family situations at home' (Kowanko & Power 2008:33).

- * Resilience and coping were enhanced through the humour of drama and theatresports; and grief was 'explored creatively by drawing, writing...and telling personal stories in whichever way' suited the young people attending a NALAG Youth Camp designed to help heal Indigenous grief (Hanson na:11).

In play:

- * Sandplay therapy is practiced at Yorgum Aboriginal Family Counselling Service in Perth to help young children express their feelings in a non-verbal way (Lawrence 2010:21).
- * Problem solving games such as an outdoor rope course build young people's team building skills and give them an achievable challenge that builds self esteem (Hanson na:11).
- * Traditional Indigenous games introduced into schools and community groups in Cherbourg and Stradbroke Island proved to be a successful community-based health promotion initiative. 'The games provided a culturally appropriate activity that combined physical activity and opportunities for social interactions with the possibility for a revitalisation of one facet of Indigenous Australian cultural identity' (Parker et al. 2006:107).

In sport:

Participating in sport, as opposed to individual exercise, is a valued activity by which Aboriginal people can represent and connect to their community (Thompson, Gifford & Thorpe 2000:735). Beneforti and Cunningham's (2002) investigation underlines the potential of

sport and recreation to positively impact health and social outcomes in Indigenous communities. Sport programs can decrease boredom and youth crime, increase school attendance and learning, create positive peer relationships and increase self-esteem and wellbeing (Beneforti and Cunningham 2002:55-58). Clinch (2010:9) also explains that bringing Aboriginal men together to play sport in a safe space is an important way to support identity.

- * The Fitzroy Stars Football Club in Melbourne provides a powerful form of healing to its Aboriginal community; powerful because of its subtlety in building community and pride. The club supports and holds its Aboriginal members and community by giving young people something to do, providing a space to raise and address social and health issues, a powerful Elder presence, ownership, a pathway to employment, and building reconciliation.⁵
- * McCoy (2008) maintains that football can be a healthy experience when it increases social/kinship connections; expresses and maintains cultural values similar to those found in law and hunting; provides a male space with Elders to talk about problems and learn responsibilities; and increases skills and self-esteem.

Traditional ways of healing

Four out of the top five healing activities rated most effective by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF 2006:16) model were traditional ways of healing involving Elders, ceremony, healing or talking circles and traditional medicine.

Ngangkari (traditional healers) were reverently received by participants at the SNAICC 2010 National Conference in Alice Springs. A large part of their work deals with people's mental health, where they work to 'centre them and give them their sense of self' (Peters, Tjilari & Ginger 2010). In these cases people are 'dispirited...

⁵ In conversation with Frank Hytten, SNAICC CEO, 7 July 2010.

the spirit leaves and hides nearby and we can put it back' (Peters, Tjilari & Ginger 2010). The Ngangkari work alongside western practitioners in Northern Territory and South Australia and doctors will approach them to work on a child's spiritual wellbeing: 'We look at effect of illness on the spirit while doctors use medicine...our power comes from ability to see things they can't see. We can hold a spirit in our hand...and place it where it belongs' (Peters, Tjilari & Ginger 2010).

- * The traditional practice of *Dadirri* or 'deep listening' can provide a useful approach to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (SNAICC 2010:113).

Dadirri is an Aboriginal way of listening to one another (Miriam Rose Ungenmerr-Baumann, 2002). *Dadirri* 'gathers information in quiet observation and deep listening, builds knowledge through awareness and contemplation...which informs action' (Atkinson 2002:17). It is a way of relating to others in the community and a way of understanding diversity and stories without judgment (Atkinson 2002:17). 'The practice of deep listening involves holding a mirror up to our own spirits and finding the same scars' (Coade & de Wolf 2010).

Principal elements of promising healing practices and models

Safe spaces

Culturally and personally safe spaces are paramount during the difficult process of healing; a place to reclaim history, find fragmented and lost stories, and talk about a painful past; a place devoid of physical harm to property, oneself and others (Atkinson 2002: 193-5, 244). When in a culturally safe place a person can commit and participate in the making of behavioural rules, and can identify things from their culture or worldview (Atkinson 2002: 193). Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have experienced unsafe places lacking in lore, family and community structure; or where discriminatory laws have been imposed (Atkinson 2002:194-5).

The essential nature of safety is recognised in a framework first developed by Take Two, Berry Street (Coade, Downey & McClung 2008:16) utilising the work of Judith Herman (1992). The recovery framework is part of the three-phased 'Spiral of Healing' - other phases are telling the story, and connection and empowerment - developed to help traumatised children and adolescents build relationships (Downey 2009:6-10). The safety phase of the framework is about:

- * Being/feeling safe in places and relationships
 - Acknowledging past hurts and caring and thinking about what a child is doing and how they are feeling.
 - Creating fundamentally safe physical and emotional environments for young people and those that care and work with them.
- * Sensing safety
 - Maintaining a connection to culture brings a sense of safety; and activities such as professional massage, dance and ceremony can help regulate emotions and the body.

Ownership

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ownership of healing initiatives is one of four primary healing principles, given by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation Development Team (2009: 6), that support healing journeys. Programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should ultimately be developed and delivered by and/or with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Independent Aboriginal service organisations are paramount in achieving culturally appropriate and accessible services for Aboriginal people (AHC 1994:29). The Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA 2010:33-34) states that Aboriginal community controlled organisations understand, represent and are accountable to their community. They take pride in Aboriginal culture and have holistic and community based ways of knowing (VACCA 2010:33-34).

Following findings of the Canadian Aboriginal Healing Foundation, Feeney (2009:9) underlines the importance of being able to take control of one's own healing journey. 'At best, the role of government should be as an enabler or facilitator of healing, not as a controller or director', especially when the government's past actions are considered (Feeney 2009:10).

Holistic & relational worldview

Western individualistic understandings of issues such as health and family often drive Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander SEWB programs with limited results (AHC 1994:24). Relevant programs are those that instead utilise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander holistic definitions and worldviews (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation Development Team 2009: 6). Programs that focus on the entire family rather than the individual alone, for example, align with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander views of the family (Feeney 2009:20).

Brian McCoy (2008:222) notes that Western medical health models cannot continue to ignore how 'desert people understand what it means to be well and sick'; because undermining health beliefs undermine wellbeing.⁶ Both traditional and clinical health care is needed. 'While palya [good health] can be located in the physical body, it describes the person who is in relationship: with others, land, cosmic and spiritual forces' (McCoy 2008:76).

"Health is the spiritual, emotional, physical health of people connected very much to their sense of belonging to a place and belonging to people and belonging to specific groups of people."

~ MCCOY 2008:214

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities face complex difficulties, which can be better understood within a relational worldview framework (Coade, Downey & McClung 2008:12-13). 'In the relational worldview, helpers and healers understand problems through the balances and imbalances in the relational world [rather than through an individual-focused framework]. Interventions are focused on bringing into balance the mind, body, spirit and context of a person, family and Community' (Coade, Downey & McClung 2008:13).

Flexible

There are dangers in presuming any broad Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander definitions, as not all communities are the same. Programs that work in one community may not work in another. 'Aboriginal people seeking healing come from a variety of cultures and nations... healing practices need to go beyond stereotypical and sometimes romantic views that Indigenous people have the same values and needs' (Feeney 2009: 19).

A limited recognition of Aboriginal diversity limits Aboriginal people's access to mainstream health services. It is often expected that one Aboriginal person can represent all Aboriginal people (AHC 1994:26). 'We need to be mindful of the diverse needs to be accounted for across Australia rather than be locked into a "one-size-fits-all" model' (Feeney 2009:24). Healing programs and funding must allow local Aboriginal and Torres Strait organisations and communities to help their own people heal with their own culture and stories.

6 For further discussion on traditional concepts of health and illness see: McDonald (2006); Boulton-Lewis, Pillay & Lewis (2002).

Impart cultural knowledge and pride

Healing an individual heals the community and heals culture; just as cultural healing heals the community and individuals therein. Healing in culture reconnects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to community, country, and stories of belonging. There is not one generic Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander culture but many separate Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander countries, each with their own unique culture and stories that guide their community. To reconnect with culture an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person must therefore learn about, and take pride in, their own community and cultural identity.

Strength based approach

Non-Indigenous Australians have a long history of using negative language and stereotypes to describe Indigenous people, which are sadly often 'echoed in the words used by Aboriginal people to describe themselves' (Gorringe, Ross & Fforde 2011:7). Yet negative perceptions of Aboriginal identity can be countered by 'focussing on successes and social capital', along with spiritual connection and cultural learning to build a 'resilient Aboriginal identity' (Gorringe, Ross & Fforde 2011:9).

A strength-based approach is one of the four primary principles identified by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation Development Team (2009:5) as needed to support people on their healing journey. This approach looks for individual and cultural strengths and 'embraces concepts of empowerment, collaboration, healing from within and suspension of disbelief' (Libesman 2004:25).

Coade, Downey & McClung (2008:6) suggest drawing on the following prevailing strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities to heal trauma:

- * Connectedness to culture
- * Support for one another
- * Humour



During NAIDOC celebrations, Warraber Island Elder, Pastor May Pearson, helps Stephanie Bob, Cassandra Mari, Sannah Pearson and Desharnthine Nona win their coconut leaf boat race. The boats were woven by community members and all age groups enjoyed racing, a traditional entertainment. Warraber Island, Torres Strait, Qld. Photography by Kathryn Wemyss.

- * Courage
- * Will to survive
- * Desire for next generation to do well
- * Resilience
- * Adaptability to new environments
- * Capacity to straddle two different cultures.

Address causes

A healing principle from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation Development Team (2009: 5) requires services to not focus on symptoms, as has happened in the past, but on the causes of trauma. The First Peoples of Australia have been seen and talked about within a deficit context of what to do about the 'Aboriginal problem' since colonisation. Aboriginal people are problematised and diagnosed by those who caused the problem (Garvey 2008: 4). Individualising Aboriginal people as the 'problem' avoids the broader historical and social context of what produced and continued the suffering of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The historical and contextual factors of colonisation and racism, cultural dislocation, and past welfare practices continue to lead to trauma and intergenerational disadvantage (Higgins 2010:3). Accumulative stress and chaos, social inequality and exclusion, including the intergenerational effects of removing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families are the main constraints on the social and emotional development of children given in *The Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey* (Zubrick et al. 2005: 558-563). The survey revealed that over one third of Western Australian Aboriginal children (0-17 years) are 'living in families where a carer or a carer's parent had been forcibly separated from their natural family' (Zubrick et al., 2005:561).

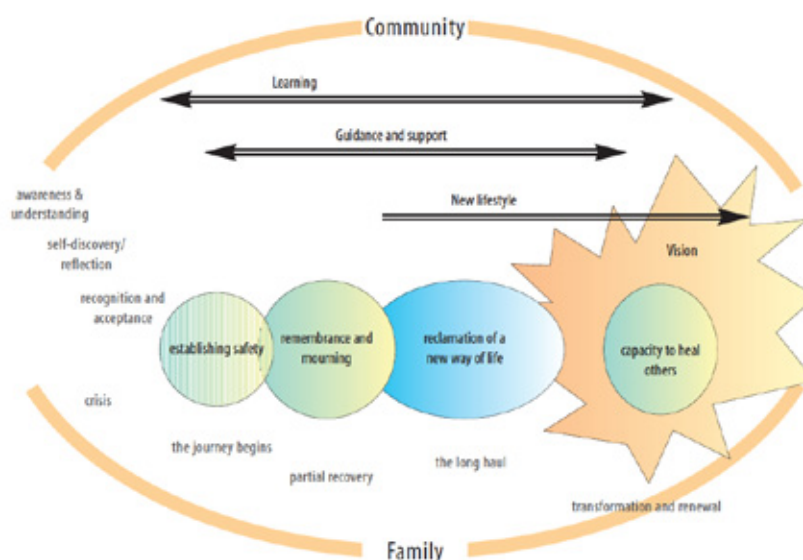
Build capacity and readiness to heal

The Aboriginal Healing Foundation in Canada has identified the capacity to heal others as one of three necessary elements needed for a healing practice to succeed. People such as Elders, who have already begun their own healing journey and are ready to heal others, are those 'who are non-judgmental, who know their own strengths and limitations, and who are well respected in the community' (AHF 2006:12).

The diagram below shows the 'Survivors Healing Journey' where an Aboriginal person at crisis point begins their healing journey in a safe space where they can remember and mourn and make the long haul to a new way of life and build their capacity to heal others (AHF Research Series 2010, p.4).

However, some people are not ready to heal and some are insulted that they are expected to heal from losses that can never be fully healed (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation Development Team 2009: 11). 'Thus healing practices need different engagement points to meet the need of the different target groups', such as children or men (Feeney 2009: 17). 'Cultural renewal programs and story telling opportunities' can be the first step (Feeney 2009:17).

Community readiness to heal should also be considered. Some Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people, who have come to know their story and are ready to find their community, find that their community is not ready for them.⁷ A community needs to have begun its own healing journey in order to be a safe place that is ready to value and help others heal.



A Survivor's Journey Final Report of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation Volume II, Measuring Progress: Program Evaluation, Figure 18, in The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement's Common Experience Payment and Healing: A Qualitative Study Exploring Impacts on Recipients, The Aboriginal Healing Foundation Research Series, 2010.

"Community is really important to our kids. It is a cohesive group that gives them a sense of belonging. It is the next layer — not too far removed from family, and it's a way back to family, it has connections to family."

~ GERALDINE ATKINSON,
SNAICC NATIONAL EXECUTIVE

Restore and build relationships

'Relationships appear at the heart of Aboriginal knowledge' and are symbolised through cultural practice (Thomas & Bellefeuille 2006:8). McCoy (2008:200) locates trauma in key relationships with family, country and dreaming that have been wounded, rather than physical or mental processes. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 'become whole selves through their interactions and not apart from them' (Grieves 2009:41). Restoring relationships with the land, between generations and with each other is thus vital to restoring Indigenous identity (Towney 2005:43).

'Relatedness provides an orientation for personal agency and strengthens one's place in the social world' (McEwan & Tsey 2009:15). Healing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is therefore a journey best travelled with others and for others; for 'their healing depends on and contributes to healing among the wider community' (Brannigan 2005 cited in VACCA 2006: 10).

Feeney (2009:14), however, notes that 'healing projects should ideally include a combination of individual engagement in therapeutic activities and group involvement in community events that promote well-being'.

"Community is the pulling together of the threads of our survival as a people."

~ SHARRON WILLIAMS,
SNAICC NATIONAL EXECUTIVE

Conclusion

To heal is to restore wellbeing. Yet healing from the continuing trauma of colonisation is not easy and restoring wellbeing may never be complete. Healing is a journey that takes time. Long-term funding for well-regarded and proven programs, along with new and promising initiatives, needs to continue. The Canadian Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF 2006:18) found 'an average of 10 years is required for a community to: reach out, dismantle denial, create safety, [and] engage participants in therapeutic healing'.

Promising healing practices are those that give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities ownership of their own healing journeys, by building capacity and readiness to begin. Healing initiatives must provide a safe space to understand history and one's place in it; share one's story and have it acknowledged by others; and renew relationships with culture and cultural identity, land, community and family in holistic and culturally appropriate ways.

Healing initiatives that strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, and the connecting relationships within, will strengthen identity. 'Children who are strong in their culture and see others value their culture are more likely to develop confidence, resilience, and positive identity' (VACCA 2010:14). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are diverse, strong and resilient people. Healing practices that draw on these strengths have great potential for engagement and success. Building on strengths also enables people to trust in the future and their capacity to bring about positive change on their healing journey.

7 In conversation with an Aboriginal member of staff at SNAICC, April 2011.

HEALING IN PRACTICE

How programs were selected

The list of programs and services profiled in this report provides a few examples of programs that demonstrate different components of best practice in program and service provision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.

The programs identified vary in many aspects, including their size, scope and location. They range from being narrowly focused, time limited programs, through to wide-ranging initiatives or processes. To be considered for this resource, programs were required to be run by community-controlled organisations, in line with SNAICC policy platform.

The rationale SNAICC used for programs to be selected for this resource was developed from the four key principles (see over page) established in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation's *Voices from the Campfire* (2010).

Healing Programs in Australia are at a new frontier. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation was only established in 2009, displaying how young this push into new programming is.

Understandably, in this context, many of the programs that SNAICC considered for this resource had limited evaluations and minimal statistics available to prove their evidence base. Thorough program evaluations can be costly and are difficult for many program and service providers to achieve. Some of the programs included in this resource are an acknowledgement of this fact, and also of the fact that there are currently many excellent unevaluated programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families operating in Australia.

Why community controlled

In SNAICC's view, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled services are the most effective and appropriate means for engaging and supporting our children, families and communities. SNAICC's *Towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander access and engagement: overcoming barriers to child and family services* outlined the barriers to our children and families both accessing and engaging with services. Two crucial aspects of engagement include cultural engagement and holistic responsiveness to a community's needs, both of which are derived from local Aboriginal staff, voluntary workers and management.

In SNAICC's experience, our families identify a clear distinction between an Aboriginal community controlled service provider and a non-Aboriginal universal service, even if both services provide similar programs and are primarily designed or designated to support our communities (Flaxman, Muir & opera 2009). This distinction rests on the design, development and delivery of services provided by an Aboriginal community controlled organisation.

These features of an appropriately resources community-based and controlled model overcome many of the identified barriers to service access and engagement (SNAICC 2010a); SNAICC 2011b) and provide multiple benefits to children, families and communities (Higgins and Butler 2007).

Promising practices

All programs have been profiled under the headings of the four primary principles that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation list as essential for successful healing.

The principles are:

- 1 Address the causes**
- 2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ownership**
- 3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldview**
- 4 Strength based approach.**

Each program showcases how these principles can be applied differently and creatively to achieve successful healing outcomes.



Aged just 11 months, this was Gindimae's first Coroboree with her Dad Dhinawan. Quiksilver Pro media launch, Gold Coast, QLD. Photography by Coco Hamel.

Take Two Program Berry Street Victoria

Introduction

The Take Two Program (Take Two) is an intensive therapeutic service run by Berry Street Victoria (BSV) which provides counseling and therapy for children and young people who have suffered from exposure to family violence; physical, sexual or emotional abuse; or neglect. The program also ensures that families, carers and teachers are provided with guidance and training. Take Two has approximately 100 staff, including clinical

teams, research and training teams.

The Aboriginal Team that provides direct service as well as training and consultation to other Take Two clinicians to ensure that all staff are able to work sensitively and effectively with Aboriginal children, families and carers.

Target group: Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children across Victoria.

PRINCIPLE 1: Address the causes

Take Two prides itself on its multidisciplinary approach to addressing the causes of trauma in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. The program aims to make sustainable differences to communities by building strength within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as well as in the service sector. A critical focus of the program is to support the culture around the child so that family and community leadership can be reinstated to allow people to heal. As Shaun Coade, the Manager of Aboriginal Service Development explains “it’s like a chain that we have to repair the links of in order to make it strong again”. Take Two ensures that the foundations around the child are strong before they address the specific issues the child is facing. If the most important issue for a child is reconnection with family and community, however the family or community in question

is not ready for meaningful engagement, Take Two won’t make the connection. First they will work with the community to help deliver a stronger, safer place for the child to re-engage with.

Having a strong family and community that is strong in their culture provides many protective layers for children. Family and community are central to the approach of Take Two. As Shaun Coade explains, “It’s not about just healing the young person, it’s about healing the extended family and community”.

The Take Two Program also includes a training component that informs community about European Settlement and the experiences of trauma. While the community always informs the training of what their trauma is, the training provides communities with the knowledge and capacity to better understand and express their own trauma.

PRINCIPLE 2: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ownership

The team of Take Two is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander managed and was designed with direction of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander working group.

For meaningful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ownership of the program to occur each community is supported according to the needs that they identify. Take Two also tries to employ staff from the regions that they will be working with and believes its important that they staff member has existing links with a community

and is recognised by community. As Shaun Coade explains, “we can train and skill workers up around therapeutic knowledge around trauma, but we can’t train the respect from the community”.

Take Two utilises the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) as its governance as well as its base for staff. VACCA provides ongoing cultural support, education and training for Take Two staff.

PRINCIPLE 3: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldview

Crucial to the success of the program has been the capacity to allow a different approach to engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who have been traumatised working through a holistic lens and always with an Aboriginal perspective.

The disproportionate number of Aboriginal children within Take Two program, places it with the responsibility to put into practice culturally sensitive, respectful and informed therapeutic interventions. This is not only so that positive outcomes are more likely, but so that additional harm does not occur under the guise of well meaning but misinformed approaches.

For Take Two the best approach is a combined approach – a western approach and a traditional cultural approach.

Take Two’s Aboriginal team has had a significant focus on understanding on the intersection between western and traditional understandings of trauma and well-being.

This approach also requires constant learning for the staff. Take Two helps foster this learning

by what it calls cultural supervision. Cultural supervision involves the aboriginal workers as a group travelling go to a region, and arranging for the local aboriginal community to teach them about the important sights and the history. Staff become more culturally educated with the regions that we’re working and become more aware of past trauma’s that have occurred in a particular community. It’s about understanding the history of a community, and the history of the trauma. Cultural supervisions are run three times a year and go for a whole day.

Patience and time are keys to work effectively with an Aboriginal community regarding an individual child. Relationships need to be developed with members of the community. Much of the therapeutic work requires establishing trust and building credibility, both of which take time.

Beyond it direct service delivery Take Two also values the process of educating non-indigenous workers about the importance of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldview.

PRINCIPLE 4: Strength based approach

Take Two's strength based approach is just about the strength of the child. Take Two is also focused on utilising and developing the strengths of a community in order to support its children. Its approach views culture as strength, and healing a community as a means to healing an individual child.

What are the strengths of the family? How is the family culturally connected? What are the strengths of the community? Do they still know language? Do they still sing and dance?

These are the questions Take Two asks. If the answers are positive, Take Two ensures these practices are supported and maintained. If the connection to culture is lacking, the program interrogates the causes and works to rebuild these connections.

As Shaun Coade explains, "culture is the healing process. It's what it's all about. If the kid has good connections to culture, and the family have good connections to culture, then that is a good healing process...and everything else will follow on".

FURTHER INFORMATION:

A large-scale evaluation using mixed methodology found that the program resulted in strong positive outcomes for participants.

www.berrystreet.org.au/TakeTwoStatewide

Healthy Family Circle Program

New South Wales

Mudgin-Gal Aboriginal Women's Corporation's Healthy Family Circle program supports inner Sydney's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women facing disadvantage, family violence and social isolation to take control of their lives and identify healthy and safe choices for themselves and their families. The program was developed in partnership with Relationships Australia (NSW) and has been running in Redfern for the past four years with funding from FaHCSIA, under the Local Answers initiative.

Mudgin-Gal is an Aboriginal women's centre in Sydney's Redfern where its Healthy Family Circles program supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who access the centre as part of their award-winning family violence prevention program, Black Out Violence (funded by the New South Wales Government). The Healthy Family Circles program offers mentoring and support to women who have children or are the main carers in their family.

PRINCIPLE 1: Address the causes

The program aims to empower women to feel confident and through skill and knowledge sharing provides them opportunities to enhance their skills for healthier lifestyles within the family unit and the wider community. It offers them tools to identify and reach life goals. The program also trains participants as peer mentors – to each other at the centre, to other women in their community and within their families – and encourages the women to be leaders in their families and their community.

The program operates through a range of workshops, activities and informal exchanges such as over lunchtime conversations or yarning. A current Healthy Family Circles project is a Mum and Bubs Water Group, involving 13 mums and 16 kids, that gets children comfortable in the pool and learn water safety, teaches mothers CPR skills and has the children swimming safely under their mothers' supervision.

All Healthy Family Circles Program participants have access to a Black Out Violence workshop on

safer lifestyles that addresses family and domestic violence, choices women have and ideas on how to create a safer environment for themselves and their families.

For Mudgin-Gal, the program contributes to the healing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in Redfern in practical ways. According to Mudgin-Gal's CEO, Dixie Link-Gordon, information and education assist women, especially those with children, live a safer and healthier lifestyle, which contributes to a healing process. The program focuses on supporting the emotional and social wellbeing of the women but is also about practical support and outlining for women what they as individuals can achieve. "The program supports the healing of women by allowing a space for sharing stories, with a trained counsellor on hand to assist if needed," she says.

This way, Healthy Family Circles also create safer and healthier families for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Redfern.

PRINCIPLE 2: Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander ownership

Mudgin-Gal is an Aboriginal organisation based in inner-city Sydney that is run by Aboriginal women.

Women who have been empowered and skilled through Mudgin-Gal's program have emerged as community mentors and leaders who are active in the centre and its Healthy Family Circles Program. An Indigenous Program Coordinator was recruited by Mudgin-Gal to oversee the project and support mentors in their new leadership role. Aboriginal women who have been recruited, trained and skilled up become active in the Redfern and Waterloo areas as mentors – passing on knowledge and running counselling courses within their own communities. The mentors' skills and training have also been utilised to help facilitate groups for Relationships Australia (NSW) within the Redfern community.

The mentors are also trained to offer 'accidental' or opportune counselling (such as providing support, information and a friendly ear to women needing assistance in informal settings and occasions) to other women they may meet down the street or at the local shops, including passing on advice on the support and services available at Mudgin-Gal.

For the women involved in the Healthy Family Circles Program, the aim is to get them going out and feeling confident once they finish the course especially to reach their goals. For example, one woman is now coaching a junior netball team, another has completed training as a playgroup facilitator, while another has received governance training. Their goals may involve being a mentor to someone else, or getting work as a support worker.

PRINCIPLE 3: Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander worldview

Mudgin-Gal means 'women's place'. As a service run by Aboriginal women, for Aboriginal women, Mudgin-Gal is unique.

The Healthy Family Circles Program offers a safe haven and active support for women, girls and their young families through services

that, because they are offered peer to peer. The Program is run through the lens of not only an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldview but an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander woman's worldview. It's this woman's understanding and perspective that maintains the programs strength.

PRINCIPLE 4: Strength based approach

Critically the Healthy Family Circles Program builds on the leadership and networking skills of its participants. The Mudgin-Gal program is empowering women and young girls with the self esteem, confidence and life skills they need to become role models for their own children and families and, by extension, for their community.

It employs a strength-based approach, investing in the social capital of the women it engages to bring the best out of its participants. The program looks for individual and cultural strengths and embraces concepts of empowerment, leadership and community.

Yorgum Aboriginal Family Counselling Service Western Australia

Yorgum Aboriginal Family Counselling Service is a highly successful Aboriginal community-controlled family counselling service supporting the Aboriginal community of Metropolitan Perth and parts of Southwest Western Australia (WA). Yorgum specialises in assisting children and young people who have experienced child sexual abuse; children experiencing or witnessing family violence; adults, particularly women, dealing with family violence; and members of the Stolen Generations.

The service receives both state and federal funding to offer various specialist services, including:

- * specialist counselling to Aboriginal children who have experienced abuse or witnessed family violence, including those in the child protection system,
- * family violence counselling
- * community education and community development
- * Link-Up service for members of Western Australia's Stolen Generations, throughout the Midwest/Murchison, Bunbury Southwest, Goldfields, Wheatbelt and Perth Metropolitan regions
- * support for local Aboriginal grandmothers' groups.

PRINCIPLE 1: Address the causes

Understanding the impact of European colonisation, past government policies, including those of forced child removal that created the Stolen Generations, and of the continuing socio-economic disadvantage on Aboriginal communities, especially the communities of southwest WA, is crucially relevant to Yorgum's work providing Link-Up services to the Stolen Generations. It is also essential to the practitioners' understanding the negative impact of these on family breakdown and parenting skills and capacity, and their repercussions in substance misuse, family violence, and child abuse.

Yorgum's practitioners draw on a range of therapeutic approaches to work with various clients, including:

- * Sandplay therapy particularly with children
- * Art therapy adults and children
- * Yarning therapy
- * One-on-one counselling
- * Group work and education workshops
- * Offering clients practical support and referral to other services in ways that empower the client to 'take control and do for themselves'.

Sandplay therapy and art therapy are used extensively by an arts therapist/counsellor at Yorgum as they are effective techniques in allowing clients to articulate themselves where they have difficulty identifying and expressing feelings and thoughts verbally. This is especially the case with young children. Aboriginal adults who prefer more non-verbal ways of communicating also favour such visual, creative expression. Art therapy techniques are also effective in group work and workshops.

Yorgum's practitioners are also prepared to offer a little of themselves to clients in order to build rapport and trust. Allowing clients an insight, however small, into who the practitioners are – where they are from, what their life's journey has been like, and how they may be connected to the client's family – is crucial to their ability to establish rapport and trust.

But what is common across all of Yorgum's therapeutic practice and methodologies is the holistic approach taken to a client's needs and issues, and the way the techniques are grounded in Aboriginal, particularly Nyoongar, culture and philosophies.

This holistic, culturally embedded approach includes:

i. The 'whole person – whole of circumstances'

Stemming from the Aboriginal holistic approach to health and wellbeing, this recognises the individual's interrelated physical, emotional, spiritual, and cultural health and wellbeing, including their

connection to their land, family and community.

This approach acknowledges that while the client may demonstrate a number of negative behaviours that are identified as needing to be addressed, practitioners can recognise that such behaviours generally stem from some trauma or multiple traumas – potentially deep-seated and frequently intergenerational – and other life stresses that clients are experiencing.

ii. A 'whole of family' approach

This acknowledges that an individual client's family members may very likely also be experiencing distress and difficulties related to the individual's situation, and that the family also needs support. For example, where a child is receiving counselling due to their experience of abuse, their carers – in most cases their mother, grandparents or other carers – may also need counselling to deal with these issues but also to be supported in managing the intense needs of a child who has experienced trauma.

This holistic approach also recognises the role of the whole community – including how the issues and difficulties facing the Aboriginal community of Metropolitan Perth and southwest WA affect individuals, and how the individual has an impact on the rest of their community. It is also about tailoring Yorgum's therapeutic approaches to the individual needs of the client, rather than a generic approach or formula for case management.

PRINCIPLE 2: Aboriginal & Torres Islander ownership

All of Yorgum's staff are Aboriginal, and the majority are of the Nyoongar community of Southwest WA, or have connections with the community. Many also have connections with other Aboriginal communities in WA and nationally. All its practitioners are trained and experienced counsellors, including one

who is also a highly respected art therapist, working with the support and supervision of an Aboriginal Clinical Supervisor who is a registered psychologist.

The service was established when a number of Aboriginal people, particularly women, sat under

a tree to examine the crisis of abuse, violence, over representation in criminal justice and deaths experienced by children, young people and adults in Perth's Nyoongar community in the early 1990s. After an initial period of development, community education and training in counselling for the core group of Aboriginal people who founded it, the service has developed and grown, with powerful philosophies and practices in counselling, therapy and healing that are strongly rooted in Aboriginal culture, history, and community. Yorgum is named after the Nyoongar word for a red-flowering gum tree

in Southwest WA that traditionally held healing properties. The tree is also a metaphor for the service's holistic approach to therapy and healing and its contribution to the healing of the local Aboriginal community.

Today, Yorgum has strong roots in its history and community, including continuing contact with the original founders who underwent the first training program in counselling. Two current staff are of Yorgum's original group of counsellors who have returned to work as counsellors in Yorgum after periods as practitioners in other services.

PRINCIPLE 3: Aboriginal & Torres Islander worldview

A number of Yorgum's characteristics and approaches have been instrumental in the service's success in providing therapeutic services to both children and adults and assisting them in their healing journeys.

A crucial aspect of Yorgum's success is the fact that it is an Aboriginal service with strong roots in Perth's Aboriginal community. With staff being from the local Noongar and wider Aboriginal community of the region, Yorgum's practitioners have a wide knowledge of and familiarity with the local Perth Aboriginal community and its families, and understand local culture and issues. According to Jade Maddox, Yorgum's CEO, being an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation with an all-Aboriginal Committee of Management and all-Aboriginal staff is instrumental to enabling Aboriginal clients to immediately feel safe and have a sense of belonging when they visit the service.

This is crucial to Yorgum being a safe space for clients to seek assistance and support in healing significant life trauma – it is a non-judgemental, supportive environment without the racism, prejudice and disadvantage that Aboriginal people may face in the wider community, or the negative connotations that Aboriginal people can associate with many non-Indigenous services. It is a space where they don't have to

constantly explain themselves, their families, or their culture. As an adult client reported to a counsellor, 'There's no stop sign or "beware" sign at Yorgum. I always feel welcome.'

Besides building the rapport with their own counsellors, clients also become familiar with the service's other staff. They are able to build a relationship with the service as a whole, not just their counsellor. 'Kids especially want to know who's who, and who's the boss – they seek me out,' says Jade Maddox.

Clients also have the opportunity to know who the counsellors are before any decision about whom they will work with. This allows potential clients to indicate whether they wish to work with a counsellor who has a connection to their extended family or who is unfamiliar to their family circumstances.

Language and culture are also essential aspects of the Yorgum community – Nyoongar language and words from Aboriginal English are incorporated into the interactions between staff and clients, helping to encourage rapport, ease communication and build connections. Nyoongar language is also part and parcel of the interactions between staff, including at staff meetings.

However, while having Aboriginal staff in an Aboriginal organisation is essential to Yorgum's success, it is no guarantee of success on its own. According to two Yorgum practitioners who were among the organisation's founders and first practitioners, Yorgum had to earn the trust of the community over many years. 'We didn't just walk in here and say we're going to do this [counselling service],' they say. Yorgum continues working to earn the trust and respect of the community through the principled way

it works with clients, its strong connectedness to the community, and its contribution to healing in the Aboriginal community.

Being Aboriginal themselves, Yorgum's staff share the lived experience of the Aboriginal community they work in and with. This provides them an intimate understanding of, and ability to empathise with, their clients' situations, and offers insights into the context to their clients' difficulties and experiences, as well as to their strengths and resiliencies.

PRINCIPLE 4: Strength based approach

Their understanding also, importantly, extends to the strengths and resiliencies that Aboriginal people have, and the sources of strength that family, community, culture and spirituality offer to members of the community. There is also the knowledge of the extended families and kinship connections of the wider Aboriginal, and particularly Nyoongar, community of Perth and southwest WA, and where clients fit in these networks. This knowledge, however, is not only from a theoretical basis. It stems from being part of the community, and living those experiences.

"It is not what we have learnt through mainstream education, though valuable for building our skill base, it's who we are and where we've come from that is just as important and adds to our ability to engage and assist in the healing of our people,' says Karen Strachan, Yorgum's Clinical Supervisor.

Yorgum plays an essential role in supporting and enabling the healing of many generations of Aboriginal people in southwestern W.A.

Through its example and sharing of knowledge with other Aboriginal practitioners and those interested in learning to work more effectively and respectfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Yorgum is also helping to shape the development of therapeutic practices that are culturally appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The service draws on a rich tapestry of approaches, techniques and personal experience, as well as practitioner expertise and training, to support children and adults undergoing their healing journeys in the face of abuse, family violence, the lingering effects of forced separation, and the continuing legacy of colonialism and intergenerational trauma. But Yorgum's staff don't lose sight of the client and what suits them best. As one of their senior practitioners reports, 'Sometimes, the simple ways of working actually work'.

Intergenerational Trauma Initiatives

Following the apology to Australia's Stolen Generations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People⁸ in 2009 the federal government provided funds for the establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing foundation to address the profound legacy of pain and hurt in the lives of our people caused by past government policies. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation was established as a national independent Indigenous organisation on 30 October 2009.

The Healing Foundation is governed by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Board whose members have strong connections to community and provide a dynamic mix of experience including members of the Stolen Generations and people working in the areas of youth affairs, health, justice, healing and trauma.

Building culturally strong community programs, locally designed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldview, the Healing Foundation is improving the wellbeing of our people by:

- * developing the story of healing through funding healing programs;
- * raising the profile and documenting the importance of culturally strong healing programs through research and evaluation; and
- * building capacity and leadership of communities and workers to deal with trauma through education and training.

In July 2011 the Healing Foundation announced a funding initiative aimed at acknowledging and addressing the devastating impact intergenerational trauma has had on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

The Healing Foundation recognises that our young people are hurting. They have been witness to, and experienced first-hand, the trauma that past government policies have had on their families and communities. Many of our young people display their own hurts through negative behaviours including the use of drugs and alcohol, self-harm and failing to reach their full potential.

The intergenerational trauma projects aim to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to heal from their distress and prevent the continuing transmission of trauma through future generations. The projects assist the wellbeing of young people and families in a holistic way including supporting young people to build skills in managing grief and loss and positive connections to their culture.

The project sites were selected through a scoping process which included ascertaining what programs were currently funded by state and federal governments and an analysis of data related to trauma indicators such as child protection and juvenile justice statistics.

⁸ Also known as the Apology to Australia's Indigenous people

In late 2011 the Healing Foundation awarded funds to three Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander controlled organisations in Brisbane, Darwin and Kununurra. The distribution of projected sites ensured representation across urban, regional and remote Australia. \$1.5million over two years has been allocated to support the lighthouse projects.

To support our commitment to building programs from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldview, we have invested significant time, energy and resources in the planning and development phase of the initiatives. We are working closely with the funded organisations to develop service-specific program logics for each of the three sites. All three pilot projects will be working to achieve common goals – improved wellbeing of children and young people, strengthened family relationships, and an integrated service system. Each project is designed to meet the unique challenges their young people and families face and the cultural context in which they live.

A range of project activities will be delivered over the life of the initiatives including:

- * healing camps for young people and families
- * healing circles
- * use of country to support increased

cultural connection

- * outreach support to young people and families
- * revitalisation of ceremony and cultural activities
- * mentoring and personal development programs for young people
- * participation in employment and education programs
- * counselling and therapeutic support for young people and families.

Staff employed to work on the pilot projects will receive training, building the skills to provide appropriate healing activities. Sites will come together to share learnings and collectively problem solve challenges as the pilots progress.

A thorough evaluation of the pilot programs will be undertaken to:

- * contribute to the evidence base for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander framework for youth-focused healing projects;
- * increase and share the understanding of the cultural and social worth of such healing projects amongst the wider community and professionals supporting children, young people and families experiencing trauma; and increase sustainability of the projects by demonstrating the need for, and value of, such projects when sourcing ongoing funds.

PROGRAMS IN PRACTICE: A SNAPSHOT

By way of illustrating the diverse ways of approaching Indigenous healing, what follows is a brief outline of a range of Australian healing initiatives currently being delivered to a number of target groups.

The Marumali Program

A training program for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal health workers in NSW, aimed at developing skills to assist workers to meet the specific support needs of members of the Stolen Generations.

The Family Wellbeing Program

Developed by members of the Stolen Generations, the Family Wellbeing Program “aims to build communication, problem-solving, conflict resolution and other life skills to enable the individual to take greater control and responsibility for family, work and community life.” (McEwan & Tsey, 2009).

For an evaluation of the program as delivered in the community of Yarrabah in far North Queensland, in response to a spate of suicides (McEwan & Tsey, 2009).

Red Dust Healing

A group program for Indigenous men and their families, aiming to reclaim a sense of male identity via modules on issues such as cultural and traditional ways, Indigenous history and the impacts of colonisation, healthy relationships and lifestyle and diet. The program is supported by individual case management plans and a mentoring system, and has been run in Queensland and NSW with input from Aboriginal Elders and local Indigenous service providers.

Aboriginal Family and Community Healing

This Adelaide-based program, developed as part of the South Australian Government’s Regional Aboriginal Health Plan, works with Aboriginal men, women and youth to promote effective responses to family violence. Hosted by the Aboriginal outreach service for a primary health care organisation, the program focuses on substance misuse and social and emotional wellbeing at family and community level.

We Al-Li

We Al-Li (the woppaburra term for fire and water) uses traditional ceremonies of healing at sites of cultural significance, to allow for the expression of anger and sorrow within a supportive context.

Healing Resources

SNAICC clearinghouse

<http://www.snaicc.org.au/tools-resources/dsp-landing-resources.cfm?loadref=5>

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation

<http://healingfoundation.org.au/>

Australian Child & Adolescent Trauma, Loss & Grief Network

<http://www.earlytraumagrief.anu.edu.au/Indigenous-children-and-families>

Closing The Gap Clearinghouse

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/closingthegap/>

A clearinghouse for evidence-based research on overcoming disadvantage for Indigenous Australians

Yorgum- Aboriginal Health Service

<http://www.yorgum.com.au/>

WA Healing Centre website has some free resources that are able to be downloaded

Aboriginal Healing Foundation - Canada

<http://www.ahf.ca/>

A Canadian website with many resources and research articles regarding Aboriginal healing

Family Relationships Quarterly No.17

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/afrc/pubs/newsletter/frq017/index.html>

Australian Family Relationships Clearinghouse, September 2010. A special edition focusing on the healing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families

Australian Indigenous Health Info Net

www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/

HealthInfoNet is a 'one-stop info-shop' for people interested in improving the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Australians

The Lowitja Institute

<http://www.lowitja.org.au/>

Australia's National Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research

Beyond Blue

<http://www.beyondblue.org.au/>

The national depression initiative

Flinders Aboriginal Health Research

http://aboriginalhealth.flinders.edu.au/research/soc_emot_wellbeing.html

Mental Health First Aid Guidelines

<http://www.mhfa.com.au/cms/mental-health-first-aid-guidelines-project>

Australian Human rights commission

http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social_justice/bth_report/index.html

Through Young Black Eyes

<http://www.snaicc.org.au/projects/dsp-default-cfm?loadref=30>

A series of resources to help you develop child safe communities and protect children from the impact of family violence and child abuse

SNAICC National Executive: Healing our Children

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