**Weathering the Storms of Life: Tiwi Women wisdom**

The strong women of Tiwi face many storms in their life. They have some hard-earned knowledge and wisdom to keep them standing strong when the storms blow.

They spoke about the main storms that blow into their lives “domestic violence, fighting, arguing, jealousing, hate, family violence, gossip, swearing, hurt feelings, speaking bad way, especially on facebook, ignoring people, lateral violence, discriminating, putdowns, tantrums, losing family…”

Some of the storms they can look to avoid, others they have to ride out.

**Here is a list of some of the hard-earned wisdom and knowledge they have to brace themselves to weather the storms of life and /or take shelter from storms when they need.**

• Ignore

• Walk away

• Reach out and speak with someone- counselling

• Sing! Sing songs that make me strong. Sometimes I sing traditional songs which I learnt from my mother- it heals everything.

• Sharing food, sitting around camp fire we talk about feelings

• “smoking’- when we have healing session we have a smoking ceremony- we learnt this from our ancestors- probably when I was 10 or 11 years old was the first time I remember we sat together. Everyone was there- sharing.

• My father smoked people who came from Melbourne when they were sad- they didn’t say anything but my Dad he knew they were sad- we shared this bit of our culture with them to help them heal

• “talk gentle”- calm down, take a breath, think about what you say. Being respectful and being a better person is what I value.

• You need to carry yourself like a tree that stands tall- let the wind blow and not let it affect you- let the wind blow and take away your worries so you can have a clear mind.

• Jealousy is bad weather like a cyclone- bad thoughts keep going around and around- can cause problems and destroy things like a cyclone

• Let go of stress- talk to each other; talk to yourself- it takes time to let go so you have to give yourself time. I learnt that from my mum- she would talk to me- she also knows how to leave me and give me time to let go.

• When I chop for Mangrove worm I let out all stress by chopping- gets all the worry out of me- or I scream out in the bush when I am on my own- I discovered this helped by myself when I was 30.

• I just sit by myself in my room- I lock myself in and think how to deal with it. I learnt this when I learnt to be a mentor and now I am teaching my children what I’ve learnt from my experience. I talk to my children first before I go and speak to anyone else.

• Sometimes I sleep before I deal with it.

• Going out bush and collecting pandanus helps me when I have lots of worries- you feel the wind and you do something you love

• Sometimes we can’t go out bush or to our Country because we don’t have a vehicle – so we gather in our family home- we sing our songs, sing for our Country, do our dances- this helps us be connected to our Country. I learnt the songs from my cousin sister- she shared these stories and taught us when we were young children. Singing these songs keep us strong

• Places in Wurrumiyanga- sitting together at the beach or under the Mango tree- we learn each other, encourage each other, share stories. We hold onto good feeling, laughter and live a good life.

• Our old people use to put babies in the fork of an Ironwood tree- for our babies to get strong and grow strong- they would get the strength of the tree. We want our kids to grow strong. We want to send a message to our kids. (poster attached)

• Some people use their belief in God to support them when the storms of life come

Together with family and friend we stand strong and we pass this onto our kids- we want to keep our culture strong - language, dancing, songs

*To the ladies who joined us for the Tree of Life workshop- THANKYOU for sharing your wisdom and your knowledge. We hope that this list is something you may keep close and will help you and others remember how you may stand tall, stay strong and weather the storms of life.*

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*27th March 2019*