

**Nexus Arts
Create**

One Love, One Family

7 Nov 2014

—

21 December 2014

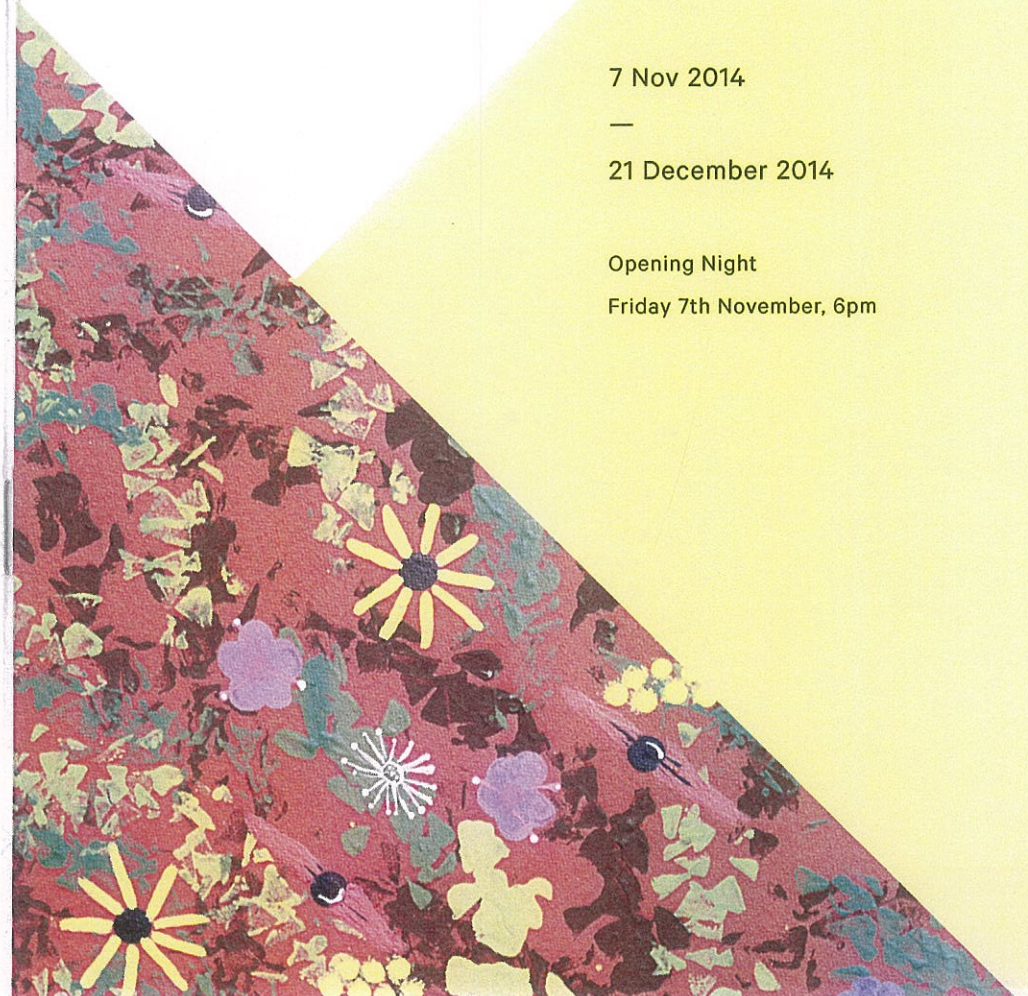
Opening Night

Friday 7th November, 6pm

Nexus Arts

Cnr North Tce &
Morphett St
Adelaide SA 5000

Phone +61 8 8123 1234
Fax +61 8 8123 1234
ABN 12 1234 5678





Maureen Atkinson *Tracing My Journeys* 44" x 44" Acrylic on Canvas

Table of Contents

4	Introduction
6	Therapist Introduction
9-27	Stories
31	Therapist Comment
32	Artist Statement
35	Community Comments
38	Project Team & Participants
38-39	Acknowledgements

Introduction

The One Love, One Family exhibition showcases the outcomes of the Barngarla: Stories of Resilience project that involved Barngarla people from Port Augusta, in particular the Dare family, in an innovative project that used the processes of narrative therapy and art making for individual and community healing.

Nexus Arts and the Dulwich Centre Foundation developed the initial project concept combining narrative therapy and art making. Professor Ghil'ad Zuckerman from the University of Adelaide facilitated the introduction between Nexus Arts and the Barngarla people of Port Augusta and through consultation with the community the project was developed. This is a pilot project and the Barngarla people have guided every step, helping to mould the delivery of this project as well as establishing a project framework for future communities.

Throughout the two stages of the project the elder siblings found comfort in each other's previously untold stories of growing up removed from their family members and culture, and how they longed to reconnect with their lost siblings and parents. The inter-generational nature of the project provided an opportunity for younger generations to hear the stories of their elders and both understand their struggle and the hardships they have overcome as well as recognising the resilience and strength they have shown.

The outcomes of individual and community healing have well and truly exceeded our expectations. It has been an honour to witness a family beginning to heal and reconnect. The family recognises what they have overcome but testament to their wonderful characters they are free of anger and resentment and are focused on moving forward for the benefit of the younger generations of Barngarla.

It is with great generosity that the Barngarla people have decided to share their stories so that other communities can acknowledge the long lasting affects of being separated from culture and family and appreciate the strength of those who have risen above such hardship for the sake of their families and communities.

I would like to sincerely thank all of the community who welcomed Tim and myself into this precious space and allowed us to hear the stories and witness the healing at an individual and family level. It is an experience I will never forget and I can't wait to see other communities be transformed through this process.

Louise Dunn
Project Manager
Executive Director of Nexus Arts



Therapist Introduction

The stories shared in this booklet were generated and documented in August 2014 in Port Augusta. Aunty Barbara Wingard, Carolynha Johnson and David Newman from Dulwich Centre Foundation met with members of the Barngarla community as they shared their stories. Over three days of yarning and storytelling, narrative therapy/community work approaches assisted community members to tell their stories. The team also asked permission to write down the spoken words of community members in order to create the stories that are included here.

As Aunty Barbara Wingard explains, narrative therapy is about telling our stories in ways that make us stronger:

As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of this country, our stories are precious. They have survived over generations. Our elderly have passed them on to us and we will continue to pass them onto our children. We have our own ways of telling and listening to stories which are important to us.

The telling of stories is something we can relate to. As Aboriginal people, we have always told stories about our lives, and we know how important it is for people to be connected to their own stories, the stories of their family, their people and history. These stories are a source of pride. When people become disconnected from them, life can be much harder to live.

Narrative therapy seeks to be a respectful, non-blaming approach to counselling and community work, which centres people as the experts in their own lives. It views problems as separate from people and assumes people have many skills, beliefs, knowledges, values, commitments and abilities that will assist them to reduce the influence of problems in their lives.

Our people understand the significance of our stories, and the importance of taking care to tell them in the right places, to the right people, and in the appropriate ways. Once these stories begin to be told we can then listen for the moments of change, the times when people are moving their lives in positive directions. By listening and through our questions we can assist people to tell their stories in ways that make them stronger.

Further reading

Wingard, B. & Lester, J. (2000). *Telling our stories in ways that make us stronger*. Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.

www.dulwichcentre.com.au



Roger Miller *Home and Family* 12" x 16" Acrylic on Canvas



Jeanne Miller *Family Tree* 12" x 16" Acrylic on Canvas



Maureen Atkinson *Loss, Separation* 44" x 72" Acrylic on Canvas

The Journey from Tears to Triumph

- Part 1 The love we have shown each other after being stolen
- Part 2 Passing it on
- Part 3 More stories of our ways and skills
- Part 4 Anger
- Part 5 Language reclamation
- Part 6 Thoughts about the yarning

PART 1

The love we have shown each other after being stolen

One of us shared this story about welfare and being stolen. 'You know welfare did the wrong thing. When they took us away they never said why. When we were taken out of the home they did nothing. And they didn't know if there were people waiting for us.' And another of us added 'I think we could use the words "stood over". Stand over tactics were used. Intimidation. Not just stolen or taken.'

Being stolen brought such hardship. We spoke about regrets, finding places to cry by ourselves, ongoing longing to return to your family and not knowing who you are. One of us saw that children who didn't know who they were would later drink themselves to death. One of us said 'being stolen doesn't effect ten percent of our people, it effects one hundred percent of us'. And we would like to say that it is a triumph that a lot of us are here today. There were things we did to deal with such hardship. These included continuing to speak language, going on a personal journey, not giving up on meeting up with each other, keeping younger ones from alcohol, loving children, working out what we divulge to the younger ones, remembering the ways we are lucky and finding ways to love each other. Here are some of our stories.

The brothers would push us under the table and we were good at running

I was born here in Port Augusta and lived out on the reserve with my parents. My oldest sister was the one who mainly looked after us. Dad was a lovely father. He loved us and looked after us. But he drank. You couldn't get a better man when he was sober. It got that way that when he came home we'd cry. The brothers would push us under the table. Years later he wrote me a letter and apologized for the way he acted. In the letter he wrote 'you've got to understand I've had everything taken away from me. I had nothing.' I remember that. Mum and dad used to fight a lot too. We ended up being put on to the welfare. We always used to run away to the sand hills when fights broke out. They were our safety. And when we saw the big black car we'd also run to the sand hills. We were good at running.



Patricia Dare *Travelling to Whyalla* 44" x 72" Acrylic on Canvas

Sister connection: 'I want to see you'

Eventually we got taken away forever. On the day it happened my younger sister said 'I want to go with my oldest sister' and they replied 'we only want the pretty ones'. The first family they put my sister and me with were lovely people, pommies. They had children. They'd take us wherever: to the races, to the beach. We had a good life, my sister and I. One time I remember saying 'I want to go back to my parents.' They said 'they have died'. And I said 'no they haven't.'

One day the daughter of the lady who was looking after us took us to look at something special. It was a jewelry box full of lovely jewelry. She told me to take one and I wasn't so sure about it but I did. I didn't think they'd do anything about it. They said I stole it and they called the welfare. I got shipped off to a home. My sister went to another home where she ran amok. One day some time later I went into my room at the home and saw a big box with my sister's name on it. I knew she was in the room but was trying to surprise me. She jumped out and said 'hello!' I was so excited and asked her 'why are you here?' And she said 'because I want to see you!'

I did it because my sister said to

My sisters play their part. I once played in the first Indigenous indoor soccer team to tour and we were off to Canada. My nephew was also in the team and my sister said 'he only goes if you go'. I was 36 and had my drinking and was unfit. I got fit. I did it because my sister said to! And once my older sister said to me to get off my arse and do something so I went and got a job then, as an archeological assistant.

I would have done a good job at guiding my brothers and sisters

Not only am I an Aboriginal woman, I'm a Christian Aboriginal woman. I was born in Whyalla. Near where we lived in Port Augusta there was a children's home. I was happy with my family. But I admired that home as the children looked happy. When we got taken away two brothers went to one home, three brothers went to another one. And my sisters went to a foster home. I think a big regret about being taken away was that I would have done a good job at guiding my brothers and sisters.

They weren't going to let anyone put anything on me

I grew up in a boy's home and I was in there with two of my brothers. Everyone says 'oh you've been stolen, that must be traumatic'. Well I've had a pretty lucky life. I had two big brothers and they weren't going to let anyone put anything on me. I was well looked after. I didn't know about my sisters. I think I'm a pretty lucky person; I've got family, sunshine every day, I've done a lot of traveling and I've got children I adore.

Reconnection

After I got out of the home I was walking around and saw some people. One of them sang out to me. She said 'are you from the Dare family?' I said 'yeah, how did you know?' And she replied 'you walk like your mother! We're going back to Kimbah, do you want to come with us and I'll show you some of your family.' And I said 'yes'.



Jeanne Miller *Jem's Family Tree* 44" x 72" Acrylic on Canvas



Colleen Taylor *Sister's Death* 44" x 72" Acrylic on Canvas

I used to keep them from here

I blame myself for my son not knowing who he is. I used to keep my children from here, from the alcohol. I sometimes used to come back. I'd get them to see my country with me. But I'd always take them back. I'm proud of my son. He's got so much knowledge; he's got so much to give. I expect such big things from him.

We have to weigh up how much to divulge

Our kids don't really have the knowledge as yet. We naturally go back to them and talk about things. We have to weigh up how much to divulge, how much to share. Here we're talking about some of the good stuff that happened to us but there's lots of tears and hardship we won't share.

I've become the authority for dad's family

Since I left Queensland three years ago I've been on a personal journey. I didn't know who I was. Coming to Port Augusta is part of this journey of finding myself and where I fit culturally and spiritually. I've worked out the family tree on dad's side. I've become the authority for dad's family. I've done 30-40,000 k's in the last year. Self-identification takes me to all these different places.

That love of children has stayed with me

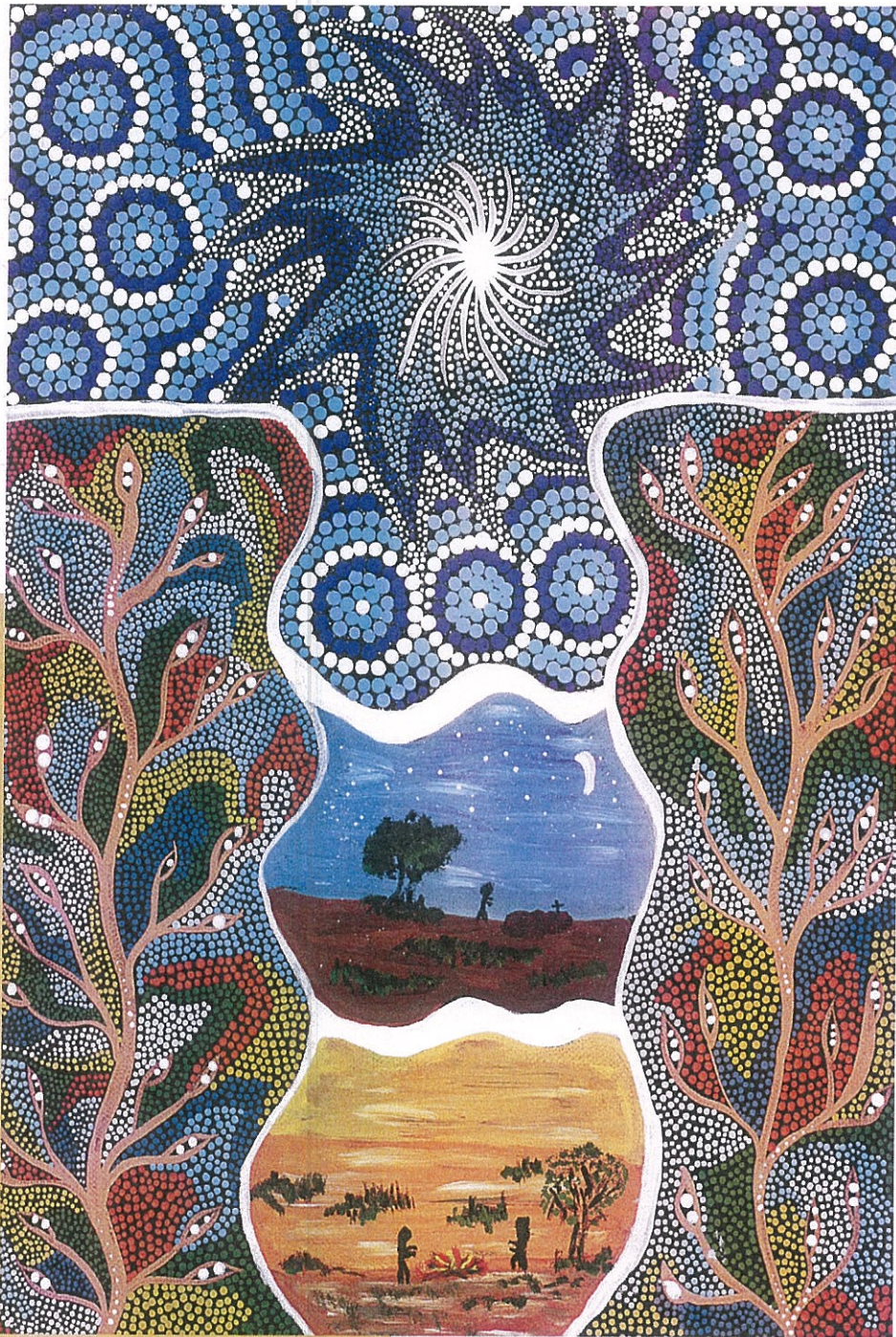
When I was put in a children's home the missionaries were kind to us. I wonder how they looked after us all given that there were 70 of us! I learned something from the missionary ladies. They loved the Lord and that's why they did what they did. Looking at the missionaries and the way they were with children gave me more of a love of children. Being in the home with all the children, they were my brothers and sisters and I'd look after the little ones. The older ones would look after the younger ones, bathe them, feed them. It was like we were given children. I have a few stories of the missionary. I remember that before I went into the home we'd play missionaries and sinners. I'd play the missionaries trying to save the sinners. They'd hide from me and I could never find them! Also my brothers used to come visit me in the home and they'd ask me for money. I'd go and get the money and bring back the bible and say 'you can have some money but I'll read this to you'. I'd read to them but eventually I gave up. That was a good part. That love of children has stayed with me, I still love children and I've passed this on to my children.

It seems half hearted but it's not

My eldest daughter said to me one day 'how come you don't show us your love?' I said 'I do, I love you'. She replied 'but you don't hug us.' And I thought about it and said to her 'maybe it's because I never got that myself. It's pretty hard to show something you haven't had'. Now I say 'I love you' when I hang up the phone. It seems half hearted but it's not.



Debra Anne Brown *Family Tree* 44" x 72" Acrylic on Canvas



Linda Dare *A Daughter's love* 12" x 16" Acrylic on Canvas

The love has been unconditional but it hasn't always been continuous

We knew we had family but we didn't have faces. We've got a few stories about this. 'My brother was taken when he was a baby and I didn't see him until he was 16. I went up to him at the baths that day I met him. I was getting married the next day. We must have hugged.' 'My uncle found me when I was on a school excursion to Alice Spring. When we were getting off the bus there were some black fellas near the bus stop. The white fellas on the bus pushed us black fellas to the front as we were getting off the bus. Well we were walking along and suddenly I was pulled by my collar out of the crowd. The teachers wondered who it was. It was my uncle.' The love has been there but it hasn't been continuous, we didn't know where to put it.

PART 2

Passing it on

We shared stories of passing on knowledge to our young people. We have many reasons for passing on our cultural and family knowledge.

We are securing the future of our people

We elders have decided and we talked about who was going to take over. We decided to pass it on to you and your sister. We have to do that because the world is changing. We are taking young people on this journey and they are here on this journey. And just by sitting here talking today we are securing the future of our people.

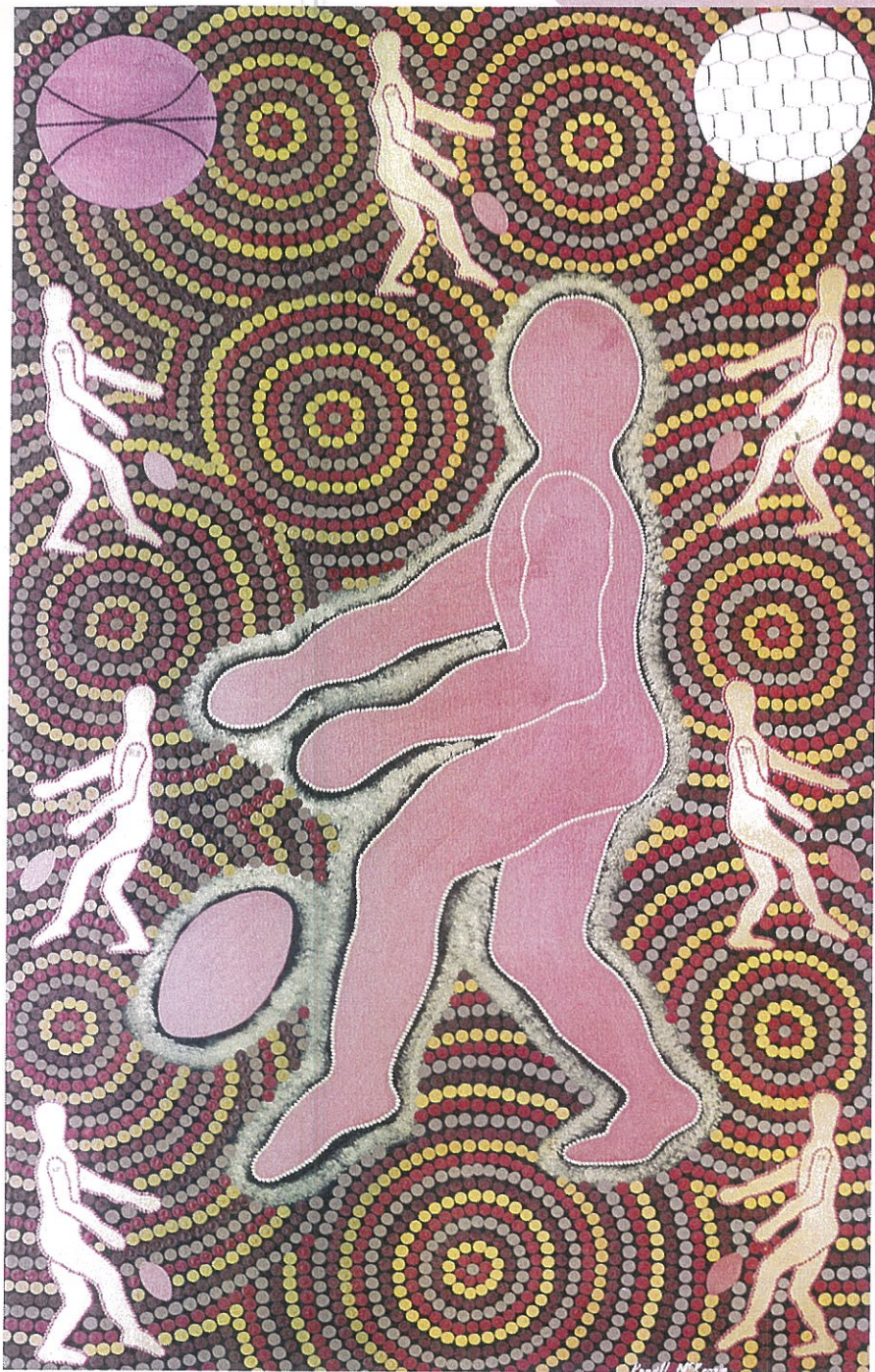
I feel pressure but I feel proud at the same time

When I was 24 I put my hand up to be on the committee. I speak with a bit of blunt niceness. I think we need to have the right people in the right places for our children. I feel the pressure for what I've been passed on. I feel pressure but I feel proud at the same time.

PART 3

More stories of our ways and skills

The following stories are about some of the special skills and ways we have used in life, especially when life is really difficult. It also includes things that really matter to us and some people who have been by our sides and helped us when life is too hard.



Kendall McKenzie Football Legacy 44" x 72" Acrylic on Canvas

I made it there

Once I turned down a job because they wanted me to fly. I don't like to fly. Sometimes my fears get the better of me. I once travelled to Darwin, I sat in the middle and didn't look out the windows. I made it there.

I don't like you drinking mum

I use to drink a lot. So did my partner. But I used to hear my son's voice saying 'I don't like you drinking mum'. I never heard him say that when he was alive. But he said it to me after he passed on. So I stopped drinking.

We didn't even get the chance to develop that habit

I really hate it when I see people abusing their parents. Maybe it's like a habit that comes for people. We didn't even get the chance to develop that habit.

Sport will keep your mind off things

Sport is a big thing and sport will keep your mind things. In Ceduna and Port Lincoln they have indigenous sports teams. We should have that here. I think sport is one of the biggest influences in aboriginal communities. Sports people can be the role models of the community.

Using a big mouth

Earlier in my life I was instrumental in setting up the radio station here. I was drinking in the pub and one guy came up to me and said 'you've got a big mouth, how'd you like to be on radio?' So it went from there!

It's the same as we do in our lives

It sounds like you have good hearts. The counselling stuff that you do in your life is the same stuff that we do in our lives. You just do it all out there.

I stayed in the high chair

One day I got to see a counselor. I was told he was an expert in alcoholic families. He told me to enter his room first. So I went into the room and there was a high chair and a low chair. You know what seat I sat in don't you? The high one! And he came in and said, 'you like to be in control don't you?' And because of his way of standing there I stayed in the higher chair.



Maureen Atkinson *Happier times at Bookaloo* 12" x 16" Acrylic on Canvas

PART 4

Anger

We have thought a lot about anger. Some of the following stories show where we have been with anger.

It's not half as hard as what happened to others

I think one of the reasons we don't show anger is because it is wasted energy. And another thing is we know that what we went through is not half as hard as what happened to others.

I'd never touch them when I was angry

As for anger – I wouldn't even go there. I would be frightened to go there. I saw what anger did when I was on the reserves. I'd never smack my children when I was angry. I'd stand and shake but I'd never touch them, especially if I was angry. I was abused when we were young.

Over the years I've learned to forgive

Dad had a lot of sisters so we had lots of aunties on his side. But not one of them took us in. I hated them for that. I asked one of them once 'why didn't you take us in?' She said 'you know, I never thought about it'. Over the years I've learned to forgive the aunties. Love is still there.

PART 5

Language reclamation

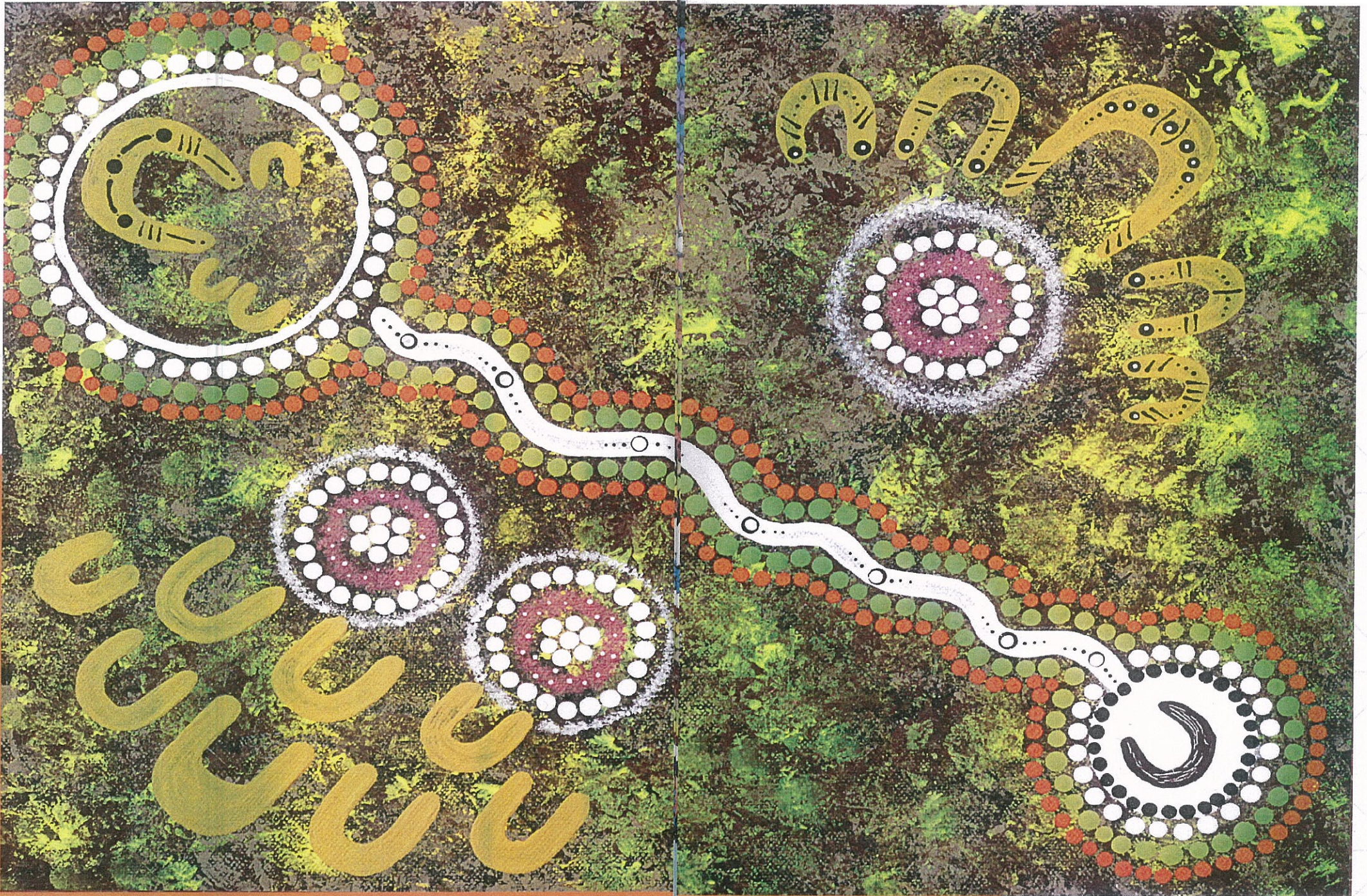
Many of us have stories about the importance of language reclamation and some of the steps we are taking to do this. These are just some of our stories.

'No I will speak it'

At times my sister and I used to speak language in front of our foster parents. They'd tell us to stop it. But I'd say 'no I will speak it. We are going back to see my parents'.

It's coming back

It's funny to think that the Lutherans saved our language and took it back to Germany and funnier still that a Jewish bloke picked it up! When I'd speak my language in the home they'd say 'you're white, you shouldn't be speaking that language'. So I lost my language. And now it's coming back, which is really good. I lost so much when I went into the home.



Candace Taylor *Family (Wattle)* 12" x 16" Acrylic on Canvas



Debra Anne Brown *The Boomerang Dreaming* 40" x 40" Acrylic on Canvas

As I'm starting to learn the language I feel more of a connection

When we were growing up I didn't feel I belonged here. There was more than just my mob here. When I mixed with my friends, they'd be speaking their language and I didn't know mine. I used to know their language more than my own. It's only now that I feel a sense of connection here. Now, as I'm starting to hear the stories, learn the language, I feel more of a connection. Without language you're not a people.

What word should we have for computer?

We were talking the other day about reclaiming our language. We spoke about how we don't have a word for computer. We wondered 'what possible word could we come up with for computer?' We came up with the words for thunder and brain egg and combined them.

I'd like to know the old words our old people used

I don't want to make up new words. I just want to know the old words. I'd prefer to know the old words that our old people used. It gives me a deeper understanding with the old people and a connection to the country. If you can understand the words, you get a deeper connection with the old people.

I'd take it on, it's what I wanted

When we were in the home, we couldn't speak our language. But we'd hear bits and pieces of it. So we'd make up our own language and speak it to each other. When I'd hear some words, I'd take it on. It's what I wanted.

The song is sung everywhere

I went to a conference once and the Maori people were telling us of some songs they have translated into their language from English. There was one, 'Yes, yes, Lord'. I asked them about doing the same thing; of taking it back to our people and getting it translated into our language. I took it back to someone who knew the language well. We must have spent an hour or more on the first word '!' We eventually got there and now this song is sung everywhere in language. Perhaps I can sing it for you now.

I want to say everything in my language

A friend of mine said 'as long as you can speak one sentence you can speak your language'. But I don't know about that. I want to say 'g'day' and 'how are you going?' I want to say everything in my language. And we should learn the swear words. It's the words we remember. And it makes it more fun. With the young people we need to make it more fun.

The missionaries would teach us songs in our language

In the mission we weren't allowed to speak our language – it was against the government rules. But the missionaries would teach us songs and the choruses would be in our language. We learnt some of our language that way. And when I couldn't pronounce the words I'd just say 'witchetty grub'!

The adaptation of our language

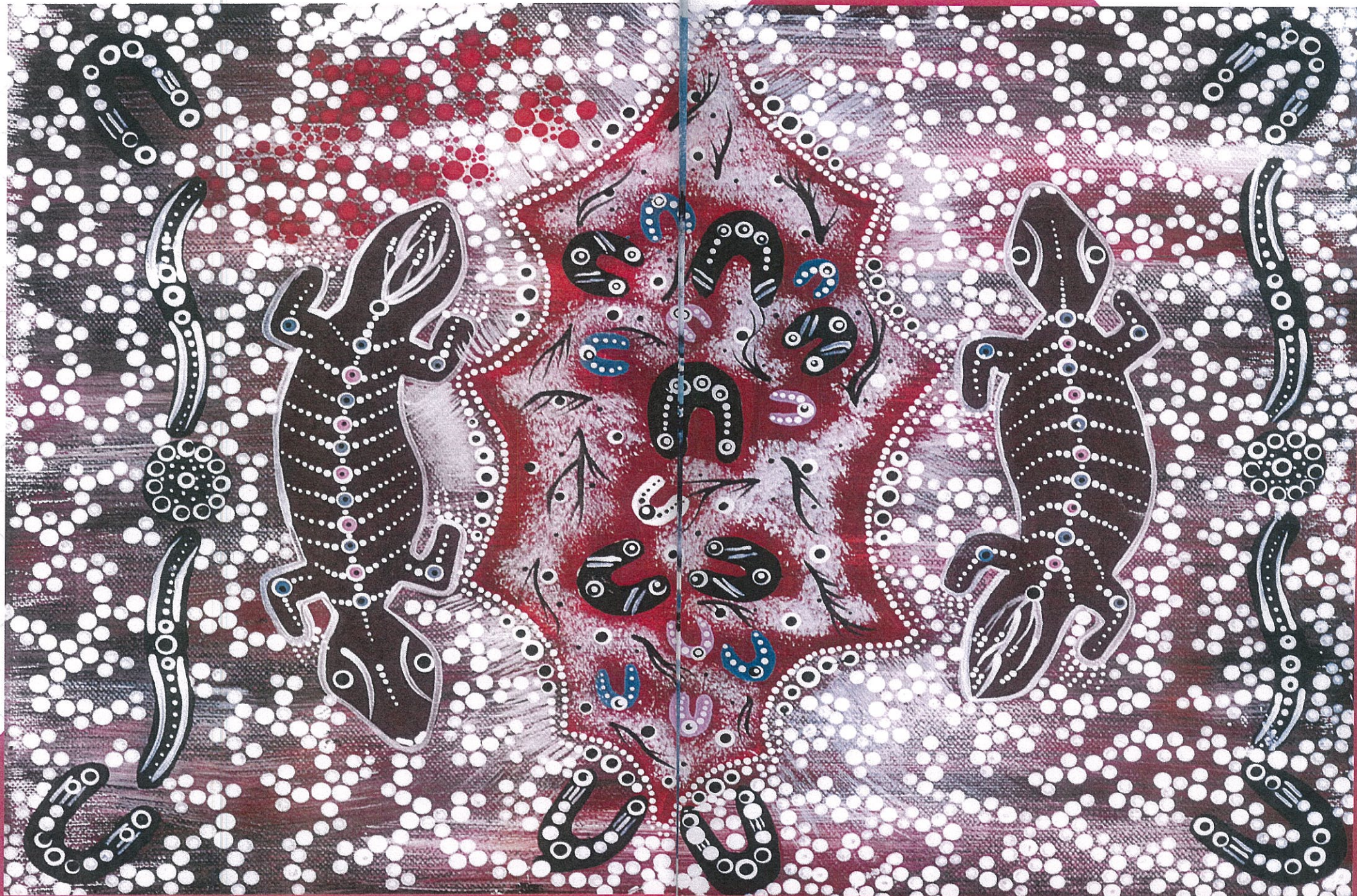
I'm not sure I like the phrase 'the bastardisation of language'. 'Bastardisation' puts a negative slant on our language. It sounds like we're stuffing up our language. I like the word evolution of our language or even the adaptation of our language.

PART 6

Thoughts about the yarning

It's good to hear more of what we've gone through

It's strange how you think you know people. I sort of lived with my sister but I still didn't realize a lot of things she'd gone through. It's good to open up and hear more of what we've gone through. It's been good to hear what my mum went through.



Colleen Taylor *Burst of Life* 12" x 16" Acrylic on Canvas



Candace Taylor *Family* 12" x 16" Acrylic on Canvas



Patricia Dare *Family Tree* 12" x 16" Acrylic on Canvas

Therapist Comment

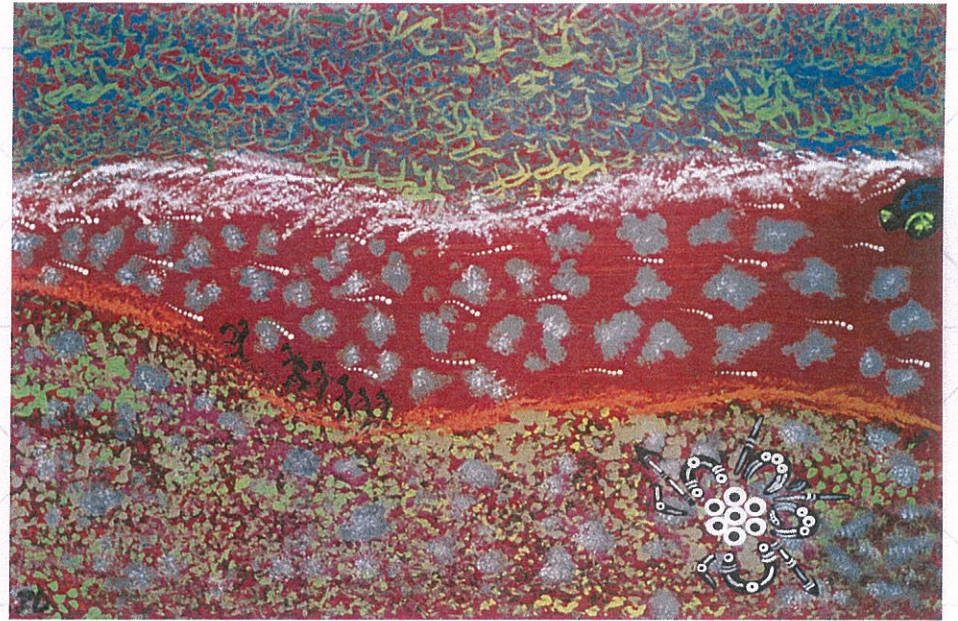
What was it like to hear these stories

Aunty Barbara Wingard, Dulwich Centre Foundation

As an Aboriginal woman who comes from hard times, but not from the stolen generation, I have a deep appreciation for time we shared with Barngarla community in Port Augusta. The trust and warmth that this group gave us was just beautiful. I don't know what it is like to be taken. Yes we can say we understand, but we can't really understand the pain that they have been through. Hearing these stories gave me a better appreciation of growing up with my brothers and sister, something I have never really valued.

It really means a lot to me that the families shared painful experiences with us. Even though they did not know us, they trusted us. We would like to thank them for sharing.

I have taken away lovely memories from our three days, memories of all of the family members and the love that they have for each other. My hope is that these stories will be widely shared. They are priceless. There is so much for other people to learn from them particularly around our culture and our families, and how they should never be broken.



Patricia Dare *Running Away from the Welfare* 12" x 16" Acrylic on Canvas

Artist Statement

Heather Kamarra Shearer

The opportunity to present my Art in Healing Program to the Barngarla People through the Nexus program was to say the least, an honour.

As Aboriginal People, we have suffered the indignities of oppression and the memory of this history and ongoing repercussions has become the trans-generational trauma we have all inherited and live with today:

Massacres, Sickness, Dispossession of our Lands, Loss of Language, Culture, Identity and ultimately, the loss of our Children...

The changes to our Lifestyle and Diet that resulted in chronic health problems such as diabetes and renal disease...

The introduction of Alcohol and Drugs that has become a devastating addiction...

All have been contributing factors to the planned decimation of our People that left us shell-shocked and spiralling into a path of desolation and despondency, ultimately leading many of us into a state of depression and apathy. This legacy to us, the world's oldest surviving Cultural People, and for all the purposes of humanity, has been a crime against humanity itself.

We have our leaders, our pioneers for justice and social reform. We have our activists and our professors. We have never given up, yet our people are vanquishing in prisons, our young ones are committing suicide, and through drug and alcohol fogs, with domestic and family violence, the blight of our communities, we are killing each other.

We have a lot on our plate. We have a lot to work through. We have the desire to survive, and like the Barngarla People, we are seeking ways to change this path, and rekindle the respect and integrity within ourselves, to heal ourselves, our communities and our People as a whole.

We have long recognised the fact that we can only do this for ourselves. The 'white man's ways' don't work for them, so why would they work for us. Only through our Cultural Practices can we reignite the spirit within and reigniting is what we are doing.

Through my own personal journey as a Stolen Generations

person who fought a long battle to reconnect with my family and culture, did I find a way to do this, and with the guidance, support and direction from my family and culture, Art became my way. I may not be able to speak my language, but my Art has become my voice. It grounds my identity as an Aranda woman, and it provides me a platform to identify my inner issues, express my knowledge and educate others in a tangible format that represents my truth, understanding and respect for my Culture and People. It gives me strength, heals my pain, but never denies the truth of my past, my ideas for the present or my vision for the future.

I share my story and my Art with others - to inspire them - to engage with them, and to encourage them to look to their Cultural Practices for a way to assist them find their footing in their Culture, and show the world who they are and regenerate pride in themselves, for them, their family and their future generations to come, that this will be their legacy to leave - a renewal of Culture, Identity and Pride.

I would like to thank Louise and Tim from Nexus for inviting me to be part of this project. To the Barngarla People, your welcome and acceptance of me, an Aranda woman, to share my Cultural Art Practice and work with you, is an honour I will treasure. We had some fun and laughter (a great medicine to itself) and I will always remember the pride and excitement on your faces as you produced the amazing pieces of Art that has now formed your first (but not last) Barngarla Art Exhibition.

My final comment is this: I sincerely hope that my involvement has given you all a new form of expression, and a tool to look to your inner child, to honour your elders and remember those in your family who fought and won ways to provide for their descendants.... Their legacy is yours, now define your legacy, as the future is up to you.

With love and respect,

Heather Kamarra Shearer.

21 October, 2014





Kendall McKenzie Uncle 12" x 16" Acrylic on Canvas

Community Comments

'I've learnt more stories about my family being taken away and what they went through. I thought I was the only one suffering, but they suffered as well. It was good to be with them and draw closer I believe to the family.'

Maureen Atkinson

'We just get stubborn with one another you know, when you argue and that. Doing this art together, it's really great, we're all getting together and doing what we're supposed to be doing – sharing and caring.'

Patricia Dare

'Yeah, again I've really enjoyed it. This is the first time I'm doing a story. Also going there and sitting down with family, having fun sitting down and sharing stories.'

Debra Brown

'Well, I've enjoyed the workshops, looking at the elders; learning about their stories and explaining what happened to their stories, about their lifetime through their stories. And through their paintings, it's really great to hear things we never heard back then you know. This is a chance to come together and share each other's stories with one another, yeah. I've really enjoyed it.'

Debra Brown

'Some of the paintings they've done over there, I knew a little bit about it from them telling me word of mouth, like my two grand mothers. For them to put it down on the painting, is, I don't know... more touching, because I didn't know that they lived life like that. It was good to see.'

Candace Taylor

'Because of my sisters death I haven't really painted and coming here now I want to go home and get on with it, that's more or less what's she's telling me to do.'

Colleen Taylor

'With the workshops I saw more happiness with my family, especially looking at my Aunties and they put their family down, their brothers and sisters. Seeing them smiling and talking about the stories because I know for a fact my two Aunties have never done a painting before in their lives and that would have been the first time ever. It's nice to see some of the others that have never done paintings sitting down and talking to them and asking them about their paintings and they're sitting down telling us the story to it. The communication, the laughter, the happiness that I can see coming out of them and they were enjoying it and coming all the time. It was great healing for them.'

Linda Dare



Project Team

Louise Dunn: Project Manager
Tim Molineux: Project Coordinator
Heather Shearer: Lead Artist
Colleen Taylor: Assistant Artist

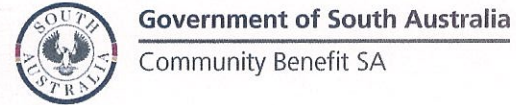
Participants

Maureen Atkinson
Patricia Dare
Harry Dare Snr
Stephen Atkinson
Jeanne Miller
Colleen Taylor
Debra Anne Brown
Roger Miller
Linda Dare
Candace Taylor
Kendall McKenzie
Harry Dare Jnr
Dwaylene Brown
Talisha Brown

Special Thanks

Professor Ghil'ad Zuckerman and The University of
Adelaide
Bungala Aboriginal Corporation
Umeewarra Media
Dr Gilbert Caluya
Georgie Sharp (Photography)

Funding Partners



Project Partners

