

Pathways to Healing: Stories of change inspired by We Al-li's culturally informed trauma integrated healing approach

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**WE AL-LI
GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY**



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We Al-li's culturally informed trauma
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POEM

BY CARLIE ATKINSON

In threads woven across the stories,
we find, a collective tale emerging,
intertwined, reflections shared from
research's core, yarns and designs, a
narrative to explore.

The We Al-li training, a spark of light,
a journey of healing, shining so bright,
immediate, and sustained, its effects
profound, for most storytellers, hope
and strength were found.

Healing's essence, in culture we reside,
connecting to Country, our hearts open
wide, ourselves and others, pathways we
seek, in the collective story, the answers
we speak.

To heal, we must first face our own pain,
a commitment to growth, our hearts must
attain, accountable for healing, we pave
the way, holding space for others, night,
and day.

Experiences complex, isolation's dark
night, pain, frustration, prejudice,
a challenging fight, breakthroughs,
reconnection, beauty, and humours
grace, in intergenerational healing,
we find our place.

Wisdom intense, from healing's embrace,
short and long periods, time cannot erase,
a 'planting the seed' analogy strong, in all
of the stories, it echoes along.

Growing roots as individuals, grounding
deep, connecting to Country, our promises
we keep, navigating healing, our roots
intertwine, forming communities of care, a
hope divine.

The collective story yearns for unity's call,
to heal, grow stronger, pass wisdom to
all, seeds we plant, future generations
will know, in families, communities, our
strength will grow.

Each plant ready, drops seeds to the
ground, creating stronger plants, future's
path is found, unwinding trauma's effects,
with love we strive, over generations, we
heal, and we thrive.

The work begins within, with you and with
me, connecting with others, together
we'll see, Country's healing, our healing
intertwined, In Indigenous practices, our
truth we'll find.

Ceremony, circle work, deep listening's art, embodied learning, storytelling from the heart, grounding our spirits, powerful and true, communities of care, in healing, we pursue.

We Al-li programs, seeds for change they sow, enablers for healing, in trust, we must grow, intuition and self, our guiding light, debriefing and cultural supervision, taking flight.

Wraparound support, resources at hand, shaping the space, making it our land, communities, and groups, together we mend, collaboration and mentoring, to healing we'll attend.

Institutional support, a crucial part, reconnection to Country, a healing start, environment, culture, family, society's embrace, sovereignty, and interdependence, we'll find our place.

In threads woven through our stories, we find, the collective tale of healing, heart, and mind, as we gather 'round the fire's gentle grace, a symbol for communities of care, in this space.

Change may come slowly, step by steady step, not too fast, for that would leave us inept, but in the measured pace, we find our way, incremental progress, day by day.

So, let's come around the fire's inviting glow, together we'll mend, let the warmth flow, change, it may be gradual, a patient stride, in unity and perseverance, we'll heal, side by side.

ACKNOWLEDGING...

COUNTRY

We acknowledge and honour the traditional custodians and carers for the lands and waters upon which we collectively live, work, and play. We acknowledge the deep healing offered by and to Country by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples on this continent over millennia. We acknowledge the leadership of Elders, children, parents, and ancestors in healing the effects of intergenerational and historical trauma on these lands and waterways and in our communities and families.

STORYTELLERS

We acknowledge the people who have generously shared their stories in this book. We acknowledge the student designers and staff at Liveworm Studios¹ at Griffith University who responded to those stories with creativity, insight, and care.

PROJECT LEADERS

We acknowledge everyone who has guided this project including Emeritus Professor Aunty Judy Atkinson, Associate Professor Caroline (Carlie) Atkinson, Mr David Ryan, Professor Naomi Sunderland, Dr David Sargent, Dr Rae Cooper, Ms Katrina Archbald, Dr Kyly Mills, Mr Glenn Woods, Dr Kerry Hall, Ms Hannah Ison, Ms Ellen Beaumont, Ms Katrina Roach, and Ms Laura Booker.

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PURPOSE

This book is intended to be both a creative artefact and a resource. It is a gathering of stories, design, art, and reflections that can help us find shared and individual stories of change to support intergenerational pathways toward healing historical and intergenerational trauma.

The book shares outcomes from a pilot evaluation of the many different outcomes and effects of We Al-li Pty Ltd's⁵ training in Indigenous healing practices and culturally informed and trauma integrated practice over the past thirty years. It shares stories of change from ten inspiring First Nations and non-Indigenous people who have completed training in We Al-li's culturally informed trauma integrated healing approach and taken it home to their families, communities, and workplaces. Their stories share insightful, honest, vivid, and practical insights into the duality and complexity of healing oneself while co-creating and holding spaces for others to heal from the ongoing effects of historical and intergenerational trauma now and in the future.

Alongside those storytellers' words, the book offers a series of artworks co-created by students and staff at Liveworm Studios¹ at Griffith University after they listened deeply to the yarns shared in this book. The book also reflects on key metaphors, threads, and levels of change that were reported across storytellers' stories. We hope that the combination of visual and written information will inspire and support you in your own processes of healing and your work as an intergenerational leader and change maker in your family and communities.

WE AL-LI

WE—FIRE : AL-LI—WATER

We Al-li is a family run First Nations organisation⁵ offering culturally informed training to diverse communities, professionals, and organisations in trauma integrated practice. It draws extensively on the work of Emeritus Professor Aunty Judy Atkinson AM and Associate Professor Carlie Atkinson alongside teaching, learning, and healing practices drawn from First Nations knowledges.

We Al-li describes its work as follows:

Healing People

We Al-li is a trauma informed, trauma specific educational and practice-based approach that promotes health, well-being, and sustainable pathways of positive change for individuals, families, and communities at both a personal and professional level.

Sharing Culture

We Al-li embraces and promotes Indigenous cultural traditions and ways of sharing, caring and renewal. Our name We Al-li literally means fire and water, two forces that are culturally understood to embody Indigenous wisdom, knowledge, and transformation.

Regenerating Spirit

Our focus at We Al-li is to cultivate and nurture the experience of exploring with curiosity a lifelong process of seeking and sustaining wholeness. We Al-li provides learning environments where this exploration happens in safety and without challenge.

A majority of professionals who undertake We Al-li training are working in community facing health and community services professions such as child protection, disability services, nursing, occupational therapy, family support, and social work. Both First Nations and non-Indigenous Peoples undertake this training, but a majority of participants are First Nations People. By holistically mapping learning outcomes after professionals return to work, we are in a unique position to understand the potential for culture shift and systems change associated with culturally informed and trauma integrated ways of working.

HOW WE AL-LI GOT THE NAME AS TOLD BY JUDY ATKINSON

On the 26th of January 1992 my husband and I dropped anchor at Monkey Beach, at Great Keppel Island. We always flew the Aboriginal flag on our old wooden sailing boat. A small dingy with a load of people motored into the bay, also flying the flag. I jumped off the boat and swam ashore.

Bob Muir and two other men had come to reclaim Great Keppel Island on behalf of Woppaburra peoples. Bob was a Woppaburra man. He asked what we were doing on the boat. I said returning to Cape York to hopefully do a PhD study. I told him what I wanted to study. Bob said: “Stay here. Your dad was born here in Rockhampton.”

Later, we held a community meeting with 23 people, 22 local Aboriginal people and one non-Aboriginal: my PhD supervisor. We worked for the day to outline suggestions and two overall themes for the PhD. The two primary themes were: (i) the phenomena of violence and consequent experiences of trauma; and (ii) the cultural and individual processes of recovery (or healing) from violence related trauma. These details are outlined in the appendix of the PhD. The group became my advisory group for the period of the PhD.

On that day we envisioned what we needed to think about and do. 22 had a vision of a tree holding the stories—a baby is born, mothers and children, young people growing up walking together, Elders teaching, Country heals, birds, animals, trees, water, people, earth. My sister Bindi Waugh painted this painting as a result of the meeting. The sun coming up in the morning through the Keppels was a powerful image of what we talked about—visioned.

Bob Muir, a Woppaburra man, was part of that group. I was looking for a name for the organisation which would hold the work. Bob said I should use Woppaburra words. We looked for words and he suggested We, meaning fire, and Al-li meaning water in Woppaburra language. At that time we would watch the sun—“fire” rising over the Keppels in the morning, across the waters of Keppel Bay. Later I understood more deeply why the name had been given to us. Moving through fire-anger—to water-grief. Both are essential for Healing. We Al-li.

Judy Atkinson.



Image by Bindi Waugh

WHY THIS PROJECT?

The Healing Foundation⁶ in Australia says that culturally and trauma integrated approaches to healing are vital in all professions that work with First Nations Peoples. Emeritus Professor Aunty Judy Atkinson AM and We Al-li have been offering training and facilitation in culturally informed trauma integrated practice for over 30 years. Their Culturally Informed Trauma Integrated Healing Approach (CITIHA) to professional and community work seeks to provide cultural safety, respect, and opportunities to heal from intergenerational and personal trauma as part of widespread professional ways of seeing, being, and doing⁷.

While traditional healing through connecting to Country, cultural ceremony, lore, touch, medicines, food, arts, singing, and music is still practiced by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families⁸, First Nations led opportunities for such healing are rare across most health and community services and professions in Australia^{9,10,11,12}. We Al-li has received feedback that people who do their training often experience big personal changes and healing that they want to share with their family,

communities, workplaces, and Australia. To date, peoples' stories of change associated with We Al-li's training have not been systematically collected or shared for the benefit of others.

This book is intended to be one step toward sharing the stories of impact and change that have arisen from Aunty Judy's and We Al-li's work over the last three decades. The book offers stories and artworks dealing with how culturally and trauma informed healing approaches can affect individuals, their families, workplaces, and communities. It also talks through the exciting and hard parts of healing and what is needed for more widespread change to happen to heal the effects of historical and intergenerational trauma in our communities.

RESEARCH APPROACH

The project team agreed on a creative Indigenist narrative research approach that privileged diverse First Nations knowledges and relational ways of working including visual art and design for this project^{13,14,15}. The creative Indigenist research approach⁸ was suitable for the research topic and communities involved and featured frameworks for working in culturally and trauma-integrated ways drawing on We Al-li's own Indigenous healing frameworks and ways of working¹⁶. Small group and individual narrative yarning methods were used to co-create data with participating graduates of We Al-li training^{17,18}. Those methods allowed storytellers to reflect on their lived experiences over different timeframes since completing the We Al-li training which ranged between three months and thirty years. We used a combination of creative design led and thematic analysis approaches to interpret and “sense make” from the resulting stories and experiences^{19,20,21,22}. We share the resulting stories and interpretations throughout this book.

EXISTING RESEARCH

This project drew on the strength and creativity of many cultural and academic leaders that came before it. Here we share a little bit of the existing research knowledge that informed our work. Before starting the project, we wanted to understand existing strengths and knowledge on training programs and practices within Australia that provide culturally informed, trauma integrated approaches. In particular, we drew on existing research to understand: how trauma healing training programs are currently delivered; the need and significance of such training; the known and potential impacts of trauma and related training for First Nations communities in Australia; the frameworks used in training; Indigenist and non-Indigenous approaches to trauma integrated practices; known and potential outcomes using Indigenous pedagogies in developing and delivering training programs; barriers or limitations to training programs for individuals, communities and organisations; strengths and enablers of trauma healing; how success is measured; and finally, the gaps in knowledge about culturally informed trauma integrated practice with First Nations People in Australia.

WHAT WE FOUND

We used a range of key words to help us find relevant existing literature in online library databases and internet searches including trauma, healing, First Nations, culture, training, impact, We Al-li. We included information from academic databases, government and community organisations, community-controlled services, conference papers and symposiums, and other websites. Gaps in knowledge were identified across community, government, and academic fields. A range of strengths were also found across communities and existing partnerships.

- The impact of colonisation continues to have significant impact on First Nations People and generational trauma is prevalent in a range of settings.
- The concept and practice of trauma sensitive, informed, or integrated practice has grown significantly both locally, nationally, and internationally in more recent times. However, the field of trauma research is still a relatively new field of research.
- There is a broad range of community members and professionals from diverse settings that engage and benefit from culturally safe and trauma integrated programs.
- Spirituality, ancestry, and Country are essential elements of identity for First Nations People and thus, healing programs that uses culture through storytelling, painting and art, and dance provide a holistic approach to healing.

WHAT WAS MISSING

- There is a lack of culturally safe and trauma integrated responses for healing First Nations Peoples.
- Evaluative research that focuses on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families, and First Nations healing programs is particularly rare.
- Funding and resources for evaluative research and support for healing-oriented community services and groups was limited.

KEY TAKE AWAYS FROM EXISTING RESEARCH

- Programs that are embedded in community and Country, led by First Nations People can contribute to experiences of culturally safe services, policies, and practices in many diverse health and human service settings.
- Holistic approaches for culturally informed trauma integrated healing programs benefit both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.
- Benefits and outcomes ranged from transformative personal healing to a deeper appreciation that systems change is possible but slow, requiring a long-term view.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing programs: a literature review. J. McKendrick, R. Brooks, R. Hudson, M. Thorpe, P. Bennet. Healing Foundation. healingfoundation.org.au/app/uploads/2017/02/Aboriginal-and-Torres-Strait-Islander-Healing-Programs-A-Literature-Review.pdf

Trauma trails recreating song lines: The transgenerational effects of trauma in Indigenous Australia. Aunty Judy Atkinson. Spinflex. To purchase this book, visit the website wealli.com.au/product/trauma-trails/

Working Together: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health and Wellbeing Principles and Practice. Editors P. Dudgeon, H. Milroy, R. Walker. Commonwealth of Australia. telethonkids.org.au/our-research/early-environment/developmental-origins-of-child-health/expired-projects/working-together-second-edition/

Marumali Program. Aunty Lorraine Peeters. Resource. marumali.com.au/resources

Truth-Telling. Reconciliation Australia. Resources. reconciliation.org.au/our-work/truth-telling/

Bringing them Home. Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families. Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. humanrights.gov.au/our-work/bringing-them-home-report-1997

Dadirri – To be listened to in her teaching: Dadirri: Inner deep listening and quiet still awareness. Aunty Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann. <https://www.dadirri.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Dadirri-Inner-Deep-Listening-M-R-Ungunmerr-Bauman-Ref11.pdf>

TEN STORYTELLERS

Here are ten rich and valuable stories from people who participated in yarns for this project. All storytellers completed We Al-li's training in culturally informed and trauma integrated healing approaches over the past 30 years. While some completed a full Masters degree in Indigenous Healing Practices up to 30 years ago, others completed online webinars or two, three, or five-day workshops up to three months before sharing their stories. Their stories are accompanied by artworks and designs co-created by students at Liveworm Studios at Griffith University's Queensland College of Art and Design.

The storytellers included nine women and one man, all currently living in Australia. Five of the women have Australian First Nations heritage. Four women have mixed non-Indigenous heritages. They have worked in schools, higher education, mental health, child protection, and other community services. The single male participant is an Aboriginal artist and self-healer from Far North Queensland, currently living in Meanjin (Brisbane).

We recruited the storytellers by sharing information via email about the project to all graduates of We Al-li's training. Interested graduates then read an approved research ethics information pack (see Appendix 1) online and expressed interest to participate. Twenty-two people expressed interest in participating in the project yarns. Aunty Judy suggested a further two who had completed We Al-li training in order to include more male storytellers and longer-term perspectives. One of those men (Duane) was able to join the project yarns.

We originally planned to facilitate individual yarns with graduates. Due to the pilot nature of our research, we could only invite a maximum of 12 people to participate in the project yarns. We started shortlisting individuals who had expressed interest in participating in the project to achieve maximum diversity in who would be represented. That included shortlisting people from diverse cultural backgrounds, Country, genders (including gender-diverse people), ages, and training completed.

By the time we finished shortlisting, people's availability had shifted, so we decided to invite all people who had expressed interest to join a group yarning circle with other graduates at a time that best suited them. Everyone was given the option to have an individual yarn if they preferred. One participant chose that option. That approach allowed all storytellers to choose for themselves how to participate in the yarns and for us to honour inclusive and relational ways of working.

Storytelling in yarns was prompted with a range of yarn questions (Appendix 2). The resulting 10 yarn storytellers have agreed to participate in the project and share their stories across the following pages.

AUNTY DI

I've recently retired for the second time. I'm a Biripi woman, but I haven't lived on Biripi Country because I was removed as a young child. I've lived and reared my children on Bundjalung Country in Casino, NSW, but I now live in Goonellabah. After working in child protection for the past 29 years, I'm settling into relaxing and looking for new beginnings.

I completed the Masters when Aunty Judy first started it. I did so with one of my dearest friends, Judy Knox, who lives up north at the moment and works in a community. What did I know about trauma before that? I knew that I had experienced very, very traumatic abuse as a child, first growing up in an orphanage and then in and out of home care. So, I already knew a lot about trauma. It was one of the most incredible experiences of my life doing the Masters because it really helped me heal from a lot of that trauma. It felt like coming home. I knew that this was the way forward in working with our people, particularly our children, and that's one of the reasons I ended up in child protection—because I wanted to make a difference.

Even during the last week that I worked in child protection, I knew that the mainstream way of working with traumatised people does not work. I had tried talking with people within that department about doing this work differently, but they're so bound by their little white boxes. I was able to speak with a manager during that last week, though, and she said, "If there's any way that you can help us with traumatised children in the future, please let us know because we can do a fee-for-service." So, there are people in that department who want to do this work differently, but still, it nearly burnt me right out. I had to leave. I think that there is a shift coming, but as I said, child protection workers are stuck in their little white boxes, and they're very hesitant to do anything creative, like Dadirri. Yet, they asked me to present Dadirri in a team

meeting. I agreed, and in the end, every person in that room was crying. It really helped deeply within each person, and they can share that experience now with their colleagues, with their family, and with their community. I'm a great one for planting seeds. I decided probably five years ago that it's the only way forward.

The seeds that I've sown over the years are a direct result of doing the Masters and doing Dadirri. I recently did a workshop on Dadirri, which was profound. The facilitators asked me to share a personal story, and it, too, wound up having a significant impact on the people present. The sharing of stories and the capacity to truly listen are important. Sure, psychologists and counsellors, back in the day, were there to listen, but they didn't listen deeply, not on the level that Dadirri takes you to, which I'm forever grateful to Miriam Rose for. What a beautiful woman! She really has taught a lot of people how to deeply listen.

When planting seeds, you can sometimes feel like you've achieved nothing. It's easy to ask yourself, "What have I done in my life's work?" Take the 29 years that I spent working in child protection. Yes, I did help a lot of children in those years, but they were still coming through the door. Every day, I would walk into work and get another

case. I had ten cases the week I left. Nothing was changing. I was working with third-generation children whose mothers and grandmothers I had worked with. I was quite taken one day when one of the managers came to me and said, "I've got five children on my books right now who need Dadirri. Can you please see if I can pay for a fee-for-service to get support for these little Aboriginal children?" So, maybe the seeds are growing into tiny plants, and I hope that before I'm taken, I'll get to see the large tree that's going to shade over a lot of children in the future.

Other staff might be too scared to do this work themselves within the department. They want somebody outside who they can refer these children to, who has the capacity and the time it takes to sit with them and listen. Perhaps they're too scared to do this work because so many of them haven't even worked on themselves. It's easy to walk in and remove a child and then find a carer to give that child to, but nobody really wants to get in there and do the work necessary for the child to stay with their mummy and daddy.

I believe that all Indigenous people in Australia already have the Dadirri—they already have the knowledge, regardless of their age. It's in their DNA; it comes from our ancestors. In particular, there

“I want to see it acknowledged that we are healers, that we are therapists, that we are people of substance, and that we have a lot to offer Australia and the rest of the world. We need to bring all our special gifts together.”

are a lot of young, motivated Indigenous people coming up through the ranks now. Every time you hear an Acknowledgement of Country, they're acknowledged. But they've never actually had a voice. Their voice has been muted by racism, by lack of education, by lack of housing, by lack of opportunity. Deep down in their spirit, though, they know this knowledge. Our kids just need to be given the opportunity to take those tiny steps forward. I pray to my ancestors that I get to see this before I go. And while we have a lot of strong young people coming up through the ranks, I want to see this strength coming from the top down as well. I want to see it acknowledged that we are healers, that we are therapists, that we are people of substance, and that we have a lot to offer Australia and the rest of the world. We need to bring all our special gifts together. Since I retired, I've spent most of my day in my garden, planting and looking at what is healing plants. Bringing all of that along with the Dadirri is so important.

When I did a Dadirri presentation in a Department of Child Safety office—a very sterile place—I took in a lot of items that are special to me, Aboriginal things, and had candles that I lit up. We built a tree out of things that I had collected from my garden, like bark and flowers and leaves. But an enabler for me was another seed that I planted. I asked them to each bring something of meaning to the circle. What I brought was something that I'd been searching for since my childhood: a pipi. A pipi is part of my totem, and my daughter found one online, but it was in New Zealand. It was this beautiful silver pipi, and attached to it was this tiny pearl. When I unwrapped it, I immediately thought of the most traumatic time in my life, my childhood. The one person who made a difference for me when I was a child was my Auntie Pearl. She was not a blood relative. I was placed in an Aboriginal family, which was very rare in the early '60s.

Aunty Pearl used to take me along the beach and teach me how to listen to the ocean, to the animals. She would drag what they call burly up the beach, gathering worms to later sell. She wouldn't talk to me much, but she did teach me how to keep myself safe. She showed me things to look for, like rips in the ocean. Unbeknownst to me, she was also teaching me how to protect myself when I went home that night, how to look for signs that I was about to be abused.

I shared that story with the group, and the enabler was that pipi and that tiny pearl. Something as simple as that can drive you to plant more seeds. Something traumatic can also steer you in the direction of creating change. I know that for a lot of our people, the trauma they've suffered has led them down the path of alcohol, drugs, and violence. I'm one of the fortunate ones; I didn't go down that path. Instead, I became mad enough to get out and make changes, especially in the child protection system.

There is one other way of planting the seed, and that's through the media. An Aboriginal storyteller can tell the story, which could then be made into a documentary or a movie. After all, people just love watching the telly, don't they? But it's also a matter of being able to tell all of the stories that impact all

Australians. If you go to school and you're learning about the Indigenous culture of this country as a non-Indigenous person, then you also need to be learning about your own culture, the history of where you come from, and how the British impacted you. It's not a matter of crying about the poor Aboriginal people of Australia. Just look at immigration—this is a very, very racist country.

Regardless of whether it's hard or easy, we can make progress if we use the approach that we've learnt through Dadirri, We Al-li, and the masters, if we're non-judgemental. We all come with our biases. One of my biggest ones, if I'm truthful, is that I find it very difficult to work with paedophiles, but the work needs to be done. Everything that we've spoken about today—the pipi shell, working with Indigenous people in Western Australia, working with CEOs, and so on—is the same approach: it's the deep business, the understanding and being present in someone else's space in such horrific trauma. That's how we can do it. When I first met Aunt Jude, I was just amazed because she told some horrific stories as well. She had witnessed horrors and was gently doing the work. No matter how horrific things are, then, if we can step into that space within our own calmness, we can make a difference.

“You have to be very aware of what triggers you, of what your body is telling you, and of what your mind is telling you. Taking time for your own healing and to regenerate yourself is the stage that I’m in at the moment. I’m in a resting state, rejuvenating.”

You have to be very aware of what triggers you, of what your body is telling you, and of what your mind is telling you. Taking time for your own healing and to regenerate yourself is the stage that I’m in at the moment. I’m in a resting state, rejuvenating. If I can give you a visual of me being this big, strong tree for many, many years, that tree has taken some battering. The bark’s fallen off, especially in the last few months at work, and it was looking pretty tired and droopy. So, I’m nurturing that tree at the moment. I’m trying to feed it, clear some space for it, and give it some fertiliser, so I can keep on giving some shade for the future, whether it be for my family, my friends, or wherever the journey takes me. And I’ve still got a lot to give. However, for now, I think it’s really important that when you have some downtime, you take care of yourself—because if you don’t take care of yourself, nobody else will, and then you’ll be no good to anyone. That’s a philosophy that I’ve held ever since I had my children and then had grandchildren. I would always say

to them, “If you don’t look after yourself, you won’t be able to care for your children. You have to take time out.” Mind you, it took me a long time to learn that.

I would love to see We Ai-li taught in schools all across this country. I would dearly love that. That is a seed that needs to be planted so that everyone, no matter what culture or colour you are, has an opportunity to learn a new way of being in this country. That would impact so many professions, as those children will grow, leave, go to university, and then go out into the world. Whether they’re doctors, whether they work in the council, or gardening, or in hospitality, or whether they work in counselling, childcare, or education, what a seed that would be to plant. Everybody, regardless of their culture, needs to be exposed to We Ai-li.

RESPONSE TO AUNTY DI'S STORY

BY KATIE MAXFIELD

When listening to the yarn I was assigned to, I began to brainstorm and take notes on the most impactful points I found when listening, and the connection to earth was the strongest message I had received.

I used the Pippi shell in my design as a metaphor for planting a seed inside the head made up of handwritten words, the words that make the shape of the head, is the description for Didirri. The aim of this poster is to be simple, with a strong impactful message, but if you take a closer look, you will find more information to be found.

PLANT THE SEED

WE ALL



In the Hopi prayer, Hoyaogah means fire. Fire is an awesome force that can threaten and harm, it can give life and it can blind. Fire transforms solid forms into gas, it can be used to heat, power, form, and destroy. It is a cosmic principle that should be used with care and respect. It is a force that can be used to create and to destroy.

CHRISTINE

I've just turned 63. I was born in Australia, but I have English and Scottish ancestry. I'm not Indigenous. Last year, I completed a Master of Dance Movement Therapy at Auckland University in New Zealand. I have a background in health and have probably always seen myself as a healer, but I've been searching for what type of healer I am. I think in previous times, I would've been the medicine woman or something like that. I was originally a pharmacist and have also done art therapy. I haven't worked in trauma specifically, but I have recently been working with people with dementia.

I've always had an interest in meditation. Years ago, a friend of mine, who I think knew Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr Bauman, first introduced me to Dadirri, which came up again during my Masters study. At the beginning of the course, we did a session in which we embodied the words "dance," "movement," and "therapy." The latter felt restricting, and I drew back. Even when I've worked in health, I've found that word difficult. So, my Masters thesis looked at contemporary perceptions and understandings of dance movement therapy in Australasia. I interviewed four

people. First, a lady who had a long history in dance movement therapy in Australia. I was so lucky to be able to interview her just a few months before she died. Second, a Peramangk Elder who was a good friend of mine when I lived in South Australia. Third, a dance movement therapist from New Zealand who is also a physiotherapist and is married to a Māori person. She admits to not fully understanding Māori concepts of health and wellbeing, but she still tries to incorporate some of them into her practice. And fourth, an Australian male who has a background in health and, on

a personal level, has always danced and loves to do so. One of the themes that came through strongly in the research was decolonizing dance movement therapy in Australasia. While I was studying, I'd read some of Judy Atkinson's work, like *Trauma Trails*. After that, I started doing some of the We Al-li training. Two weeks ago, I gave a presentation for the Dance Therapy Association of Australasia on my thesis, specifically on the theme of decolonising. Last year, I was told that the topic is too controversial and would upset people, so this time I agreed but pointed out that it needs to be heard. I ended up receiving a really good response, and hopefully there will be a follow-up. I mentioned the We Al-li training in that presentation, which sparked a lot of interest in the forum.

I was born in Narromine, NSW, but I grew up in Brunswick Heads, which is the land of the Arakwal people from the Bundjalung Nation. I spent 25 years in South Australia, spending time with some of the Peramangk and Adnyamathanha peoples and researching some of the healing plants when I was looking at herbal medicine. Then, after my husband died just over seven years ago, I didn't really know where to go or what to do—but I felt drawn to come back to this Country where I'd grown up.

I completed the We Al-li training very recently. I've just finished the first online course: "Dadirri—Ancient Aboriginal Mindfulness for Self-Care and Self Inquiry." At the moment, I'm doing the second online course: "Recreating the Circle of Wellbeing—Self and Community Care Assessment." I don't want to just rush through it. It's a matter of taking my time and giving it justice, and so far, I'm finding it helpful on both a professional and personal level.

I have known nine people who have been involved in domestic violence, including my late husband. When he looked back, he realised that he came from a family that was involved in domestic violence. I don't like to call them victims because I don't like to see them that way. Several years ago, I was working with a primary health network in South Australia when there was a lot of coverage in the press about domestic violence. Even though it's not just women who are affected, the press was telling women to speak to their GP. One of the local GPs approached the primary health network and told them, "It's all very well for the press to tell people to speak to their local GP, but we don't have the necessary knowledge. We don't really know where we can refer people." This GP had a colleague who had encouraged a woman

“When we finished, I first thought that everybody must’ve had a similar experience to mine, but after sharing what I felt and hearing other people’s reactions, I quickly realised that wasn’t the case.”

to leave a domestic violence situation, only for her to be killed. I ended up being involved in organising a workshop on domestic violence for the local GPs, which covered quite a large area of regional South Australia and was well-attended. In general, I’ve been aware of trauma through my own interests and my involvement in Surrey Days many years ago.

More recently, I’ve been involved with dance movement therapy. Trauma was one area that was covered in my Masters studies, particularly Stephen Porges’s polyvagal theory and the work of Amber Gray, who’s internationally known for her work in treating trauma, especially through dance therapy. After that, I started investigating trauma a little bit more, not on any deep level, but I can certainly see how dance and bodily awareness and knowledge can help. Because the learnings from my Masters study are so recent, I haven’t yet had the opportunity to work specifically in dance movement therapy, but I do a little bit of what I would call therapeutic dance.

Have I noticed any changes in my life since doing the We AI-li training? Well, it’s still in progress. Particularly since the death of my husband, I’ve felt like I’ve been at a crossroads. Doing the Master of Dance Movement Therapy, I went down a little road, and I’m not sure if I arrived at another crossroads or the same crossroads. I can’t see very far ahead, but I think that doing these final parts of the We AI-li training will be very beneficial, given that it involves looking at your life journey, your body, spirit, mind, and emotions. The training is starting to give me some direction, and I’m finding people who are supporting me in what I’m thinking.

As Ruth was talking, I was taken back to when I was studying transpersonal art therapy through the Ikon Institute. I remember that we had some guided meditations with drumming that sent me to this amazing place, which seemed to have an Indigenous feel about it. When we finished, I first thought that everybody must’ve had a similar experience to mine, but after sharing what I felt and hearing other people’s reactions, I quickly realised

that wasn't the case. Later, probably 20 years ago now, I saw these images of two women—an Aboriginal Elder and my grandmother—and they were both saying, “You need to walk both pathways.” So, I'm not trying to appropriate Indigenous knowledge. I just want to learn how to walk both ways—and help our country walk together, I suppose, for the good of all. I've probably still got the drawing that I did at the time.

I'm not sure that I'm ready to hold space for other people's healing on a formal level, but then again, at this stage, I haven't had an entrée into that type of work. On a personal level, I've seen the intergenerational trauma in the friend who I mentioned earlier. She was part of the Stolen Generation and is the same age as me, and it really struck me that when I was growing up, we were just totally unaware of that—it was hidden from people. She's been through a lot of abusive relationships. She's been raped. Fortunately, she wasn't left to die and was taken to hospital, but it was so brutal. She was bleeding, and her bowel was punctured. That story just came out when I was talking with her later on. She had called in to see me, and I could see that she was in pain. I offered her something to relieve the pain and told her that she could stay the night, but she

had to make her way home, as she was caring for her grandson so that he wouldn't be taken away. It might not be called the Stolen Generation anymore, but there are still more Indigenous children being taken from their parents and homes than non-Indigenous children. I asked if she'd had any surgery, and she replied, “Oh, it's funny that you should ask.” Then, almost two years ago, around Christmas time, her eldest granddaughter, who must have been 20 or 21 at the time, either suicided or was killed by her partner. There was an inquest, and I haven't asked about it, but I do check in with my friend, and I'm aware of the trauma that she carries and of the different ways in which it is evidenced. So, on a personal level, I feel that I can hold space for healing, but I'm not sure if I can do so on a more professional or broader scale.

As I said, I've finished one of the online We Al-li courses, and I'm in the midst of another, but building on those and perhaps working as an apprentice or assistant with some facilitators who are experienced and who you know how to hold the space and respond appropriately to anger or violence would be great. I would say that I don't have the necessary knowledge, but sometimes intuition kicks in and I find that I am able to respond in an

appropriate way. Maybe that's just deep listening—not reacting but being there and letting the person know that you're there to hold space for them. So, perhaps developing my personal skills in that way, along with working with more experienced facilitators, is the next step.

Have I seen changes in my life or around me since doing the training? I haven't seen anything specific. Having given the presentation a couple of weeks ago, though, I can see the potential for these ideas in the Dance Movement Therapy Association. I also met a woman about five years ago who asked if I could assist with her husband's intensive care. I met with her again recently and learnt that I had planted a seed for her all that time ago. I'm not sure if she's been to the Healing Hub yet, but she was planning to visit, and I'm sure she'll follow up on the We AI-li courses and training.

All of the training participants will respond and react differently. I suppose I'm fortunate in that I have only recently finished one workshop and haven't quite finished the second one. I feel incredibly appreciative of and privileged to be part of this yarnning session, and I'm interested in where We AI-li might go from here. I think there's a huge need for it right now across the country: urban areas, regional, rural, and remote.

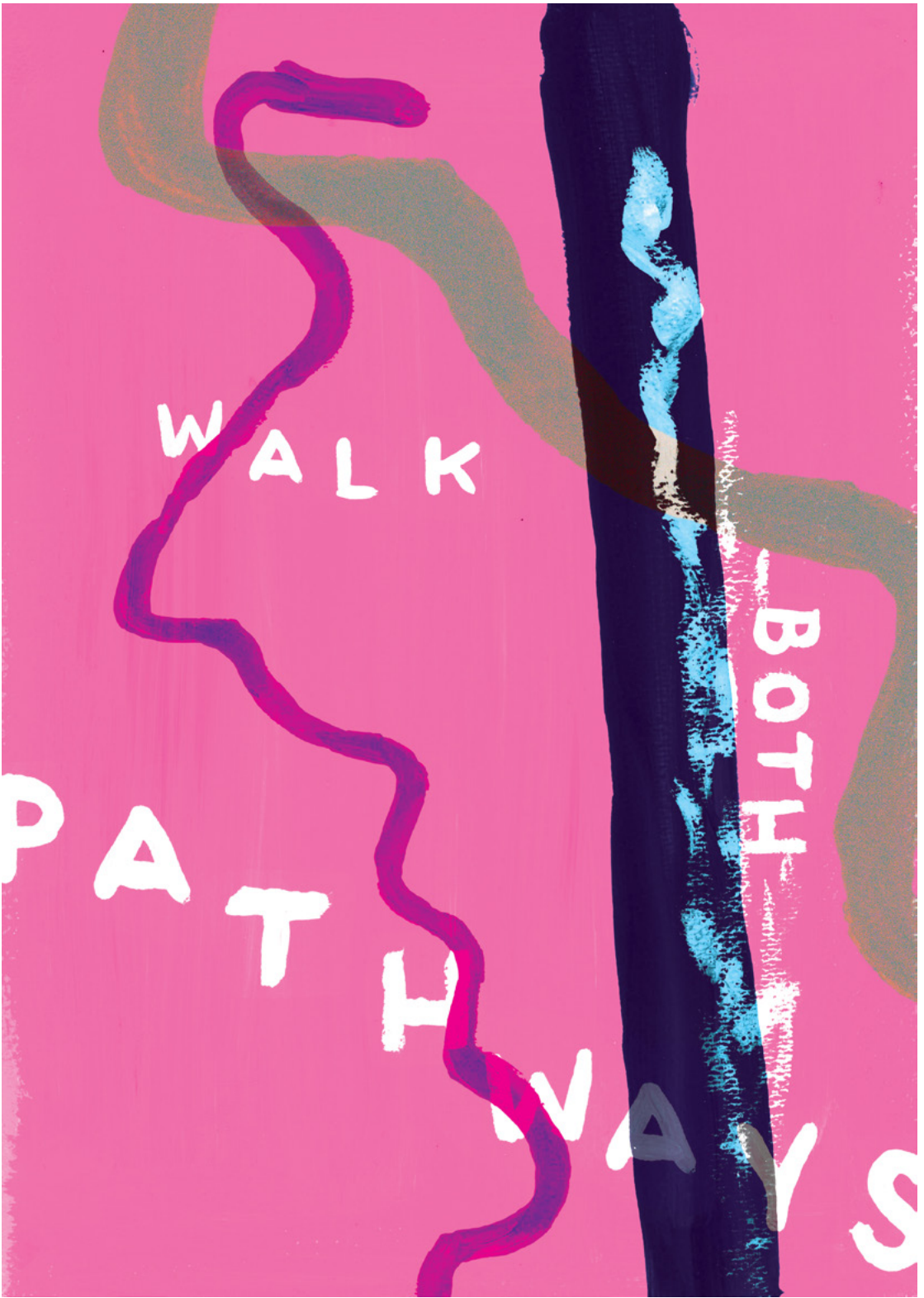
RESPONSE TO CHRISTINE'S STORY

BY RHIANNA PEARCE

This design centres around Christine's story of an image she had of her Grandmother and an Aboriginal Elder. In this image, Christine was told by both women "you need to walk both pathways".

Christine explained "I just want to learn and walk and walk both ways, and help our country to walk together". This story deeply resonated with me and made me wonder what our country would look like if this was what we all sought to achieve: to help our country walk together.

The main elements in this image represent Brunswick Heads, which is part of the Bundjalung Nation, specifically of the Arakwal people. This is where Christine grew up and returned to in recent years.



CINDY

I'm currently in Coffs Harbour, NSW, but I've spent over 20 years travelling around the country doing different things. My main connection has been with communities in Broome and the Dampier Peninsula in the Northern Territory. I've lived over there in the Kimberley for about five-and-a-half years in two different stints and worked in health and education. I also helped set up a charity over there for working with disengaged or Aboriginal youth coming out of detention because there's nowhere for them to go that is trauma-informed and culturally safe.

I was first exposed to Judy's work when I was doing my Masters study in mental health, mainly because I was choosing to study culturally appropriate ways for healing trauma. I also used her *Trauma Trails* book and her We Al-li work as part of my research in Broome in 2019. Then, when I got over to the east coast in December 2020, as soon as the borders opened, I attended the Dadirri workshop. It was profound in that it was able to create a transformational learning space that was safe because it was held in ceremony and with respect, and that was

the first time that I had experienced such a sacred space being held over that period of time, which created space for deep connection. So, I think that was pivotal in that work, along with me still being pretty traumatised at the time, coming from Broome and having fought the education system and all the systems that are set up to so-called "support" the First Nations people over there.

I'd also gone on my own trauma healing journey with the Heal for Life Foundation in the Hunter Valley in 2009 and trained

in their trauma skills. And I'd done a lot of online stuff as well. So, I've been very aware that trauma is the key. If you can't actually calm people enough and co-regulate enough to relax, they can't learn and they can't function, and then you can't communicate with them. And I'd sat for years in classrooms as a teacher aid, an integration aid, with all of the kids that are labelled as problems with learning disabilities. So, I also had first-hand experience of the education system. I'd had the opportunity to use the trauma framework and understanding of the need to create safe spaces in order to change the way that I delivered training courses, using reasonable adjustment and substantive equality as a human rights framework, to say, "By law, we should be doing this. However, this is what I'm doing. The only way that we're going to get these people through is if we actually acknowledge that they learn differently." So, Tyson Yunkaporta's 8 Ways of Learning also came into play as an evidence-based framework.

The second time that I came to We Al-li training was in July last year, and I did the trauma skills training. This was after I'd been online and done some transformational leadership training and some transformational coaching, looking at removing the barriers that women commonly face around shame, lack, and

isolation. So, having done that work on myself, I was in a completely different space when I did my second round of We Al-li training. I could really see that my role as a white-bodied person is not to be on the ground doing the work but to understand that I have the capacity to educate other white-bodied people around the racialised trauma that they carry and that they inflict on others.

So, I'm now coming from a different space. I was just so excited by the amazing young First Nations people who are coming out and being trained as facilitators and who are doing brilliant work around the country. My fight now—or, better yet, my challenge—is to raise awareness about the need to recreate a new culture in this country. It starts with white-bodied people actually acknowledging the impact of colonisation, their white privilege, and the impact that has on our systems, along with how we actually walk alongside, or whether we have the capacity to walk alongside, First Nations people.

The last workshop I had on trauma-informed skills really pulled together a lot of the art therapy in the child-centred play therapy, the drumming, and the other approaches that I'd explored looking for ways in which to engage kids that are creative and made connections at a heart and soul level. The Trauma-Informed Care

“...I can see a shift in the skills of the First Nations people who’ve stepped up. This next generation coming up? They’ve got it.”

and Practice workshop demonstrated all of this in action, asking how we might create communities of practice and what are communities of care. Experiencing that in a safe and focused space consolidated a lot of the skills that I already had and showed how and why they worked together. That was really valuable.

What’s changed for me is that after 20 years working across academia, education and health, and not-for-profits, I can see a shift in the skills of the First Nations people who’ve stepped up. This next generation coming up? They’ve got it. I feel that I can step back now and just focus on what we can do as white-bodied people in this country. And I can say that I’ve used these We Ai-li techniques, and they work. We can all benefit from them because of their holistic approach. That’s what my recommendation was when I did the research with the remote Aboriginal community in Broome. Everybody in that community would benefit from doing the We Ai-li work and really dealing with their own trauma first.

If you haven’t done your own work, you’re a recipe for burnout and overwhelm. And I think that’s what I loved about the trauma-informed workshop: the message is to look after yourself. Your own self is the important person, because if you do burn out, that’s just counterproductive. I didn’t have the skills not to burn out, so that’s what I’ve been trying to cultivate over the last couple of years. It’s about how able I am to regulate my own neurology and my own response and whether I can stay calm and non-judgmental, because I do have an absolute passion for and connection with First Nations people. And I’d rather work with them any day—because what you see is what you get. It’s pretty much about being able to hold that space without judgement in order to create a safe space for them to be where they’re at. Often, they’ve got their own solutions if you can calm things down enough for them to think everything through. That’s not stuff that I’ve always known. I worked in an accident and emergency department in Broome 20 years ago and was in culture shock. I had no cultural training and no

skills to deal with what I was seeing. So, it's really important that anybody working on that end of the scale undertakes the necessary training to be able to hold the space, because if you are not able to do that, you end up escalating the situation.

The biggest enabler we encountered was in Broome when we became a not-for-profit and Public Benevolent Institute: Agunya Limited. This was a charity that I helped set up with one of my community development students, a course that I was teaching at the university. We could apply for funding directly, so we would not be controlled by the systems that were not interested in doing things differently. In fact, we unsuccessfully tried to get auspiced by the local people. They saw us as a threat, precisely because we were doing things differently. Ours is the only programme in Broome that's actually working, that's actually engaging Aboriginal youth, because we know the families and have worked as volunteers. As I said, the enabler was to get out of the system in order to have control over what we create and deliver, all of which we do in collaboration with the local First Nations people and with the support of Elders. Basically, it's a social enterprise. We've created a space where young people can learn work skills, life skills, team skills, and do community projects. But it's all based

on Judy's work, on the understanding that many families are in their eighth or ninth generation of trauma. We understand that this is what we're dealing with and that we need to work with whole families and the community. So, that's the enabler. We now have the chief of police saying that this is the only thing that's working up here, yet we're still fighting for funding, which continues to go to organisations that are not providing the service.

I have this thing. If I'm not in alignment with what I'm doing and it's not resonating with me, I will walk away. I will not try and stay in a system that's draining my life force. That's what sustains me. That's how I've been able to do what I've done around the country. I often do contract work because you don't have to get involved in the politics. I can go in and create change and new ways of doing things that are trauma-informed and that are culturally secure, but if I don't have the support from management and the organisation has no intention of changing, I will finish off my contract and tell them, "See you later."

We actually have to start teaching the truth in our schools. The true history of this country. Until we do that, we won't have any firm foundation to build on. This is one of the big things that I'm trying to promote: we have to deconstruct history.

We have not been told the truth. We also need to challenge the whole concept of whiteness as the dominant culture. But that starts with telling the truth about what's happened in this country since the early years. That would sit in well with the We Al-li model because it does talk about the impact of colonisation and what's happened as a result.

I've been reading Resmaa Menakem's work, *My Grandmother's Hands*. He's a black-bodied American, and he says that racism is embodied within us. It's not a conscious thing; it's a bodily response created through our conditioning and how we've been brought up. So, most white-bodied people—and even brown-bodied people and black-bodied people—don't realise that they're actually acting in racist ways. It's not a conscious thing; it's a bodily response, a conditioning.

RESPONSE TO CINDY'S STORY

BY TALLULAH VINEY

After reading Cindy's story I felt at ease. It was amazing to know that there were people like Cindy out there actively fighting a harmful, unhelpful system endeavouring to create a better one. Listening to the yarn further enlightened me to the struggles that Indigenous youth were facing when reintegrating into their communities. When Cindy spoke about how youth coming from detention centres had nowhere to go that was trauma informed and spiritually conscious a certain saying came to mind, "a sense of place."

Everyone should be entitled to a space where they feel seen and heard, from what I could tell Cindy was willing to be this place. The "bubble" should evoke warmth and safety, the shapes and colours inside feel tumultuous since there is still a level of trauma being experienced and in the centre, you'll find "a sense of place."



DUANE'S STORY

The skills that I gained with We Al-li, I use them for my individual healing. I have had a lot of mental illness, although it wasn't so much mental illness but more emotional trauma. What I gained from We Al-li was healing skills to help myself live in this society. The breath-work we did at We Al-li was one of those skills. If I didn't have that skill, the anxieties would've taken over my life.

If I wasn't using the breath—breathing deeply, the tension in my stomach was going to overpower me, so I had to use the breath, from what I learnt, from the first days of We Al-li, from when I was first shown how to use it. Some of the other skills that I gained was from the non-Aboriginal people that were there at the time. My mind keeps on going back to the early days at The Haven, because that's where I felt most comfortable. I was safe. I use my brain to take me back there to listen to people who had suggestions or advice. They had healing skills themselves, and they passed them on to me. I have used a lot of that. Meditations. The glowing white light entering my chakras. I did that for many years. Dadirri, I practiced that every day, basically. The only days that

I didn't practice it, was the days when I allowed the anger to come up.

I've been here in Meanjin—(Brisbane), using We Al-li healing approaches since 2018. I'm by myself. It's a scary place to be, but I keep on going. Basically, I keep living each day, and whatever emotions that my body picks up, I go home, and I deal with that the best way I can without hurting myself. I do play-role suicide, but my conscience only knows it's just a play-role. But the feelings are still there.

In the past, maybe, I don't know, I've only probably discovered it within the past 15 years, that whatever artwork I'm painting, I'm going through the experience in the painting I'm making. A lot of skills that I learned from We Al-li, helps me with that

because if I'm painting for the community here that represents family violence, all those bad memories are coming back to me and haunting me. I was unconsciously opening up the door for the bad trauma that happened to me when I was a child, coming into the present, without knowing it. It might've have been about five years ago, me and some other people caught on that whatever artwork I'm doing ... if it's a happy artwork, I'm feeling happy, content within myself. But if I'm painting those trauma ones, that's when my life becomes affected. I'm blaming everything, my pain is coming out in my paintings.

What I would like the spirit to understand is that when I go into healing, a lot of blame comes in because nobody is there to take responsibility for our conflict upon each other. I keep on telling the spirit I don't want to carry this pain because it doesn't belong to me and I'm not getting paid to heal, to feel, survive the pain. They're some of the things that I do get really upset about, it's not my brain that's blaming my Aboriginal parents or my Aboriginal elders back home. It's the pain talking. And nobody wants to go right back to the massacre times where the pain started. There are two different components in my body that are doing the healing. I have to be aware of that, the spirit, and the pain inside me, which also has to be healed.

At the moment, I'm doing healing with my art gang mom. She's a non-Aboriginal woman. I would like her personality, and her spirit, to understand that when I'm speaking the words, "Oh, F and C," and stuff like that and that pain is blaming her, it's not me as the human being that's doing that. It's the pain that needs to come out, to be healed.

They're some of the things that I would like people to understand. It was mentioned back in We Al-li, that my body was like a sponge; that it soaks up the negative energy around me ... of people, places and things that have happened in those places, to my ancestors and they passed down to me ... I didn't have a full understanding ... all I knew was, it was pain. I come to understand if I'm hurting in my spirit, my body, my brain—it's all pain, whether it's mental, emotional, physical, or spiritual. I do have the appropriate healing skills to confront that. I've just been using We Al-li healing strategies for the past 25 years, which I learnt at the Haven at Emu Park—just to help me to live in society, to cope. Now it's art groups here in Brisbane, that are helping me.

If I get triggered in those groups, I have to bite my tongue, and then I have to take that energy and deal with it myself. My old way of surviving, of dealing with things, was violence, whether it was

mental, physical, spiritual, or emotional violence, but that's how I survived. Today's a different story. I came out of that shell and started educating myself that violence isn't the way to go.

There's not too much of We Al-li work that I can do with others except just listen to their stories, listen to their problems. I've been doing that since I learnt it and left We Al-li anyway, to go to Adelaide. Human beings are very tricky and earn my faith and trust in them very quickly. Then, when I feel that they have overstepped a line, I have to go inside myself and deal with it. It's very hurtful, but it's been happening ever since I left We Al-li. Not that I left. We Al-li has always been with me. Smoking ceremonies have always been with me ... Dadirri—listening to myself and others is always with me. When education centres or organisations ask me to go to do cultural guest speaking, I take dadirri with me and help them understand where it's coming from—Aunt Miriam—the purpose of dadirri, listening to one another.

Not a lot of people in organisations want to deal with the conflict in Aboriginal culture. They're very fearful of it. They don't know how to tackle it. That's basically what happened to me back home. My elders didn't know how to deal with the issues that came up in their lives, which was me. At that time, in Rockhampton, Central

Queensland, the only way they could deal with it was to try to brainwash me ... When healing, I like to have the understanding of, "Well, they're doing something like We Al-li work," but human beings will have a way of offloading their problems on other human beings ... I don't get paid for counselling, I don't get paid to be a psychologist, but other people need to talk about their pain, so I listen.

At the moment, I got an artwork project down at the pathway on Boundary Street at the kiosk. Sometimes I feel like I have drunk human beings walking on my spirit. I'm the one that's feeling the hurt and the pain of these human beings, and not getting recognised for it. I can feel their pain. That's one of the things that I don't like about healing. When I've lived it and felt it, survived it, and healed it, but I'm not paid for feeling the pain of others, but I do. I have to facilitate myself in my healing and at the same time do the healing of those around me.

Couple of weeks ago, I run out of oxygen. It stopped me from breathing, so I got myself to the emergency department and they put me straight through. I was able to help them help me breathe again. The person that did help me to breathe again back in 2018 was my art gang mom, our art facilitator. Recently, they were talking about that American fellow who couldn't

breathe. He was saying “I can’t breathe. I can’t breathe,” and I was thinking of that at the same time, my art facilitator was helping me to breathe. When I realized I automatically kicked back in: “Right. Breath. Use the breath to go back to the anxieties—you can deal with it”. We Al-li taught me that—we did that breathing back in the 1990’s at the Haven Emu Park. Breathe...

I call them personality defects because when I see them in real life, they’re all strong and shiny and they’re spruced up, but the personality inside me is sick. I taught myself to tell them to F off ... because they haven’t received my permission to take over my life... Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn’t, but I’m the one that’s left to deal with it, and I deal with it the best way I can. That’s by just using what I have been taught—the breath.

Some people may think that I met Jude [Atkinson] through Gumbi Gumbi back home in Rockhampton. Gumbi Gumbi is a detox centre for people to help them get off the grog.

Gumbi Gumbi also had projects, and We Al-li was one ... helping people look at themselves and why they were drinking or using drugs. But I met Jude before then. I remember going to the Rockhampton

City Council for a meeting when I was a lot younger, and I asked them for the geographical map of the Fitzroy River so I could paint it. This is where I met Judy. She introduced herself to me. I wasn’t quite at Gumbi Gumbi. Then I got myself to Gumbi Gumbi. Then, being at Gumbi Gumbi for six weeks, Jude was doing her work down at The Haven in Emu Park. I wasn’t too sure if Jude remembered me, but she did and that’s when I was introduced to intergenerational trauma. All the workshops, family violence recovery, alcohol, and other drugs—child abuse, all the workshops of We Al-li. That is where they grew. So Gumbi Gumbi took me to her workshops. And I knew that’s what our Aboriginal people needed—healing. Yet, when people in community heard my story, my real story, the true story ... it frightened them. My story of trauma. They took me out bush, but what they did was the complete opposite of helping me. I like the old ways of We Al-li. I wouldn’t count myself as an Indigenous therapist or a healer. I’m just an Aboriginal artist trying to live his best in this society.

There is an artwork I did in Boundary Street: Enough is Enough. And I thought that is what Aboriginal people wanted. I thought they wanted healing. But they just want to blame, not heal the pain. They just want to continue living in the pain and hope someone else catches

it, so they don't have to worry and deal with it. I'm sorry I can't be positive. The pain is all some people know. Judy says its generational trauma from the massacre times.

I became a single parent at 30 and I didn't know how to be a parent—a father, and I did my best to raise Leone, my daughter. She's a We Al-li baby. But being a parent wasn't easy.

She's up in the Gulf of Carpentaria working with the Aboriginal people today. She has been across to Uluru and Darwin with the Elders, sharing the lessons she has learnt, recording their stories. So I had to go into the non-Aboriginal world and allow the non-Aboriginal people to help me be a parent. Christmases and birthdays—all those important days were the worst, because I had to send her away to her friend's families to enjoy those times because I was in too much pain and trauma to bring her happiness on those days. But I was trying to be a good father. She says I was a good father.

Just before she left, the happiness of being the parent started coming out. Once I learned that, yeah, we can have our Christmas by ourselves down the river. We can have our birthdays in a dining room at a restaurant. So a lot of changes have

come. She was raised with listening to me go through the healing of mental illness, emotional (deep) trauma. When she was about 15–16, she was typing up workshops for me to go to, into places like St. Patrick's with the kids, Marist colleges. So she was typing up the workshops and I would do cultural workshops with the students.

But we didn't do that work at home in Queensland. The community realised that once they lifted the carpet—the blankets, the past would come up and they were fearful of that. It would be too painful. But if I did not have the support of We Al-li, I probably would have suicided. And I went out and did the work they taught me to do.

With some groups I can do the work ... I like them to have the questions up first and then sometimes when one of the participants might ask, "Oh, how come they're drunk?" then I know I should keep my mouth shut. But people need to know the truth. "How come they're drunk and causing the violence on the street?" So I help them understand colonisation. Brisbane Jagera and Turrbal, their colonisation is different to the colonisation of Darumbal peoples of Central Queensland. They may have had similar trauma experiences and the depression, anxieties that are there—all of that. Being molested, I know both tribes

“... any We Al-li healing work done by yourself, is a very lonely place. People don’t want to understand you. Because what’s coming out of my mouth is words of healing, words of truth. Even my own truth causes me anxieties.”

going through the rapes, being beaten up. It’s all pain to me, no matter whether it’s happened here in Jagera or up in the Yiman or Darumbal country.

Pain is pain. I just have to find the appropriate healing strategies and skills to deal with that. Not all healing skills suit one purpose. I understand what it’s like to be under a blanket (the blankets of oppression—racism, violence, abuse), I understand that. I’ve lived it. Not just in one place, or once. Many times. We Al-li wasn’t the first one to try help me, but it did help me. This also happened in a couple of places that me and Leone lived. The blankets that were thrown on me by society, even in my sober life. Because I don’t have the resilience to throw them off me, so I have to deal with whatever blanket it is that society has thrown on me to stop me from growing. That’s even happened here in Brisbane. I’ve had blankets of depression on me for two years when I first arrived. I thought I was losing it. But once I learned what it was, I just lived with it and dealt with it the best way I could. I suppose it all depends on what human being you

are. The human beings that call out for healing, and when the healing arrives, they run from it, because they have to face their pain. Pain wants to chew us up and eat us and destroy us. And me too. The pain in me was big. My argument today is with spirit. Whether it’s the Aboriginal spirit or the white man’s God, I believe I’m up against the spirit, because it’s the spirit that’s working through human beings. And that spirit can prevent any accident or trauma from happening, yet it doesn’t. It wants us to go through it. And I disagree because my education is, that spirit is loving, caring and kind and welcoming, harmony, peace, joy, and happiness. But Jude says the pain teaches us to. We just gotta face the truth of it.

However, the spirit has a responsibility and if that spirit isn’t taking care of its responsibility, it doesn’t have my trust. So at this present day, no, I do not trust any Aboriginal spirit. Let alone the Darumbal spirit from where I was born, and those elders up there. I’ve lived in pain too much. I’m 55 years old and I’ve lived this trauma for over 25 years in my sober life. I lived it

probably all my drunk life, trying to deal with it through alcohol and the excessive abuse of drugs, sex, and gambling. Now I'm sober, I'm dealing with it this way, the We Al-li way.

And like I said before, that ... any We Al-li healing work done by yourself, is a very lonely place. People don't want to understand you. Because what's coming out of my mouth is words of healing, words of truth. Even my own truth causes me anxieties. Like I fell in love here, and that human being spat my love out on the concrete. And I had to pick that love up, all battered, torn, bruised, feeling betrayed. And I had to place that love back inside me. It took me 12 months to get that love to feel strong and happy again. I still have to work with that same human being, without my love becoming angry. Because she's a good human being to work with. I know my place.

So that 12 months here, that was very helpful, because I just didn't have to heal my love, I had to deal with it, and live in the community and what was happening in community. So a lot of people were offloading their problems, especially a lot of Aboriginal people were all putting their problems onto me and then they'll come back and they're full of ice. Or they're drunk. And so my spirit wasn't very happy.

I felt like I was being abused. I felt like I was being betrayed by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

So We Al-li work cannot be done on the street. It has to be a safe healing place such as The Haven. So I've learned that much. I'm not blaming any human being, but I do hold the spirit responsible. When I've been in this work for a very long time and no God, no white man's God, or no Aboriginal spirit wanted to invest their powers in me, so I could live a good life before I die. My mom died when she was 49 with emphysema and it started off with a lung infection. That lung infection took four of her last years. And I've been diagnosed with a lung infection, and I'm 55. So I'm looking that I've only got another four years to enjoy my life here on this planet before I go to my Dreaming. And that's not enough time for me. And I give myself self-love. I care for myself. I take myself on a self-picnic. I've learned to use society as a healing tool itself. So when I want to stop listening to the anger, I will take myself to the city or to a loud place where all that loudness is outside my body and I'm listening to it. But it's not inside, it's outside me. So the noise pollution ... I use to get me out of my own noise.

I also use the city as an inspiration when it comes with my artwork, because I've

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learned, I’ve educated myself to absorb the artwork. Not that the canvas is walking along side, it’s the human being. A lot of people like to make themselves colourful, here in Brisbane. I use that and I absorb it and I go home and I just paint. So whatever I’ve absorbed within that artwork over in the city mightn’t come out looking like that, because it’s Aboriginal. But it’s inspiring me to sit and paint. When I paint, I like to paint with the feeling and the thoughts going through my mind, which is the love, peace, joy, and happiness, —healing, whichever one at that time is there. It’s whether it’s lines, or stencil art, or dots ... each dot ... a lot of my paintings, I use dots. And when I’m painting it’s love, peace, joy, and healing. So with a crosshatching line: love, then the next one, peace. I cannot sit there and go: hate, blame that person. I hate those negative feelings inside me.

And music: So I got the guitar for that. It all depends on what kind of music. There’s a range of music in my healing. Rock and heavy metal make me swear. Country western music will bring the

tears. So when it’s time for me to grieve, I will use that music. At the moment, the Whoopee-Do Crew, our community, West End community, the House Band helps. We play on a Wednesday morning, down at the Boundary Street. I’ll get my inner child back, at that time, to feel proud of himself. They get me to sing Black Boy. I’m not a singer person with a good voice, but It’s trying to help me understand on the inside, to feel proud of the human being, the Aboriginal human being that I am, and that’s really good. But yeah, my artwork here in society’s pretty different. My artwork loves Brisbane, and I understand it sees a lot of attention, it sees a lot of reflection. But that’s my artwork. That’s not Duane. I’m glad that my artwork receives that attention, and I hope maybe one day that attention will rub off on the inside of me. Maybe one day!

Us artists, we understand that we are artists or painters, mentally. But to feel it down here (hand on heart) is a different space altogether. To feel it in the heart, it’s like a miracle. to feel that feeling, that love, to know that I’m an artist. I like to

paint happy paintings. But at the moment I'm painting one for the ancestors back home. I'm going through a little bit of mixed feelings with it. So it's raised what the elders did to me and so I'm working through that. Not that it doesn't hurt ... yeah, it makes me angry. But one of the artworks inside is ACDC. At the time there was supposed to be a lot of anger around it, but then, just as it was finishing, the anger mellowed down and I don't know, the bright yellow sun or yellow came out and so I don't know where that anger went. So, yeah. But one of the reasons why it was painted was because two of the younger uncles on my dad's side, that was their sober time. So they were still in high school. One was in grade nine, one was in grade 10, and they used to be skating to the pitches. So this was all done before they must have turned 18, before they found alcohol. And then when they found alcohol, that's when I found alcohol too. Well, I didn't find it, it was there. My father just poisoned me with it.

So a lot of the non-Aboriginal people here built-up trust relationships with me. And I tend not to listen to so much of the younger ones, but more of the elders here that have lived on the street. And they participate in voluntary work and things like that. So I take notice of their words

here to keep me on the path, start learning to like living because I'm one of those Aboriginal people that don't want to live, but I have to. Without We Al-li I would've suicided back in the early days.

When my daughter was born, me and my daughter, we went to Adelaide, and we came back and I asked them, where was Jude. I went home. When I asked my elders where Jude had gone, they told me she went down to Lismore. There was nothing that I could do about it. I said, "What are we going to do [since we can't find you?]" And then I went to a non-Aboriginal man from the Central Queensland University, I said, "Look, can you do me a favour and look up Jude." I don't know what year it was. And then he found out, he said, "Ah, she's down in Lismore and she's still working".

So me and my daughter went to Adelaide for a couple of years. So we only done some of her primary schooling down there. And I started getting, I don't know, stronger after some years. I said, well, maybe it's a good idea for her to go and do her high schooling out in the bush. And it was a good idea for her. But for me, I was going back into the old shit again. So no matter what place I was living in, different address, different people, but the same shit came up.

I'd leave everything when I closed the front door and then when I go home to open it up again, there it is, waiting for me to deal with it. Yeah, I just ... it's a lone walk. Helping people to understand me ... It's a very difficult thing. So sometimes I have to show people. So one day when my art gang mum was away for two weeks, and I said—we'll be right. But the trauma kept on triggering me to drop off into a lot of anger and stuff. And then on the day that she came back, I allowed myself to breathe, walking up this hill. Allowed myself to connect my breath just to show some of the workers here... So by the time I got through that front gate, I was in breath-work, already. I'd already connected my breath. And so Kai and Andrew asked, do I want to paint? "Take you downstairs, Duane, and paint Solomon." I knew the environment around me already. It was just showing the facilitators and the coordinators where I'm coming from.

Well, now this is where I'm a little bit confused. It may have been the inner child, but it may have been something else as well. And I'm not ready to say that something else because when one of paintings ... they brought out a painting and then my hands just went over it. So I'm up here looking down at myself again, out of body experience. And I'm helping somebody understand where I'm coming

from as an Aboriginal human being. And then when it's over, see the respect has my art gang mum. Because when that inner child, or that something observed her facilitating the art group, that's where the trust came. By how she communicated, how she worked, how she weaved her way through that art group like an emu, just like Jude. And that's where my art gang mum received that title, and that respect, and my trust.

I met Jude when she may have been about 53, 54, and she was very strong. So I don't know whether it was ... yeah, it was just the energy, the way that she communicated, the way that she stood up for herself, for us. So that's what attracted me to my art facilitator too, basically. I felt safe. And then one of the paintings that I did, or one of the stories that I had to write out ... I was writing out what I could remember of the workshop, Lifting of the Blankets—the first workshop with Jude, where we named the blankets of oppression and what we would do to remove them. So I wanted to see if I could remember. I remember Jude had a lot of fiery energy in her and I felt like I was home. When I feel like that, I feel like I'm healing for other people too. Now, when that happens, because I'm the one that's feeling the pain, this poor body here, I probably weigh 50 kilograms. I don't have very big muscles. And I'm so angry

that the spirit chose this body to feel the pain and not a strong Aboriginal man who just bashed up his woman and molested his children and can get away with it. Now I believe it's not right what that spirit did. Allows him to get away with damaging his woman's life and his children's life, and then giving more power to go and do it again to another woman and her children. But they didn't give me a big strong body. Maybe that is good! I paint my stories.

I'm trying my best to promote our culture, not in the sense of after colonization, but more so before colonization. So I live by the principles that We Al-li has put down, because ... That's It. And the very first one of those principles is safety, respect, trust, honesty, confidentiality, participation, and truth. So I live by those principles. When I feel an Aboriginal man is receiving respect that he didn't work for, he's damaged a lot of human beings' lives, and he receives more power to go out and do that harm, I feel ashamed. I feel betrayed because I'm the one that's still living the pain and not getting paid for it. And that's not right. I shouldn't have to keep living the pain and trauma and do healing for other people who aren't willing to pay. I got to live too. But art is my healing, so I share that.

That's one of the hurtful things about healing is the pain. Now, psychologists, counsellors, therapists, they get paid hundreds of dollars an hour for doing that work. I don't receive that. I've never received that. I'm just trying to earn money from my artwork, to earn a living. I've been on the unemployment benefits since I was 16 and never been off it once. Yeah, I've done a lot of work. Yes, I worked in my father's generation out in the country and the bush. So what turns me away from healing, what makes me angry about healing is that I'm not being paid. I'm not being compensated for the damages and the side effects that has done to me. I have lost my faith, have lost my trust through healing. I have lost my love for my mum, my Aboriginal people, my respect. I have lost my respect and trust for my Aboriginal spirit and white man's spirit. And I just see us as human beings. And I'm not the one to grab the knife and stab somebody with it. I'm not the one with the axe who's going to chop that human being down.

[facilitator: Can I just double check if I'm understanding right? So when you're saying about when you hear other people's pain in their stories, it brings pain to your body, but you're not being compensated for taking the weight of that pain. Is that right?]

Something like that, basically. I have an ABN number; I have an Indigenous therapy certificate. There's a human being that when they offload on me, that gives them the space in their being to go on continue receiving help, support or to go and do work. And there's another human being that offloads and just keeps offloading and does nothing to help themselves heal, doesn't do any work for community, doesn't do any work for individual or groups, but they just keep on offloading their problems, their pain and trauma onto other people. So the people I don't like to work with. However, the people that offload, that I allow to offload onto me, that are going to work and helping other people, that is a different story. I'm proud of some of the individuals that offload on me and go out and seek more support from other people. Or go and do voluntary work themselves or find paid work themselves. But the energy where some other human beings just keep offloading and offloading and offloading, that sends me insane. What I receive from that is, it's nothing but yeah, mental illness, depression, emotional trauma, and the isms of alcohol, drugs, sex, gambling. All these things have all different personalities and I'm listening, and they go my head. But the trauma is coming from down here [lower tummy]. So to do this healing by myself

has been very difficult, but I have no one to support me. One of the reasons why I don't contact Jude, because Jude has her own life. She doesn't need me there. She has other people to do the work that I do. They're more qualified human beings. And I just have to be happy and satisfied with what I've got now. And just hope that We Al-li continues to go forward and just hope one day that the federal government does come to the table and accept We Al-li healing for the whole nation. And until that happens, I will always have a boundary up against Aboriginal human beings and non-Aboriginal human beings, because we all have pain, but aren't brave enough to try to heal it.

And I just have to keep on, well, I keep on living and surviving the best way I can. Maybe it's not the way that I want to do it, but that's the way I wake up in the morning. Because I've tried to change it, I've tried to change my lifestyle, I've tried to change my social lifestyle, I've tried to change my occupation, my employment. It's because I've built relationships up in community through work, basically. I've had to work 10 times harder than any Aboriginal human being that I know in Boundary Street to earn trust of retail workers, shop owners, elders. I work over and I get paid one job once a week. I get paid \$50 for doing two

hours co-facilitating art over at Arts from the Margins over in the valley. So I work hard to earn trust and respect. But when I'm working 10 times harder than another human being to earn it ... Well that's what I had to do. I felt that I had to work to earn my trust and respect and community, to find my place here in Western Community House and the broader, basically. So there is art group that I go to in the afternoon. I'm a participant. It's always somebody, personality, inside me somewhere that hasn't received my permission to be inside me or to work inside me, and I'm not being paid for it. That hurts. Doesn't make me feel good, doesn't make me feel resilient. So I hope the spirit would've blessed me with that resilience, but it never did. But, still, I continue to live.

Well, I'm not going to be the hero, because there's no pay in it but when it comes to healing, I have to pick myself back up again and brush myself off and walk as if nothing's happened. Go on to the next issue in life. I don't like doing this work by myself because I don't have support. I honestly do not have support when it comes to We Al-li healing here. I've become too afraid to mention it because of lack of support. So when the people found out that I was going to Byron they liked the idea that I was going, but bringing that home with me is a different story.

So I wasn't able to share what happened inside We Al-li healing, in mapping out the history of our trauma. Outside I was able to share that. I went outside to walk in the rain with my boots on, and just as I went to take the step out something inside me said, take off my shoes, to walk that land bare footed. I have sciatica and my left foot is painful. I knew what was happening straight away. And because I'm experienced at it, I followed it. I could see the rivers flowing and I knew what the old people down there wanted me to do. They wanted me to walk that land bare footed, and it was helping healing this nerve here. So I walked barefoot for the five days and was feeling really good.

Coming back is a different story. But the old people also gave me the opportunity to look at some country in Australia that's been traumatised, so I realised there's a lot of other country that is plentiful with love. The country back home is very traumatized. My foot isn't able to walk bare footed or flat footed on that country because the pain of the massacres is still unhealed. Whereas the country down in the Northern Rivers is different. I was able to walk bare footed. So that was something that I was able to share, but what happened inside the Healing Circle itself, I had to keep my mouth shut because I saw others had their own pain.

Some people aren't ready to go into depths of having an understanding of the inter-generational trauma in family violence, alcohol and drug abuse, in Australia, and what colonisation has done to our world. They don't want to know about that.

RESPONSE TO DUANE'S STORY

BY DAVID SARGENT

Listening to Duane's recording, I could hear his voice's sadness, resignation, frustration, disgust, and anger. His story was challenging to hear, but his reaction was completely understandable. No one should have to endure such trauma. My way of dealing with stress is to run. After the recording finished, I ran as far as possible to wear out my body and calm my mind.

A few days later, I listened again. I could still hear the trauma, but this time, I noticed aspects of happiness, beauty, ambition, and hopefulness in Duane's voice that I had previously missed. His story is tragic but also inspirational.

This image represents Duane's story, with the word 'human' drawn multiple times. Every version is incomplete, damaged, blurred, or worn, but it creates an unbreakable and enduring composition when layered and combined.



ERIN

I'm a Yorta Yorta and Gunaikurnai woman from Victoria. You would've seen on the news that, as we speak and last week, my Country is being flooded. I think Barmah Forest and Cummeragunja are preparing. The Dungala and the Kaiela—the Murray River and the Goulburn River—are just cleansing the earth, I suppose.

I work as an executive in government. I have two kids and a husband, and I love gardening. I'm a deep thinker, so the way that I express my Aboriginal spirituality is through things like writing poetry. That's me in a little nutshell. I didn't grow up on my Country. I grew up on Darumbal Country in Rockhampton, Qld, and now I live on Ngunawal Country in Canberra, ACT, and have worked for the public service for about 20 odd years in Aboriginal Affairs. I've seen two "Closing the Gaps," and to me, this one is probably the best. I did We Al-li training in July 2022, one of their first face-to-face trainings after the floods in Lismore. I've got the certificate over there. It was the one on Dadirri.

I am a product of intergenerational trauma, and I live with it every day of my life. I've been doing a lot of personal healing work after burning out at the end of last year. Doing the We Al-li Dadirri training was meant to be part of that process. Professionally, I like to enable self-determination wherever I work or in whatever I'm doing, so my work paid for me to attend the training, which was amazing. My workplace is always dealing with vulnerable people or people who are in a vulnerable place. Being able to train up our workforce to be able to handle those conversations in a trauma-informed way, then, makes a better service than just processing.

Have I seen changes around me as a result of doing the We Al-li training? Look, there's nothing tangible that I can point to, like writing it into a strategy. It's more the conversations that I've had within different areas of the organisation. I use my position in the executive to plant seeds. I'm not a HR specialist, but I work in that department, doing workforce modernisation. So, I've also been able to apply We Al-li's principles when speaking with customers, who are vulnerable people and the workforce. There was a social worker from my work at the workshop as well, but for me to attend as an executive in HR is itself a transformation because I was able to pitch the cultural value, in both a personal and professional sense, that the workshop would bring to supporting me in my job in a mainstream organisation.

What enables me to introduce trauma-integrated ways of working? It's definitely my position. Working in HR and the executive, I have exposure across the agency. My networks are also important because as their first Aboriginal executive, I'm able to build the cultural capability of my staff. I bring a lot of culture to the way I think and the way I practise and the way I lead. For me, it's a matter of trying to get people to think a little bit differently.

Within my department, we do a lot of engagement across the organisation, so I will be part of conversations around our servicing strategy for vulnerable people, for example, or our servicing strategy for Indigenous people, although I hate that word for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. I'm exposed to different facets across the organisation and can bring in a trauma-informed approach. What does that look like? For me, it's deep listening. It's listening to and seeing the whole person, not just the outside.

That's essentially how I plant the seeds—by championing the work. I share the We Al-li website and Judy's TEDx talk, which I've shared amongst the government executives and my executive peers. At our executive planning day, I shared a Miriam-Rose video as well as the learnings from the training. These are people who are not only looking after our workforce, including our Aboriginal workforce, but also feeding into conversations across the organisation, and they've been quite positive about what I've shared. I don't know where they've taken it, but I've never really looked to tell you the truth. But as I said, I am very careful about managing my energy levels, particularly after burning out, so I just make sure my patch is doing

“After the training, I could reflect and see trauma in other people and that the organisation I work for, as a collective, is also in trauma. There are remnants of poor decision-making and the impact that had on people, including the workforce.”

the right thing and leave it up to others to take things forward. Once you understand trauma, you can see trauma in yourself, and that’s really hard to look at. After the training, I could reflect and see trauma in other people and that the organisation I work for, as a collective, is also in trauma. There are remnants of poor decision-making and the impact that had on people, including the workforce.

What would help me to continue this healing work? Maybe a network of past participants or facilitators—an alumni-type thing where you can just check back in at any time, learn more, or revisit some of the training. While you can make connections with people at the training, you may not necessarily be in their sphere. When I was at my training, I wrote a poem and left a segment of that poem with the facilitators as a gift, as a reciprocal thing. Dadirri is, for me, a gift of knowledge and tools with which to operate, both personally and professionally, if you have the opportunity. So, I would just like to say thank you from

the bottom of my heart for the gift of Dadirri and the We Al-li training.

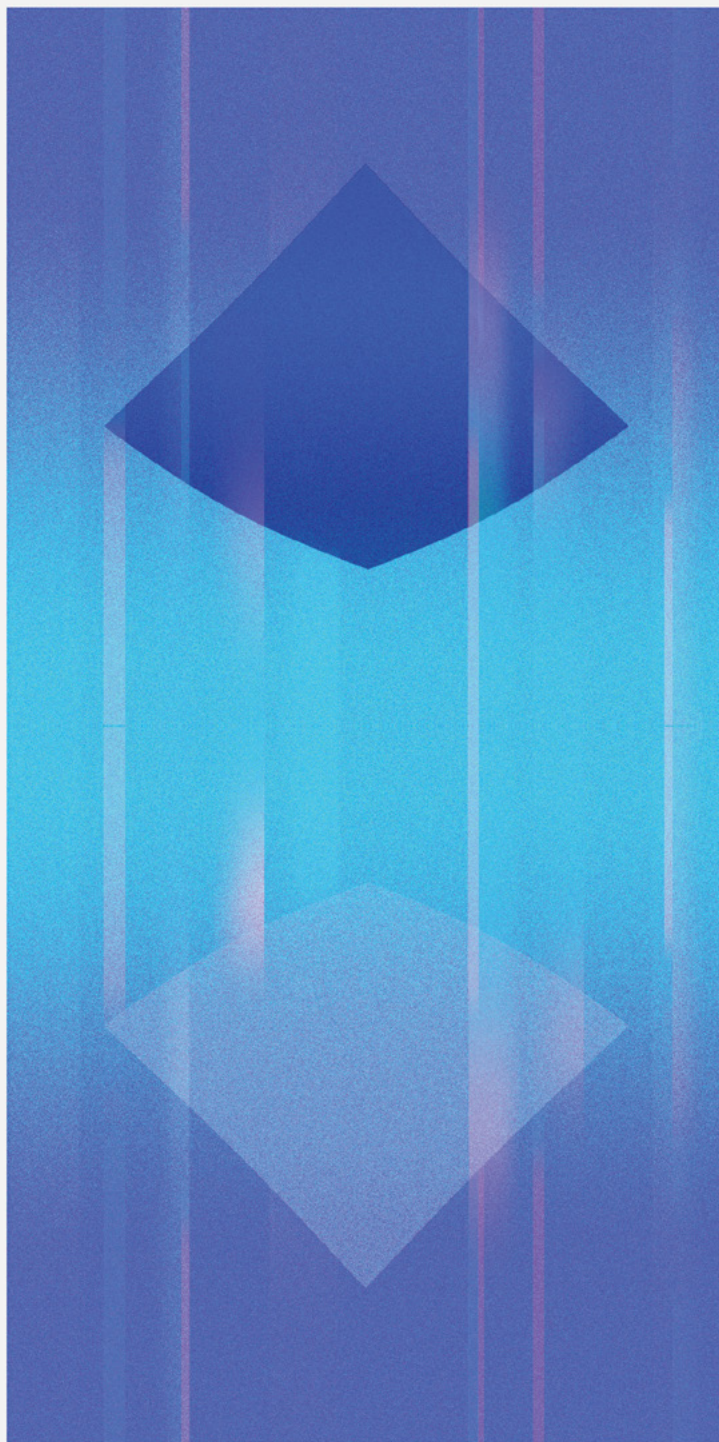
How ready would I be to facilitate healing for others? The thing is you need to hold space for yourself to be able to help others. And if the situation is triggering for you, then it’s very difficult to step into that difficult space unsupported. I’m already doing difficult work with myself, let alone trying to deal with it in a work context. As I said before, I was psychologically harmed by my last workplace, so I have to be really careful about stepping into those difficult situations. That’s not to say that I don’t want to or that I don’t want to help but given the impact that it has on me after the event, it takes a lot of time to pull myself back together as a whole person. That’s why I was gardening this afternoon: I was trying to bring myself back from some re-triggering moments with family. It just takes a little while for me to get back that same spark. And it’s those healing practices like mindfulness, touching base with the aunties, listening to stories, and being connected to the ground—the earth—that help.

After the training, I was really inspired to work in the field. When I say “work in the field,” I mean train people who work in the field. I am interested in becoming a facilitator because I believe that deep listening is the core of humanity. Deep listening to Country and to each other is the essence of life. I’d like to do that.

RESPONSE TO ERIN'S STORY BY LACHLAN CAMPBELL

This work represents the acceptance and acknowledgement of trauma and learning to not entirely heal but to live with it, allowing it to become another facet of yourself among countless other things that make up you.

It also symbolises the peace and calm I feel personally by the sea and in the sea, almost as if I am taken to another reality, one of peace and serenity. This is much like Indigenous Australians seeing a river as a symbol of life, as it has ebs and flows but always moves in one direction.



GIGI

I am an Aboriginal woman living in Western Australia, with connections to the south-west of Western Australia through my mother and to the Northern Territory through my father. I have five children and four grandchildren. Always got to do that: introduce myself along with my children, as this is one of the most important roles that I play today.

I found the We Al-li training that I've done in Western Australia to be quite a bit of an eyeopener, as an Aboriginal person in that working space. It was a different way of working and being trauma-informed in my role at that time, and it complemented not only my employment but, when I think about it, my everyday life. You see, my mum was Stolen Gen, so already there's a deficit before healing becomes a conversation. With the intergenerational trauma, I feel that it's important when going into a workspace to hold on to your identity and try not to be identified as that trauma. I have worked in roles that were 50D, which, for those who do not know, is an employment category specifically for Aboriginal people, as they come with a

specialised skill set. I do not believe that organisations that advertise 50D roles fully understand what such a role entails, which would include being trauma informed. This is a disconnection that takes place in the working space. You can see it in the community as well.

Some organisations fall short in creating a safe space for Aboriginal workers. In my experience, I struggled to hold on to my identity and utilise my specialised skill set while operating in 50D roles. I found it hard to negotiate in these roles, as my Aboriginality was my strength, but I was being told, "This is how an Aboriginal person should act." I felt that it was tokenistic, one of those "tick the

box” processes. I have been employed in Aboriginal organisations where there have been neither safety nor trauma-informed practices applied in the workplace. Workers, particularly Aboriginal workers, were triggered daily in these environments. Vicarious trauma. As I am doing this interview, there is an awareness of the changes that are happening out there for Aboriginal people—it is not all bad. One example is how I was able to navigate and try to come to a space and have myself heard there. It’s an interesting space as you evolve and hold your own.

The We Ali-li training gave me the opportunity to say, “Yeah, it’s okay for me to validate my thoughts and feelings, as well as my lived experience, and bring them forth as I can connect.” The training gave me the opportunity to be aware of trauma, to see it in other people, and to identify it, even in organisations. And I knew that, if needed, I had support. This was followed by a healing process—going back to Country, reconnecting back to the circle of females in my family, especially the female elders, and getting strength from their knowledge and wisdom, so that I can say, “Okay, yeah, I’m alright—I am not on my own here.” I was able to identify this trauma, which had been carried from my teenage to my adult years. Growing up, I did not know that this feeling of disconnection was associated

with trauma. But when I came into the We-Ali-li training, I began to connect the dots in terms of my mum. It was a light bulb moment, in which I thought, “Oh, *this* is what you are talking about.” From there, I was able to reconnect to before Mum was institutionalised, following the trauma-informed healing practices. This came in the form of stories, family gatherings, walking on Country where my mother was born, celebrating my ancestors’ strength and resilience, and acknowledging the journeys that they took for me to be present today. It was along the lines of epigenetics. I was given a tool to open my DNA and connect to a frequency of cultural safety.

What would help me to continue the healing work? Maybe a chance, through yarning, to ask people from the training where they’re at now. It creates pathways to other opportunities for healing. I’ve even bought some of the We Ali-li products (cards, posters, and so on), which I have since used in my line of work—for instance, facilitating group healing and giving participants tools to use on their own after the training, so that they can maintain their self-care and healing.

When I did the training, I was very shy. Public speaking? Oh my God! I dreaded speaking in front of people. If ever I could use any excuse to go to the toilet, it was

“Am I ready to help others do the hard healing work? That’s hard because you are going through your own healing journey as well. I mean, broken can’t fix broken.”

at those times. But the training gave me a voice—and I did not know that I had one. And so, with that, I’d just like to say thank you for seeing and hearing me. It was empowering. I doodled all the way through the training to distract myself from my shyness. But it’s when you are acknowledged that you see new trauma. And it was beautiful how the facilitators did their delivery. It was safe and a soft way to connect with trauma. I think that’s the biggest thing: creating that safety and trust.

Am I ready to help others do the hard healing work? That’s hard because you are going through your own healing journey as well. I mean, broken can’t fix broken. But somewhere in your own safety, you can gauge if you can take that work on, if the safe place has been created beforehand. You need to have safe people around you while you step into that space. This is important. Currently, trauma is everywhere, and the beauty of it is that people in my experience are open to their stories of trauma—of homelessness, AOD, suicide, mental health, removal of children, incarceration, etc. I do believe

that owning your story is powerful and that resilience is how the story ends. I mean, we all have a story, right?

Healing is a huge space to go into without being fully supported. And I’m not sure what that support would look like. I do believe that some workplaces, though, do not cater for or promote healing, especially in terms of Aboriginal cultures. Keeping the diversity of Aboriginal cultures in mind, grief and loss take a lot of time to process. I have been in workplaces where there were huge moments of grief and loss, and Aboriginal workers were given the same leave entitlements as non-Aboriginal workers. This was not long enough for them, as there was a different set of cultural obligations and protocols involved. For Aboriginal people, it’s a holistic approach—spiritually, physically, mentally, and so on—to Country, so more time was needed in order to pay cultural respect and grieve. There’s the need for self-care, too, which is part of the mindfulness, but most important are the boundaries. And it’s hard for us as Aboriginal people to put those in place

without being or feeling judged. And because we don't have downtime when we come home from work, there is a lot of other stuff happening that leaves us open to burnout. It's a matter of saying, "Okay, I can only cope with this much. I know my limits."

The We Al-li training answered questions for me regarding intergenerational trauma and just trauma in general, as well as the healing practices that we have—our own cultural healing. We Al-li opened the door and the focus on mindfulness, as in Dadirri. It gave me an opportunity to look at our Noongar word here in Western Australia for mindfulness practices, which I've forgotten, but I think that in all Aboriginal cultures, there will be a word for Dadirri in language. It's just connecting back to our roots—because our culture was interrupted. We Al-li is a brilliant program for sure. I really did enjoy it once I got over my shyness. It's about connections, isn't it? And the most important one is to the self. If you can connect with yourself, it's a breeze with everyone else.

RESPONSE TO GIGI'S STORY

BY GENE WILSON

In this project I am expressing my interpretation of the yarn I listened to. The way I saw it was the layers of trauma from family, institutions and systems like layers in an old tree where each ring is from responding and developing from these experiences and follow how we grow.

I've also included some quotes; some verbatim and some paraphrasing to highlight some key insights into the We Al-li training and how this has helped people understand themselves and feel grounded in their identity.



planting seeds

seeing the whole person

the way i think, practice, lead

once you understand the trauma within yourself you can see the trauma in others

if you can connect with yourself it's a breeze with anyone else

hold the identity of who you are

JEDDA

I am a descendant of the Wiradjuri nation through my mum's side of the family. My nan's family was from Peak Hill, NSW, and before that, Bulgandramine Mission, which is Bogan River mob. I also have Irish and English through my great-grandfather, who was a mission worker from England.

I'm still learning a lot about my family history, as I didn't connect much with it as a younger person. It took my mum until I was having kids for her to start sharing a bit more and gently pushing me towards other family members. I live in Sydney; I always have. At the moment, I'm on Gadigal Wangal Country in the inner west of Sydney, and I grew up on Gadigal Bidjigal Country, which is more in South Sydney, quite close to the beach but not on it. Growing up, I had a lot of beach friends who used to tell us that we weren't on the beach—there's a big hill, and we were behind that hill. Still, I connect very strongly with salt water and don't like to get too far from it.

I have a partner and two young school-age children who also keep me busy, and I'm currently working part-time so that I can have more space in my life for family.

I have a kind of hybrid work role. It's partly academic, partly professional. I do a bit of staff training, run some community of practice groups, and do a lot of research support. The person I work with does a lot of work in justice health, so I'm learning a lot about research design and survey design. My background is in qualitative research, particularly storytelling methodologies, but I'm trying to learn more about quantitative methodologies, like measuring wellbeing and knowing what questions to ask in order to do that. There's certainly been a lot of stretching and growth involved in this.

Finally, I've been looking into retraining in the mental health field and have been looking into different options, like social work or counselling, with universities and private providers. Part of this decision came out of doing the We Al-li training a

few years ago, which really affirmed my desire to work in that way and that space. I did the two-day face-to-face “Dadirri Ancient Mindfulness” workshop in Lismore in 2020. Then, in 2021, I did the two online eight-week Dadirri programmes, which are self-paced. I just went quite slowly through that. I have also attended a couple of the seasonal webinars.

What did I know about trauma beforehand? I thought I had a bit of an understanding, but that changed through the training. I became aware of a different way of thinking about it and saw it as something embedded in people’s lives, including my own family’s. Before doing We Al-li training, I thought of trauma as contained within particular things that could happen to people. I understood that trauma can be an effect of sexual abuse, for instance, or family violence, domestic violence, war, and things like that, but I didn’t quite appreciate the intergenerational effects of trauma or the way that trauma can start to look like culture. It can start to look like the way people relate to each other, particularly in terms of hypervigilance and what that lack of safety feels like in the body. I suppose that thinking about that was probably the first time I’d really thought about not only trauma but also healing as happening both in the body and in between bodies as a very physical thing.

I’ve done some mainstream trauma-informed practice training and have really enjoyed it. All of those clinical perspectives, such as that of Dan Siegel, are really great. But with We Al-li, the content is Indigenous-specific, so specific to this place and its history, and held within both the bodies of Aboriginal people and the Country that everyone walks on. It’s a way of connecting and making it everybody’s business in a way, or everybody’s responsibility. Whenever I start learning about trauma-informed principles now, I always think, “Oh, we did that in the We Al-li workshops.” We would dance or sing, discharging and metabolising the story that we just heard. We also had time to sit quietly by ourselves, as well as time to share with others and then celebrate. There was always a balance of heaviness and healing or connection that meant we were able to embody all of these principles. It wasn’t so much the content as the way that we were being taught. Unlike other training I’ve undertaken, at the end of the We Al-li training, I felt like everything had really sunk in.

We Al-li training has been very transformative in a holistic way. I use the self-care techniques of grounding (five things you can see, three things you can

“You can be doing all the political work you like, but if you’re not checking in and looking after yourself, if you don’t have communities of care, and if people aren’t being healed through the work, then we’re not going to make any progress.”

hear) for sure, especially at work. For a while, I’ve been trying to bring more slowness into the way that I work and the way that I relate to people. The We AI-li trainings have been affirmative and given me a language and permission to do precisely that—to take time, to set things up right, to start the relationship, and in each case, not be so concerned about the checklist of tasks and content, because each will get done properly if we take time to get there in our own way. For example, in my previous job, I was involved in a large-scale collaborative project looking at institutional responses to racism, and taking the time to set up the relationships properly helped avoid what might have otherwise ended up being really adversarial—a “This is my turf, and that’s your turf” situation. There are many different people involved in that space from many different walks of life, so it needs to be a holistic and slow way of working.

Understanding is also really important. You hear people say that there can be no justice without healing. We AI-li has made

it possible for me to understand what this actually means. You can be doing all the political work you like, but if you’re not checking in and looking after yourself, if you don’t have communities of care, and if people aren’t being healed through the work, then we’re not going to make any progress. Instead, we’ll just keep going around and around and around—and probably harm ourselves and others in the process. This also comes back to taking time to understand that while I might be feeling good and doing some great work, there might be other people in the room who are struggling. We need to be mindful that the space must allow everyone involved to heal.

I haven’t undertaken the We AI-li facilitators trainings, so I haven’t pulled too much of that into anything that I do. I respect that this is not something for me to do, nor would I feel confident in doing so. It is all woven together, so what impact does taking one bit and leaving the rest have? On more of a personal level, there is a difficulty in that you are exploring yourself, and while you might feel on top

of stuff in terms of where you are, who you are, and where you come from, you can easily be surprised. For instance, the online training took me a lot longer than eight weeks to do. But I have a real trust that if you're getting stuck, there will be something there—a tool of sorts—to help you get unstuck. Whenever I begin something new, such as teaching or a workshop, I like to read a poem, maybe something by Ali Cobby Eckermann. And then, all too often, I've had a sea of people in ties look at me, thinking, "Who is this chick? What have we signed up for you?"

I don't think I'm very well equipped at all to facilitate the hard healing work for others. I'm not ready. My background is in sociology, so I don't have experience in healing work, and that's partly why I want to do more study. There are frameworks and experience that you need. I have a colleague who works with Aboriginal families who've lost someone in custody, and I'm helping to design some aspects of the process. She asked, "Oh, would you feel comfortable coming in and talking with those families?" And I got to all of body know from that, but also because I feel like I'm not the person that they need. Even within my own family, I'll sometimes say something to a relative like, "Oh, my grandma told me this happened then. But that's weird because I thought Mum was

living here at that time." It's one of those questions where you're trying to work things out, and eventually a story emerges. There are really traumatic things that have happened to my family members: a lot of sexual violence, being separated, and being taken away. I'm always grateful to be able to listen to those stories and be someone who, I believe, can hold the space. While it has given me some tools to take care of myself, the training has also made me realise what is required of this work. There is a lot to get under my belt before I'd feel confident in being able to be supportive rather than accidentally contributing to someone else's harm or even harming myself in the process.

In terms of the flow-on effects of the training, I'm not really sure. I was involved in a collaborative project looking at anti-racism and addressing racism last year. I was doing the online We Al-li modules around that time, and I'd already completed the Dadirri training, all of which informed the way we worked. We all co-facilitated and engaged with the principles of being slow, setting things up safely, and being holistic. We weren't just engaging with the head, but also using the heart and the body and listening. For many of the people involved, that was a totally new way of working, and quite a few expressed an interest in learning more. There was even

a period when I couldn't stop saying, "Oh, you should really do the We Al-li training" or "Have you thought about doing the We Al-li training?" I would also weave in resources whenever I could. I don't know what people did with those prompts, but I certainly have recommended the training to a lot of people. A community or a group would help me implement the ways of working and potential changes that We Al-li has taught. People are everywhere, so while I love in-person meetings, it would be valuable to have an online community where we could share the things that we're learning or trying and simply continue connecting.

We Al-li, I want to say thank you because I have nothing but positive things to say, think, and feel. It's such a gift. I have this We Al-li Dadirri resource with the beautiful artwork on the front with me. Sometimes, I take it with me if I know I'm about to have a hard meeting with people asking terrible questions or saying terrible things that are difficult to hear culturally.

RESPONSE TO JEDDA'S STORY

BY AMY CRIPPS

The line I chose to exhibit for the We-Ali Project was from Yarn one, spoken by Jedda at 19:18mins in

“...after many generations trauma can start to look like culture”

After research and discussions, I chose to create a physical woven piece to represent this sentence. Using the traditional form of weaving I have created eight circles of various sizes. These circles are representing the generations of a family tree. The paper medium of the circles helps emphasise this connection with the idea of a family tree to the viewer.

Two different threads of plastic and cotton were used for the wording in the piece. This was to represent two sides of a family coming together and the various generational traumas of each that affect the overall pieces appearances.

Each circle has a specific representation of generational trauma The piece when viewed briefly appears cohesive, though a little messy. However, upon further inspection the viewer can see issues within the piece that stem from the previous circle.

Though simple in appearance, I hope the small details help the viewer connect the piece with their own experience with generational trauma and how over time that it has become their family culture.



WAMBUI

I am of Kenyan heritage and currently work with children on Ngarrindjeri country. I feel deeply thankful for the land that I work on and the rich culture of the Ngarrindjeri people who have cared for these lands.

Prior to doing the trauma-informed care and practice training through We Al-li, I had some knowledge of trauma that I had gained through studying at university and other training sessions in my previous work life. I had learnt more about theories and research on how trauma impacts people, as well as different approaches to giving support. What stood out to me in the Ali training was the emphasis on holding space to create a safe environment—because trauma has very many layers and it takes time to process. There are similarities with what I have learnt before, but We-Ali incorporates Indigenous perspectives more specifically, which works beautifully. The focus was on connection to people and Country.

During the training, there was an emphasis on waiting and breathing deeply together. I love that the training started with Dadirri. We listened, closed our eyes, and then watched a clip by Miriam Rose. During the training, there was connection around the circle: people truly listened, and the

facilitators modelled patience, which led to deeper conversations. It reminded me of just how important it is to be present—when I'm with a child, when I'm with a family, and when I'm in a space where I'm not sure what I'm meant to do. I can trust that listening deeply to a person carries weight and that they feel that connection.

The organisation that I work for recognises the tragic impact of past injustice and generational trauma that has contributed to the systemic disadvantage faced by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, which makes it a lot easier to be exposed to more in-depth training sessions. I am also grateful for the opportunity to learn from other people's stories. When I listen to someone who has gone through intergenerational trauma and something has triggered them, I need to stay attuned and sit in the space, allowing time and space for the healing process. I want to keep committing to being present and advocating for change.

I feel that there are similarities with my own cultural heritage and my country's journey through colonisation, and I have a drive to challenge the stereotypical attitudes that inform culture today. I find it helpful to read books about other people's experiences of choosing to be the change. It is encouraging, and when something is relatable, I think, "It is not just me thinking something. It's actually a thing!"

I value moments when there is an opportunity to encourage a shift in perspective, when I can walk alongside someone and ask, "Have you thought of it this way? Have you considered this other perspective?" Challenging thinking rooted in racist beliefs is a passion that I have, especially when I engage with people who are willing to learn. I feel that the truth also needs to be told internationally. When I was back home, I didn't know about the rich Aboriginal cultural heritage; the picture that I received of Australia was different. It's so important to tell the whole story.

RESPONSE TO WAMBUI'S STORY

BY CATHY LUONG

The pain we hear in stories are pains that have been lived before.

This statement is the first thought I had after listening to Wambui's experience with We Al-li and it continues to resonate with me long after listening to the yarn. Wambui tells the importance of listening to stories with patience and willingness to hear discomfort because difficult stories of trauma are the traumatic experience of others. As a means to raise awareness, I chose to incorporate the words in the shape of a heart, a symbol of our life and our blood.

Words in any context, particularly stories, hold immense power in directing the narrative. Like Wambui, I have become more willing to not turn away from discomfort in stories and to be present when I listen to others' narrative.

THE
PAIN
WE
HEAR
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RUTH

I'm a psychotherapist, originally from Canada, and my roots are Eastern European Jew. I'm 62 years old, queer-identified, and moved to the Northern Rivers in 1997. We were extremely flood-affected in early 2022, and I have become passionately involved with the Northern Rivers Community Healing Hub since that time.

The Healing Hub was initiated in the aftermath by Carlie Atkinson of We Al-li, and you could say that at the time of the disaster, it became an anchor for me to find a meaningful way to be in the world that we're currently living in and to address the challenging times that we face environmentally and socially.

I spent some 20 years as an activist fighting for forest protection and land rights as well as in social change work, and this, the Healing Hub, brings together my interest in trauma and healing with social change and Indigenous ways of being. So that's some of who I am at the moment. I also live on the land in an intentional community with my doggy, growing food and sitting by the creek.

I did the Dadirri in-person workshop at Invercauld House in Lismore, up at

Southern Cross University, sometime in the last three years. Before that, I was already working with people with high levels of trauma when I worked for several years at an organisation that was contracted with the Royal Commission into the Institutional Response for Child Sexual Abuse. I offered psychotherapy sessions to people, often disadvantaged and marginalised people, who presented with severe trauma, often complex trauma and comorbidity, and usually familial trauma followed by institutional trauma and then social trauma when they became adults. I later transitioned to my private practice, where I largely continue to work with childhood and adult trauma.

Regarding the historic intergenerational trauma of First Nations people, I have learnt things through reading and various media, as well as through my activism

work when I have worked on land rights campaigns with local Indigenous people. For instance, I worked to support Wiradjuri Elders to halt the gold mine that went in at Lake Cowal in Central West NSW in an effort to stop the desecration of the sacred lands there. So, I also have a sense of lived trauma happening in the now for people and hearing their stories.

Being a Jewish person, there's a certain amount of trauma in my family lineage that I carry personally—an intergenerational experience of trauma that's in my somatic experience and awareness. I have a tendency to work somatically with my clients based initially on trainings grounded in the works of Bessel van der Kolk, Steven Porges' vagus nerve theory, and Pat Ogden's sensory motor work, people who work with the understanding that trauma sits in our cellular memory and can be healed in the present without having to excavate the story from the past, that we can find the story that wants to emerge from the cellular memory, the bodily response. I also employ an approach that is somewhat hypnotherapeutic, where the client works in a deeper state of consciousness to change the end of the story, moving from the sense of helplessness into what's called a moment of triumph, where they feel into the bodily responses of being rescued or protected from the trauma in some way. The body

holds the story, and we redo the ending so that the cellular memory is changed over time and the client can better manage triggers that arise. I did some work on this method with Forrest James from the Gestalt Institute in Lismore. This is one of my main approaches to working with trauma, but every person is different, and a lot of my work involves what we could call deep listening and being with—just being there to hold space while people share their stories.

I couldn't really say anything specific changed following the We AI-li training. It's more of a cumulative process that builds on previous ways of being and previous knowledge. For instance, the training began with a smoking ceremony with Uncle Gilbert. I can't remember much of what he said, but at the time it was very impactful and added to my previous knowledge of Bundjalung country, which I live on and with. And while perhaps I did not see a direct impact on my work at the time, sometime a year or two later, I am involved with this Healing Hub, where yarning circles and weaving circles are at the core of the cultural healing activities that we offer and where our work is based in an Aboriginal healing model, specifically the Culturally Informed, Trauma Integrated Healing Approach framework from We AI-li.

While I don't remember many of the specifics of the training, I have a positive sense overall that sits with me still—a visceral feeling. In particular, there was this one magical, mystical space that my group entered into during a small group exercise in which Aunt Judy had invited us to connect to past, present, and future. I've worked with groups my whole life, but through this method, I saw and felt a kind of shared consciousness arise, where the whole group was in an altered space together, connected—something that I had only experienced on a couple of occasions beforehand. We could feel that something was happening together, but it wasn't really being spoken about: our sense of time had merged, so that we were experiencing the past, the present, and the future all in the now. Meanwhile, we were working with clay and other materials, and all kinds of little yarns were happening about that. But the group feeling is what I took away. There was a woman present who I had seen out and about in the community for years previously. When I met her after the training, she expressed her awe of the exercise, and it felt as if our relationship had deepened into something special.

Through the training, I deepened my understanding of a sense of belonging and social cohesion. It's an experience that I have now with an Aboriginal model for

healing trauma, which involves creating connections and telling your stories. Those elements were all there at that time. And in some ways, maybe today, even while I'm talking to you, I'm just now integrating what happened. In a way, that experience was like waiting, forming a foundation for what was to come next. I know what an Aboriginal healing model feels like and looks like, and it's helped to form a foundation for being a non-Indigenous person in a space that's practicing an Indigenous way of healing.

I'm really happy I came to this yarn because I hadn't really thought about how that experience might have been percolating underneath. I've had a lot of experience with deep listening and facilitation of similar group processes, but the Dadirri workshop had its own special characteristics. It almost felt that though very little, a lot happened—a case of “Here's the ingredients. Now put the people together, and something will happen.” If I had to say what changed, it would be that the training deepened my sense of trust in the process of circle, especially a Dadirri circle, in a cognitive and visceral way. If we sit here, what's meant to happen will happen.

Following the workshops, I joined the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia culturally informed, trauma-

“Am I ready to do the hard work of helping communities heal the complex effects of trauma? I could imagine holding space and working with a team, for sure. The Dadirri training plus what I’ve done now at the Healing Hub makes me feel quite comfortable working in a yarning circle fashion with groups dealing with violence, issues of sexual assault, or suicidality.”

integrated group, but I never heard from them. I’ve heard Judy Atkinson speak a number of times, and I watched Aunt Judy’s talks by the fireside that she gave during the COVID-19 pandemic. I follow the work of We Al-li because I am so impressed. So, when the floods came and somebody included me at the Healing Hub, I was just thrilled. Yes, I would’ve done it whether or not I’d participated in that workshop, but I can also see how one thing builds on another, how our life experience accumulates. To me, healing trauma and being an ally to Indigenous peoples are what the world needs right now—the change that needs to happen, the healing of that trauma, and the possibility of bringing those ways out into our world.

As to why I was keen to get close to We Al-li, I first heard Judy Atkinson speak over 20 years ago about the historical trauma of First Nations peoples in a very emotive and expressive way that shook me to my core. I think what draws me to this work is the combination of Indigenous healing of trauma, Indigenous ways, and

women; together, these create some feeling of accessibility. I didn’t meet Carlie Atkinson until the Healing Hub, but I had heard of her work. After reading about their offerings on their website and corresponding a bit through email, I felt like the overlap of those elements—women, healing, and the CITIHA framework—was where I was meant to be next, and We Al-li represents that. It’s bringing culture to the foundation of our communities.

Am I ready to do the hard work of helping communities heal the complex effects of trauma? I could imagine holding space and working with a team, for sure. The Dadirri training plus what I’ve done now at the Healing Hub makes me feel quite comfortable working in a yarning circle fashion with groups dealing with violence, issues of sexual assault, or suicidality. I am comfortable working individually in one-on-one settings with high levels of trauma, and I have also worked extensively with intense emotional group experiences, particularly in the areas of deep ecology,

ecopsychology, and what they now call eco-anxiety, inviting people's feelings about what's happening to the earth and grounding it in connection to nature. That's a very emotional space to enter, and I've dedicated a lot of my life to travelling the world and giving people a space to feel what's happening to the planet. In terms of working with communities to heal the complex effects of trauma, I feel that it relies on being present, mindful, and attuned, and I trust that I would be able to demonstrate each. As a non-Indigenous person, though, I could only do so alongside an Indigenous facilitator who is able to work with that community. Our model at the Healing Hub involves two space-holders facilitating a yarning circle at any given time, and if a participant is very triggered, one of the facilitators can move out of the circle with that person and give them some one-on-one attention. So, I couldn't say that having completed the Dadirri workshop makes it possible for me to work in that type of setting, but it has certainly added to my confidence.

The fact is I am very home oriented, so I probably wouldn't find myself in a remote community anymore. Although 20 years ago, I would've loved to have done that—so maybe it's not impossible. I remember doing some training in my 30s in a correctional facility with people who were considered very violent, and I

have significant experience working with suicidality and childhood sexual abuse. But if I were working in settings with large amounts of violence, I would want more training on dealing with violent behaviours in circle spaces. I would also want some local leadership in the circle. I wouldn't want to enter the circle without trusting or knowing anybody.

While I was at the course, I wondered how I would apply the work, the learning, and the experience in the psychotherapy room, which is where much of my work happens. It's all unfolding at The Healing Hub now for me, and I've had another year to grow and learn from it. Overall, I am aware of integrating what I've learnt about yarning with what I already do as a psychotherapist, though it would be helpful to have supervision with a culturally informed, trauma-integrated practitioner and maybe even further training focused on applying Dadirri practices in one-on-one settings. That said, I can see the influence of the training on my yarning style—slowing things down, relaxing into the client's story, and understanding the We Al-li 7R values (Respect, Reciprocity, Relatedness, Rights, Responsibility, Resonance, Resilience). I feel confident that all is unfolding as it needs to, and there is always an abundance of positive client feedback.

My understanding is that We Al-li works around Australia with communities and organisations. For instance, they might provide a cultural wellbeing day to Social Futures here in Lismore that includes weaving and yarnning circles. Or they may be working in a remote community with specific challenges. In the aftermath of the 2022 floods in Lismore, Carlie Atkinson, who is CEO of We Al-li, played an important role in the founding of the Healing Hub. Carlie has strong vision and leadership and is an amazing person. She grounds our team in the principles of participation, the actual elements of what makes a good programme that embraces an Aboriginal healing framework: food, social connection, creative arts, soft surfaces, friendly spaces, and something that's somatic and body oriented. We're starting to transition so that we're not so reliant on Carlie, but through and through, the Healing Hub is, I hope, a model of what We Al-li has to offer in a community that has been devastated in many ways. In fact, the Healing Hub now works in collaboration with many local organisations, including Rekindling the Spirit and Social Futures, and we are frequently part of Lismore City Council community events as well as the Kinship Festival.

RESPONSE TO RUTH'S STORY

BY SOPHIE HART

My visualisation was inspired by one of the participants stories where they discuss a magical moment in the We Ai-li training where there was an unspoken sense of belonging, social cohesion, a deepening of connections, and a shared conscious space. I wanted to recreate this idea of shared consciousness and connection.

The centre artwork is nails and copper wire connections, and the base is a thin piece of wood coated in a thin concrete mix. The background is a collection of relevant text extracted from the yarn, which I have hand written and matched to the earthy gold colours of the main artwork.

I wanted the text to be somewhat illegible so it would not be the focus of the visualisation, but rather as a subtle reinforcement of the concept as well as acknowledgment and appreciation of the participants story.

I saw and felt this kind of shared conscious space arise where the whole group was in an altered space, if you will, connected. Where we could feel that something was happening together, but it wasn't really being spoken about... our sense of time had merged, so that we were experiencing what the exercise asked, which was that the past, the present and the future are all here in the now... our relationship had deepened into, we were bonded forever kind of thing... that the whole thing of sense of belonging and social cohesion, it's an understanding I have now about how the Aboriginal healing model look towards healing trauma... it does it through creating a sense of belonging and connection and telling your stories... the experience of that, I think, is forming a foundation. I know what it feels like and looks like, and it's forming a foundation for being a non-indigenous person in a space that's practicing the indigenous healing way...



TASHA

I am up in Darwin, in the Northern Territory, on Larrakia Country. I was born and bred in Darwin, but my family's originally from Broome. I've mostly lived here in Darwin, a couple of years when I was young over on Melville Island in the Tiwi Islands, and about five years in Perth on Whadjuk Nyoongar Country.

Currently, I'm a teacher, and I've been working in education since 2006 or 2007, when I was about 19 years old. I haven't been in classrooms for about 10 years, as I've been working a lot more in the space of mentoring, child protection, mental health, and suicide prevention. But I'm back in the education field this year as a curriculum specialist. There are only three Aboriginal people in the office, one of whom doesn't very publicly identify as being Aboriginal. So really, there's two of us. My role is Aboriginal Education Officer, and the other lady is in Aboriginal workforce development. We're both holding that space. My experience in the NGO and mental health spaces has been quite beneficial.

I did two different We Al-li trainings, both in 2021. The first one—the three-day trauma-informed workplace skills workshop—was in April. It was amazing.

I thought, “I need to quit my job, then come and work with these people. This will be the new thing that I'll do.” I felt like I already knew a fair bit about trauma. I had been working in the mental health space for a couple of years already, specifically around suicide prevention, postvention, and early intervention with young people. I'd also worked in child protection, so I had done some trauma-informed training, but it was a lot more clinical. I learnt about the neurons in the brain, how the brains of neglected children don't develop properly and light up differently, and about the Russian babies who were in an orphanage and left to cry, only to stop crying and have really small brains. I also learnt practical things in terms of how we relate to young people who are in care, how we might interact with them, why certain behaviours surface due to trauma, and how you might let something negative go as long as they've followed one instruction.

The We Al-li training made me reflect deeply on my previous teaching. I realised that if I could go back to those few years that I spent in the classroom, I would change so much, and I began to wish that We Al-li was part of teacher training. When I was teaching, I worked at a rural high school. The socio-economic status wasn't extremely low, but certainly a lot of the students would have come from trauma backgrounds. To have not had any idea about that and for teachers around the country to not know about the high rate of trauma in young people is terrible.

I did those three days of training with Antonia Burke, and she mentioned that they were doing a We Al-li facilitator training in July. I had said to her at the time that I just didn't feel like where I would be an ongoing thing. I was about five months pregnant, so I already knew that I was going on maternity leave and didn't think I would come back after that time. However, I managed to swing it so that I finished work the week before and could do the facilitator's training at Mary River. I didn't stay and do the whole experience because I already had four children at that time. Thankfully, it took me less than an hour to drive there each day. Then I went off and had a baby. I haven't had the chance yet to reconnect and do much else in terms of further training. I would love to, but

unfortunately, with so many children, bills need to be paid. Still, having that exposure to Indigenous-specific trauma training is very valuable now that I'm back in the education space, particularly in the small system that I am working in.

I work in a system where a quarter of the schools are remote schools that have close to 100 percent Aboriginal enrolment and a very high trauma rate. As I said before, teachers not being aware of what trauma looks like is an issue. It's not within my job description to educate teachers on that matter, but I struggle with that because it is my responsibility as an Aboriginal person. It's difficult to separate my role as a curriculum specialist from the responsibility that I have as an Aboriginal person towards our younger generations when we have these people in our schools. Teachers want the best for our young people, but they lack the skills required to provide our young people with what they need. When they witness these trauma behaviours, then, they don't understand that's what they're seeing. Instead, they believe that they're witnessing defiance, a perspective that needs to be reframed. Yet, that's not necessarily my role, and I don't want to overstep boundaries when we have people in our system whose role that is. I'm certainly very lucky that I work with people who understand that I come

from a background in mental health and that I have been in that field for quite some time. So, I have the capacity to have those conversations, but at the end of the day, that's not what I'm getting paid for. There's always a tension that we have as Aboriginal people, particularly as Aboriginal women—that balance that we will always have to navigate, that kind of burden of responsibility to provide a caregiving space that we can't just turn off.

What makes We Al-li training different from other training that I've done? Obviously, the setup of the way things happen in terms of the yarning circle and everyone being invited to bring something with which they connect into a session. The storytelling approach is also so integral, as is the willingness of the facilitators to give of themselves. I remember watching Antonia and Jolene give so much of themselves and share their stories and thinking, "These women are amazing." They don't have to do that. It's clear that they've done so much work to heal, so much beforehand to be able to stand up and share their stories. The training was really about storytelling and relationship building. The other kind of trauma training, the clinical kind, is about what's happening inside the body, which is also important. I'm a scientist, too. I'm a logical person who likes to know what's happening inside the body. For

me, then, marrying the two approaches is really helpful. I also remember Aunty Judy talking about retelling a story in the facilitator training. She said, "You might hear me say a story and think initially that you've heard this story before, but I'm sharing a different element of that story, or there's a reason that I'm retelling this story. It's not because I'm a senile old woman who has forgotten that I've told you this story before. There's a point to why I'm saying this story again." So, at a recent training session run by a lady who's a data expert in schools, I was amazed when, to a room full of middle leaders in schools, she said, "I'll share a piece of information seven times before you remember it." That's not so different from what Aunty Judy told us.

Since completing the training, I have a bit more of something—not patience, but almost an ability to choose not to engage when certain comments are made, especially when I know that doing so wouldn't be beneficial for me to respond. For example, earlier last term, I travelled out to one of our remote schools with one of my colleagues, who is our education officer responsible for English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D). She has a wealth of experience working in remote communities, and obviously, literacy is her area of expertise. She was running a workshop with teachers around

the EAL/D band progressions, which is how they assess students' progression, and how to use them to assess. There were only a handful of teachers in the room, none of whom had worked in a remote school before. One particular teacher, who was nearing the end of his career, had moved from Adelaide. The school where he had relocated from was a sister school, so he'd visited this community over the course of his career. I think part of his bucket list was to work at a remote school. In this Aboriginal community, they don't really speak a lot of English outside of school. Primarily, it's a mix of Aboriginal English and their local language, and I believe that there are two local languages. During the session, this teacher commented that he doesn't believe in Creole, which he believes is just a bastardisation of English, and that Aboriginal English is not a real language.

I was raging in my head and thought, "Well, who are you? What does it matter what you think? Who are you to believe in it? There are language professionals and experts who do believe in this and who do say that Aboriginal English is a language just like standard Australian English." But I then told myself, "If you say something to this man, he's just going to shut down, and he won't engage any further in this training. He won't then be able to go and teach his students. There's no wonder

he can't engage with these students, because if this is the attitude that he has, he has all the behaviour problems that he's saying that he has. Even if he's not saying as much with his mouth, he's going to be displaying this attitude with his body. No wonder these young men aren't engaging with him in his classroom." My colleague handled the situation beautifully, and we debriefed afterwards. But if that had been a year or two ago, I definitely would have said something, which wouldn't have made any progress in solving anything. Instead, it would have damaged the relationship between me and that person, as well as the relationship between him and my colleague, who was there to improve his professional development. As a result, the relationship between him and the students would have also been damaged.

To be honest, I haven't tried too much of what I learnt from *We Al-li*. It's trickier in my current role working with schools, which involves more one-on-one sessions, working with smaller groups, or working with a whole staff. There are certainly some things that I would like to try out, but I need the time to sit down and figure out how to incorporate these into an education context. One of the things on my to-do list is coming up with more of what we'll call ongoing cultural enrichment. I don't like the terms "cultural capacity" or "cultural training." When people enter our system,

they do some initial cultural orientation, and that's it, unless, individually, they do something in their school or community. I'd like to implement something that is more ongoing. I would also like to teach teachers how to teach the curriculum because they are scared to do so. It's a bit like cancel culture. They don't want to teach the curriculum and the Aboriginal histories and cultures because they're scared of getting it wrong or because they don't know it themselves. How, then, are they supposed to teach it? They think, "Well, I can't teach that because I'm not Aboriginal." Trying to empower teachers or give them some confidence can change that. Indeed, I've noticed that Facebook has started to become inundated with online offerings of "Teach Australian curriculum in an Aboriginal way," which is perhaps because of my own Google searches. I have looked at some of the businesses, and not all of them are Aboriginal run, although some are partnered with Aboriginal people.

Am I ready to facilitate the hard healing work for others? It depends on the week, really. As I said, I've come from the mental health space, where I was an educator working in a cross-disciplinary team with clinicians. As part of my role, I received clinical supervision as well as cultural supervision from the cultural practice team, both of which gave space for

debriefing. This is different in an education system where we have psychologists, but their role is to diagnose and support students, not staff. And while we have access to an employee assistance programme should we need it, there's neither clinical supervision nor even regular supervision—it's a small system, and there just isn't enough time. That's not to say that we can't seek out a debrief with a manager. Still, I was really surprised when I came into this role that I wouldn't be having regular supervision every fortnight like in my previous role and that the wraparound support wasn't as robust. Given that some of our schools have a high trauma rate, I believe that regular supervision is something that is needed. Everyone who is supporting our schools should do the necessary training. The question then is: who do we turn to, what would the training look like, and how do we enable all staff to have access? There's also much vicarious trauma amongst staff in our schools—high rates of teacher turnover are evident of that. And that's something that exists across the country, not just in our little corner of the world. Yes, I feel like I'm well-equipped because of the background that I have working in various other spaces and my fondness for working in pairs when I facilitate cultural professional development, something that was reaffirmed when I did the We

“... a network of people can be really helpful in terms of being able to share, have those conversations, and understand what you’re going through.”

Al-li training. So, I feel like I could hold the space with someone else, but I don’t know if I’m supported enough for afterwards. Then what?

So, I need to spend some time revisiting the resources, looking at how I can implement them in my work. And I would be grateful for any resources that people might be able to share. As Jedda was saying, a network of people can be really helpful in terms of being able to share, have those conversations, and understand what you’re going through. In my last role, there were only three Aboriginal people in the whole of the organisation, which is part and parcel of being behind the scenes and not a frontline worker. When I was in the interview for my current role, then, I asked, “What kind of network do we have for support? What kind of supervision?” The two white ladies in the room said, “Oh yes, we have good support.” But the Aboriginal woman said, “Oh no, I know what she’s asking. Me. I’m the only other Aboriginal person. We can talk; we can debrief. I’m the only other one who gets it.” It’s important to be able to check in and share frustrations, as well as what’s working and what isn’t. Of course, though, that can be hard to facilitate because

everyone’s context is so different. It almost needs to be something that is done within your own little sphere of influence. So, I just need to take that time and maybe even reconnect with some of the other people who have done the We Al-li facilitator training. It would be great to chat with the people who were in Darwin to see how they’ve progressed and whether they’re still facilitating any training. Maybe they could offer some in my workplace.

We Al-li, I haven’t forgotten about you. Even though I’m not delivering anything, I’m still using your resources. I carry them around in my laptop bag! At the moment, it’s comforting to just know that the resources are there. Yet, I also know that if I need to use something for an activity, whether it be with teachers or young people, then I can whip it out. Our schools are short-staffed, so if I find myself in front of a classroom teaching a lesson, I’ll just pull one of the resources out.

**real names withheld at request of storyteller*

RESPONSE TO TASHA'S STORY

BY LILY SPITERI

I chose to visually respond to the thoughtful quote “If you’ve got a window, maybe look outside and see where you are. Maybe just taking a bit of time to acknowledge that Country where you are.”

This quote sets the scene in the yarn and creates a safe space for all involved. I was taken aback by the simple grounding method and how one small action can do more than just relax, more than just calm, it can also connect. I spent lots of time sketching thumbnails of hinterland scenes while thinking about this quote, and how I miss the landscape that I grew up in. This inspired my practice.

I used imagery from outside my own window, in a sense. Although I currently live in Brisbane, I lived in the Northern Rivers of NSW for 19 years on the Arakwal people’s land of the Bundjalung nation.

Wollumbin, also known as Mount Warning has been said to look like the face of a sleeping man. It is a sacred landmark for the male indigenous population of the area, as its counterpart, Mount Chincogan is sacred to the women. Driving home to the hinterlands to be with my family, whenever I see the sleeping face, I know I am home soon. I used this recognisable geographic shape to attach a sense of grounded appreciation for the landscape that you are connected to. Included in this piece as the quote encapsulates this grounding and contemplative experience. Looking out my window, acknowledging Country.



IF YOU'VE
MAYBE GOT A WINDOW
LOOK OUTSIDE AND SEE WHERE YOU ARE
JUST TAKING A BIT OF TIME TO ACKNOWLEDGE
THAT COUNTRY WHERE YOU ARE

THREADS WOVEN ACROSS THE STORIES: TOWARD A COLLECTIVE STORY

In this section we share reflections on the *collective story* that emerged from this research, drawing on overlapping threads woven into yarns and the responding student designs.

The We Al-li training sparked a journey of healing for many years and that had almost immediate and sustained effects for most storytellers. The collective story suggests that healing involves connecting to culture, Country, ourselves, and others to find individual and shared pathways and resources for healing. The story repeated by many storytellers says that we need to connect to ourselves first, face our pain, and make a commitment to be accountable for our own healing as a pathway to holding space for others.

The collective story includes experiences of complexity, isolation, pain, frustration, prejudice, breakthroughs, re-connection, beauty, and humour as people open up spaces to heal from intergenerational trauma. It reveals an intense wisdom that can emerge from healing with and for ourselves and others over very short and long periods of time.

A ‘planting the seed’ analogy emerged strongly in Auntie Di’s story and Katie Maxfield’s design. That analogy was echoed in several other yarns. The collective story suggests that people experience healing over time by growing roots in the ground first as individuals and having connection to Country. Often, as people navigate through their own healing, their roots grow deeper and connect them to other individuals who are also healing. Ideally, those connections form into deep and enduring communities of care but many individuals in this research did not yet feel surrounded by caring communities.

The collective story from this project hence reflects a deep yearning to come together to heal, grow stronger, and pass that onto future generations. The seeds we plant become the next generations who benefit and grow outwards and upwards. That intergenerational growth can happen in families, communities, and organisations. When each plant is ready, they drop seeds to create stronger plants and shade for the future. Through that incremental process we can slowly unwind the effects of trauma that have built up around us over generations.

THE WORK HAD TO START WITH ME

A deep thread in the yarns was that people who seek to facilitate healing with others felt they had to get to know their own inherited and personal trauma and heal themselves. That often took time, and some storytellers didn't feel ready to start seeking major institutional change at work or hold space for others' healing while working on "stuck" effects of intergenerational trauma in their own body, brain, emotions, spirit, life, and families. That was sometimes due to their own feelings of being overwhelmed by their own experience and sometimes because they needed a community of practice around them to feel confident to start holding spaces for others' healing.

Many storytellers displayed patience and cultural knowledge, acknowledging that becoming unstuck from intergenerational patterns of trauma behaviours requires new "tools" and resources. Some likened their own healing to seasons and cycles of year, with an autumn, winter, spring, and summer. There was a strong thread of needing to "burn our own wood" so that we can become a safe space for others and ourselves as taught in We AI-li training. Stories indicated that healing was not linear, and there could be multiple times that people needed time out to rest and rejuvenate in their career and life.

Some storytellers reflected that healing themselves was also for others because it helped to interrupt intergenerational and lateral transmission of trauma in communities, families, and workplaces.

While some of the quotes below infer that there might be division between doing our own personal healing and helping others, We AI-li's approaches reinforce that Indigenous societies often do not separate between the personal and professional parts of life. In We AI-li's training personal healing will always overlap with our professional work and potentially reap benefits in all directions. In general, storytellers reported impediments to sharing healing beyond their immediate sphere of control at work, but also shared examples of work colleagues being very enthusiastic and willing to learn about the techniques and knowledges shared through We AI-li training.

...on a personal level ... the difficulty is that you are exploring yourself and so there's always those challenges if you think, "Oh yeah, I'm on top of stuff, I understand where I am, and who I am, and where I come from." But actually as you start to enter into that you can come across some really hard stuck stuff" ... I have had that experience ... it took me a lot longer than eight weeks to do ... I was with it for ages, but I also felt like the tools were there as well ... I have that real trust that if you're getting stuck there's going to be something there to help you get unstuck as well

– JEDDA

I come to understand if I'm hurting in my brain or if I'm hurting in my body, in my spirit, it's all pain, whether it's mental, emotional, physical, or spiritual, and I have to have the appropriate healing skills to confront that, basically. I've just been using We Al-li healing strategies for the past 25 years just to help me cope to live in society; to help me cope just to live with groups. Mainly, it's art groups here in Brisbane. It helps me be able to sit with those human beings

– DUANE

Look, I am a product of intergenerational trauma and I live with it every day of my life, and things. So been doing a lot of work personally, because I had burnt out at the end of last year, and so I needed to heal. So doing the We Al-li Dadirri training was part of ... well, meant to be part of the healing part of that process

– ERIN

I remember something in the facilitator training about the seasons, the seasons of healing. And just those images were coming into my mind ... We have our autumn and our winter, and we have to go in and then sometimes we're back in spring and we're back in summer ... And to do that work on ourselves, it's a gift, it's a to ourselves, but also those around us. We're interrupting cycles and that's huge. Huge, huge work

– ANONYMOUS

And without the support of We Al-li, I ... Yeah, probably would've suicided, probably. Basically. Yeah. Today is a different story ... I've lived this trauma for over 25 years in my sober life. I lived it probably all my drunk life, trying to deal with it through alcohol and the excessive abuse of alcohol, drugs, sex, and gambling. Now I'm sober, it's dealing with it this way, the We Al-li way

– DUANE

CONNECTING WITH OTHERS AND HEALING TOGETHER

I think you've got to be very aware of what triggers you. You've got to be very aware of what your body's telling you, and your mind. Taking time for your own healing and to regenerate yourself. And I think that's the stage that I'm in at the moment. I'm in a resting state, rejuvenation. If I can give you a visual of me being this big strong tree for many, many years. It's taken some battering, that tree. The bark's fallen off, especially in the last few months at work, and it was looking pretty tired and pretty droopy. So I'm nurturing that tree at the moment

– AUNTY DI

Western society makes a strong distinction between the personal and the professional, whereas Indigenous cultures they're co-related the personal and the professional are intertwined...

– JUDY ATKINSON

Another thread across the yarns was that people need connections with others to heal. Storytellers spoke about going away from We Al-li training and being motivated to reconnect with family and Country and getting strength from Elders. A strong thread emerged about feeling isolated or alone in healing. While some storytellers were able to find connections and support in their family or community, others described a deep sense of isolation and lack of support that affected their wellbeing and healing over time. Others spoke about wanting to bring different communities and cultures together to heal the nation and being an ally to First Nations People. Many communicated that Aunty Judy Atkinson and We Al-li's work had given them knowledge, language, and resources to connect to in their own lives and professional work. That appeared to often result in a feeling of deep and enduring connection to We Al-li and its facilitators.

...the healing practices [involved] going back to country, going back into the circle of the females in my family group, the female Elders, and getting strength from their knowledge so that I can feel like, "Okay. Yeah. I'm right. I'm not on my own here."

– GIGI

I don't like doing this work by myself because I don't have support. I honestly do not have support when it comes to We Al-li healing here. I've become too afraid to mention it because of lack of support. No support. So, when the people found out that I was going to Byron they liked the idea that I was going, but bringing that home with me is a different story

– DUANE

I just want to learn and walk both ways, and help our country to walk together, I suppose

– CHRISTINE

...trauma is such a main area for me. And also being an ally to Indigenous peoples is really important to me. And it's those two things together to me are what the world needs now. It's the change that needs to happen, is the healing of that trauma and bringing those ways out into our world

– RUTH

Judy's work been pivotal in mine. It's given me a framework to hang what I've done on, and the science and the evidence to back it up

– JEDDA

I'm interested in teaching people how they can have the skills to heal the generational trauma of Aboriginal lives ... We have to know where we're going ... the steps we have to take to change the circumstances of our youth and our children. What I'm talking about in a theory of change is a complexity that has to be put together in understandings of what's created the situation that we have today.

– JUDY ATKINSON

WE HEAL COUNTRY, COUNTRY HEALS US

Some yarn storytellers recognised that humans are not separate from nature and that colonial trauma is held not just in human bodies, but also in Country and non-human beings. Some spoke of trauma as being specific to place and a time in history related to colonial violence and ongoing invasion. They argued that the pathway forward for healing all people in Australia needs to also include healing Country. Others spoke about walking mindfully on Country to heal their body, mind, and spirit and how they had been taught to do that many years before through We Al-li's training in Indigenous healing approaches.

...the content being Indigenous specific, so specific to this place and its history. So that's something that all of the facilitators have always said. That's also held in country too. So it's (trauma's) not just held in the bodies of Aboriginal people, but in the country that everyone's walking on as well. And so that way of connecting, making it everybody's business in a way, or everybody's responsibility, I suppose

– JEDDA

So I wasn't able to share what happened inside We Al-li healing, within mapping out the history of our trauma. Outside that I was able to share that, oh, I went outside to walk in the rain with my boots on, and just as I

went to take the step out something inside me said, take off my shoes and I must walk that land bare footed, flat footed. I have sciatica and under my left foot is painful. It got me to follow certain rivers and I knew what was happening straight away. And because I'm experienced at it, I followed it. So I could see the rivers flowing, but it was taking my mind away from this foot, and I realized it. So I knew what the old people down there wanted me to do. They wanted me to walk that land bare footed, and it was helping within healing this nerve here. So by the end of the five days, I walked the five days, and was feeling really good. Coming back to concrete is different story. But the old people also gave me the opportunity to look at some country in Australia that's traumatized, but there's a lot of other country that is plentiful of love. The country, back home in the Gumble, or Wamberal, one water is very traumatized. My foot wasn't able to walk bare footed or flat footed on that country, where the country down on Byron was a different story to land there. Put love in my nerves, in my foot. I was able to walk flat footed. Sometimes I'm able to walk flat footed here, but maybe the park or something like that. So that was something that I was able to share, but what happened inside the Healing Circle itself, I had to keep my mouth shut. That's very disappointing. Because not a lot of people... Although they promote healing, family violence, alcohol

INDIGENOUS HEALING PRACTICES

and drug abuse, some people aren't ready to go into depths of having an understanding of intergenerational trauma and what colonization has done to our world. We come out of that, and a lot of people don't want to understand, "Oh, Duane has multiple abandoned children." They don't want to know about that.

– DUANE

We Al-li was definitely different because it shows how a different perspective and more of an Indigenous approach. The focus was on connection to people and country, not just on research and theories

– WAMBUI

I'm using a massacre site construct to understand how the nation state has formed itself, how institutions of the state have formed themselves and how therefore I am expected to comply with that, while I'm also an Aboriginal woman who engages in difficult, painful, historic situations on the ground...

– JUDY ATKINSON

Many storytellers described enduring positive effects of the Indigenous healing practices used in We Al-li training and ways they had introduced, or planned to introduce, those techniques into their own professional work. Many also used the healing practices for themselves and their own families where possible. We describe the main healing practices storytellers spoke about under the headings below.

Ceremony, circle work, and deep listening

Ceremony, circle work, and deep listening were described as key practices for establishing safety in groups and as a foundation for ongoing healing. Storytellers spoke about strongly embodied feelings of resonance and connection in ceremony and circle that resulted in feelings of trust which allowed people to slow down and step out of their daily work roles and busyness. Some said that the healing practices used in We Al-li workshops such as Dadirri and smoking ceremony were always with them, even after years or decades had passed since completing the training. Such stories indicate significant and sustained transformation can result from Indigenous healing practices.

“the Dadirri workshop was profound in that it was able to create a transformational learning space that was safe because it was held in ceremony and with respect [...] it’s the first time I’ve experienced such a sacred space being held over the period of time, which created space for deep connection. So, I think that was pivotal in that work. And that I was still pretty traumatized myself at the time”

– CINDY

“I loved it and it resonated with me and I loved being in the group and there was a living activity that happened that brought it all alive. And maybe that’s exactly how it’s supposed to be”

– RUTH

“In small groups and we were doing some kind of a mapping thing that goes past, present, future. And I’ve worked with groups my whole life. It’s an area I’m very familiar with. But through a different method, I saw and felt this kind of shared conscious space arise where the whole group was in an altered space, if you will, connected. Where we could feel that something was happening together, but it wasn’t really being spoken about ... Auntie Judy had invited us to connect to past, present, and future, our sense of time had merged, so that we were experiencing what the exercise asked, which was that the past, the present and the future are all here in the now... it deepened my sense of trust in the process of circle. Of especially a Dadirri Circle, that I have an understanding in my system that this works. That if we sit here, what’s meant to happen will happen. And so I’d say that’s a change. It deepened my understandings on a visceral level of that”

– RUTH

During the training there was such a connection with us around the circle because people actually listened. People were not rushing to go to another appointment and the facilitators modelled patience as well

– WAMBUI

...the way things happen in terms of the yarning circle, and everyone being invited to bring something into a session that connects with them

– TASHA

We Al-li has always been with me. Smoking ceremonies have always been with me. Dadirri

– DUANE

the Western education models don't allow people to look deeply at themselves ... Indigenous Healing Practices are an education approach in their own right ... I think a training in dealing with violence, especially in a community setting or in a circle where it's like an intact group who already know each other and have history and story together, I think that would be really helpful, with local people leading the way. I prefer the word facilitation because it's the facilitation of learning, of teaching, of starting to know yourself more deeply, individually, and collectively ... In this model, you are expected to know yourself deeply so you can reflect on what's happening at the time...

JUDY ATKINSON

Bodies and embodiment

Two storytellers spoke about the embodied nature of the We Al-li training and how it had shaped their experiences and knowledge. They reflected on the processes of teaching and learning that were used in We Al-li training and how that allowed for the content and experience to really “sink in.” One participant spoke about feeling that they had experienced a different space, one that was magical and mystical. The other spoke about realising, in a very embodied way, how trauma sits in the body and how somatic activities like dancing and singing can help to dislodge and metabolise those embodied effects.

We got up and danced or we sung, and we discharged and metabolized the story that we just heard, and we had time to sit quietly by ourselves. And then we had time to share and then we had time to celebrate. And there was always that balance of heaviness and then healing or connection that meant that I felt like as I was going through, we were getting to embody all of those principles. So it wasn't so much the content, but the way that we were being taught. At the end I just felt like it had really sunk in and that has felt very different from other kind of training

– JEDDA

what I did take away from there was a visceral feeling ... there was this one sort of magical, mystical, magical space that my group, we were in confirmed many things that I've thought and ways that I approach things

– RUTH

So I guess thinking about that. And I suppose I'd add that thinking about that was probably the first time I'd really thought about trauma, but also healing as things that are really in the body and in between bodies as a very physical and I guess somatic kind of thing

– JEDDA

Storytelling

Storytelling is used as a key Indigenous healing approach in We Al-li's work. It was noticeable that not as many storytellers spoke about storytelling as a key part of their ongoing healing or professional work after the training.

So that whole thing of sense of belonging and social cohesion, it's an understanding I have now about how the Aboriginal healing model look towards healing trauma. Well, it does it through creating sense of belonging and connection and telling your stories. That was all there at that time. And so in some ways, maybe today, even while I'm talking to you, I'm just integrating what happened. I sat there just waiting, in a way. And now the experience of that, I think, is forming a foundation. I know what it feels like and looks like, and it's forming a foundation for being a non-Indigenous person in a space that's practicing Indigenous healing way

– RUTH

the storytelling approach ... is obviously so integral to the whole way of doing things and the willingness of the facilitators to give of themselves. I remember sitting and thinking and just watching Antonio and Jolene just giving so much of themselves and sharing their stories and just thinking, these women are amazing. They are just giving so much, and they don't have to do that, but they are just standing there and just sharing so much. And they've (the facilitators) obviously done so much work to heal. There's so much that's gone on in the background before they've got to the point of being able to stand up there and as opposed to other kind of trauma training where it's very much that clinical, it's about what's happening inside the body, which is important

– TASHA

The truth telling is critical, but we can't get to the trauma stories until we've got the other things in place and make it safe... The theory of change demands that we engage with the system that is not delivering so that we can deliver an "educaring"... To lead out from, to show the way... There are stories under the pain... Stories are the way we teach...

– JUDY ATKINSON

Grounding

Fewer storytellers talked about grounding in a direct way than other Indigenous healing approaches such as circle, ceremony, and Dadirri. While not as many spoke about grounding it was evident that many storytellers were adopting taught techniques that may be experienced as grounding and soothing.

It's sort of hard to pinpoint in a way because it feels like it is such a profound, it's been a very transformative, I think, in a really holistic way. But that self-care thing, for sure, I do use those techniques of grounding

– JEDDA

COMMUNITIES OF CARE

Storytellers shared that healing can be a lonely experience and placed value on the idea of communities of care. They saw power in such communities in supporting their own healing and in supporting the healing of others. As Tasha reflects on her work in the education system, she had the idea of a community being a way to identify and develop “a little circle of influence.” In reflecting on their readiness to work with “the hard stuff,” such as areas like suicidality and where trauma is manifesting in violence, storytellers returned to this idea of power in the collective, and the circle. Storytellers spoke about having come to deeply appreciate the power of this way of working, having embodied it in this way during the We Al-Li training.

... that kind of checkpoint to share frustrations or what's working and what isn't can be helpful. But it is also ... That can be hard to facilitate and pull together because everyone's context is really different. So it's almost needs to be something that is within your own sphere, I guess, your own little sphere of influence ... I just need to take that time and maybe even reconnect with some of the people that I did that we did that facilitator training with

– TASHA

Because not a lot of people ... Although they promote healing, family violence, alcohol and drug abuse, some people aren't ready to go into depths of having an understanding of intergenerational trauma and what colonisation has done to our world ... Basically. I'm all by myself. I don't like being by myself when it comes to healing because there's so much I have to be aware of. I have to facilitate myself in my healing and at the same time do the healing ... I find myself applying what I've learned through culturally informed trauma-integrated practice approaches in almost every interaction, across all of those parts of my job

– DUANE

Rollo May has written a book which says there are two things critical to healthy societies: that we become a community of care and then, in evolution, a community of practice. I think that these are very important ingredients in how we skill up our teachers, our social workers, our doctors, our psychologists, anyone that comes in. How do we maintain that community of care? Well, we do that by engaging with each other and that was very much part of Aboriginal cultural processes before Cook. How do we maintain the practice? Our community of practice is that we are always upgrading our skills, our knowledge bases. They are two critical ingredients. The community of care is that we look after each other, we care for ourselves and we care for each other and we learn, more particularly, about what's happening. The community of practice is that it's expanding.

JUDY ATKINSON

PLANTING SEEDS FOR LONG TERM CHANGE

A powerful metaphor emerged in the yarns around planting seeds. Aunty Di shared that for a decade she saw her efforts as planting a seed to ensure shade for future generations. Personal stories shared were entwined with a hope for change at the macro societal level. Storytellers shared understanding of two things. First, the systems we are located within have been and continue to be sources of trauma for First Nations people. Second, Indigenous healing offers a new way to recognise, support and respond to the trauma stories we carry and that is held in the lands we all live on. Examples were shared of the slow and steady shifting that can occur within government departments where employees seem ever stuck in their “little white boxes.” Aunty Judy’s quotes remind us that We Al-Li training is founded on an understanding that systems change will be as slow as it is essential if we are to heal as ourselves, to help others to heal, to heal as a country.

I understand that trauma can be an effect of sexual abuse, for instance, of family violence, domestic violence, war, things like that. But I don’t think I quite appreciated, or I hadn’t really been seeing I suppose the intergenerational sort of effects of that. And then also the way that it can become, some people talk about after many generations trauma can start to look like culture. It can start to look like the way people relate to each other

– JEDDA

I know about it feels like just the first little seeds are there and that over time there’ll be a lot more weaving of what We Al-li offers

– RUTH

And even the last week that I worked [in child protection], I knew that that way of working with traumatised people does not work. And I tried to talk to people within that department about doing it differently. But they're so bound by their little white boxes. However, I did actually talk to a manager the week before I left and she said, "If there's any way that you can help us with traumatized children in the future, please let us know because we can do a fee for service." So there are people in that department that want to do it differently. But look, it nearly burnt me right out. I had to get out. I think that there is a shift coming, but when I was working for child protection, as I mentioned before, they're stuck in their little white boxes and they're very hesitant to do anything creative, like Dadirri. And yet, they actually asked me to go to work and present Dadirri in a team meeting. And every person in that room was crying. It really helped deeply within each person. And even that, they can take away from that opportunity to go and talk to their colleagues, to talk to their family, to talk to their community. So I'm a great one for planting seeds. I think the seeds that I've sown over the years is a direct result from actually doing the masters and doing Dadirri. I recently did Dadirri and that was profound. There were two facilitators and they asked me to share a personal story of mine and that too had a great impact

on those people in that room that day. So, I think sharing of stories and having the capacity to truly listen. Psychologists and counsellors, back in the day, were there to ... Yes, they did listen, but they didn't listen deeply. Not on that level that Dadirri takes you to, which I'm forever grateful to Miriam Rose for. What a beautiful woman! She's really taught a lot of people how to deeply listen. I think planting seeds, sometimes you feel like you've done nothing. Like the 29 years I spend in child protection, yes, I did help a lot of children in those years. But they were still coming through the door. Every day you'd go in, and you get another case. And I had ten cases the week I left. Nothing was changing. I was working with third generations of children. I've worked with their mothers and their grandmothers, being in the child protection system for that long. And I was quite taken when one of the managers came to me and said, "I've got five children on my books right now who need Dadirri. Can you please see if I can pay for a fee-for-service to get the support for these little Aboriginal children?" So, I think the seeds are growing into tiny, little plants. And I hope before I'm taken, that I'll see the large tree that's going to shade over a lot of children in the future...

– AUNTY DI

I like to enable self-determination from wherever I work, or whatever I'm doing. So for me, my work actually paid for me to go, which is amazing. And really, it's about bringing the trauma-informed approaches to the workplace. So, [workplace withheld] they're always dealing with vulnerable people, or if not vulnerable, people who are in a vulnerable place. And so, I think if we can train up our workforce to be able to handle ... Not handle, but handle those conversations in a trauma-informed way, then that's a better service than just processing ... it's like, you can see once you understand trauma, trauma in yourself, and that's really hard to look at ... And after the training I just reflect and go, "Okay. Yeah, I can see trauma in other people, and I can see trauma that the organisation that I work for is also in trauma, as a collective." There are remnants of, I don't know, poor decision making and the impact that had on people, like the workforce and things

– ERIN

I think that, even if people don't understand trauma-informed practice, if they understand Indigenous protocols, it's a real enabler, to be able to work with those people from a culturally informed and trauma-integrated perspective. I think what We Al-li have done, merging the two, is just such a natural merging. So I think that's a real enabler. I think having managers, particularly non-Indigenous managers or leaders in positions of formal power, who are either up to date with those protocols and understand the need for trauma-informed practice or are humble and just want to know more, that is incredibly enabling as well. I think it's really enabling when others treat me from that perspective, to feel safe, welcome, accepted, grounded, in settings that other people are shaping and influencing. At work, that is incredibly enabling because all of that extra effort to try and calm the nervous system and all the things that go off when you don't feel safe, you just don't need to do that because you feel safe. And so the energy can go into creativity, collaboration, innovation, singing. Can go into other things, other than just spending all of our time just trying to deescalate the nervous system

– ANONYMOUS

Yeah. And when I think about it, it's mostly just if there's a person in a position of power, in one of those little subgroups or across all of those subgroups in my institution, who this feels like if they don't make time for it, in particular, that's an impediment. If they don't make space for it, if they've got no idea about trauma, or if they're unaware of their own trauma, they can be almost just like a bull in a China shop, causing damage to a lot of other people

– ANONYMOUS

Change is incremental. It doesn't just happen like "bang" in ourselves or in the institutions in which we work, but ... the theory of change is that you start off wanting change to happen and then it starts to move gradually, slowly, and she says its incremental, and then when enough of the changes are starting to happen, it goes 'boom', and it all happens. We are, in this country we now call Australia, nowhere near that at the moment but it's possible for changes to happen. We're locked into institutions of the state...

If we think they are separate, we're crazy. The work is to bring them together in some way. I'm more interested in changing how the system itself is malfunctioning by bringing in the truth of Indigenous healing practices into this whole process in this country. We are not yet at that stage where we can take on every institution in the country ... What we hope is that you will go back into your workplace and function in such a way as that others look at you say, "Oh, can you tell me why you're doing that or tell me more about that."

You [We AI-Li Graduates] actually are a teacher in your workplace ... someone who is willing to open the space for better dialogue together. You do something, you learn something, you then pull back and let it ferment inside you, or you reflect on it, and then if you're really clever, you go up to your boss and say, "I didn't this brilliant workshop recently and I'd love to talk with you about it." The universities aren't delivering what we critical need to heal from the generational trauma so we're doing it but we're doing it with intention, slowly, and it's a sovereign business"

JUDY ATKINSON

ENABLERS FOR DOING THE HARD WORK OF HEALING

Storytellers in this project shared information on things in their lives and work that enable healing to occur in families, communities, and organisations. Those are summarised below.

TRUST, INTUITION, AND SELF

So I think if I had to say also what changed is, it deepened my sense of trust in the process of circle. Of especially a Dadirri Circle, that I have an understanding in my system that this works. That if we sit here, what's meant to happen will happen. And so I'd say that's a change. It deepened my understandings on a visceral level of that

– RUTH

intuition can kick in and you can actually handle a situation, even if I haven't been exposed [before] ... I find I can just respond in an appropriate way, and maybe that's just being that deep listening and just not reacting but actually being there and letting the person know you're not going to react to them but you're there to hold space for them. So perhaps that, developing my personal skills in that way

– CHRISTINE

I think you've got to be very aware of what triggers you. You've got to be very aware of what your body's telling you, and your mind. Taking time for your own healing and to regenerate yourself

– AUNTY DI

SPACE FOR DEBRIEF AND CULTURAL SUPERVISION, WRAPAROUND SUPPORT

I feel like I could hold the space, but I don't know that after that, then what?

– TASHA

supervision from a culturally informed, trauma integrated practitioner would help me

– RUTH

WE AL-LI RESOURCES

*Even though I'm not delivering anything,
I'm still doing things using resources*

– TASHA

*I also have this [Dadirri resource] and
sometimes I take it, just if I know I'm going
to have a hard meeting ... I just look at it and
it makes me feel calmer*

– JEDDA

SHAPING THE SPACE, MAKING IT OUR OWN

*I took in a lot of my special things to me,
Aboriginal things that I took in and did up
the table ... And we built a tree out of things
I collected from my garden, like bark and
flowers and leaves and they created a tree
... I asked them to each bring something of
meaning to the circle*

– AUNTY DI

A COMMUNITY OR A GROUP

... I love in-person stuff, but even if it's an online community where you can just share the things that you're learning or trying, and connect regularly with people who've also had that experience and can give feedback

– JEDDA

[a] network of people can be really helpful to be able to share and have those conversations and just even for the debrief to understand what you're going through

– TASHA

a local community of care could be great ... could be self-organising

– RUTH

COLLABORATION, MENTORING, AND CO-DELIVERY

two people hold the space

– RUTH

working, perhaps, as the apprentice or assistant with some facilitators who are experienced, and you know that they can hold the space and respond

– CHRISTINE

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Within my organisation, I really noticed that our CEO's focus on supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders makes it a lot easier to be exposed to more training. I feel that this is rare and good to see in an organisation

– WAMBUI

... even if people don't understand trauma-informed practice, if they understand Indigenous protocols, it's a real enabler, to be able to work with those people from a culturally informed and trauma-integrated perspective. I think what We Al-li have done, merging the two, is just such a natural merging ... I think having managers, particularly non-Indigenous managers or leaders in positions of formal power, who are either up to date with those protocols and understand the need for trauma-informed practice or are humble and just want to know more, that is incredibly enabling as well

– ANONYMOUS

RECONNECTING – COUNTRY, ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE, SOCIETY, FAMILY

the healing practices that followed [We Al-li training] like going back to Country, going back into the circle of the females in my family group, the elders, more so the females, female elders, and just getting the strength from their knowledge and so that I can feel like, "Okay. Yeah. I'm right. I'm not on my own here"

– GIGI

I've learned to use society as a healing tool itself. So, when I want to stop listening to the anger, I will take myself to the city or to a loud place where all that loudness is outside my body and I'm listening to it. But it's not inside, it's outside me ... When I paint, I like to paint with the feeling and the thoughts of going through my mind, which is the love, peace, joy, and happiness, or healing ... So that's whether it's lines, or stencil art, or dots. So, each dot ... A lot of my paintings, I have got dots in it. And when I'm painting it's love, peace, joy, and healing. Love, peace, joy, and healing. So, with a crosshatching line: love, then the next one, peace

– DUANE

SOVEREIGNTY AND INDEPENDENCE

The biggest enabler we encountered was in Broome when we actually became a not-for-profit and Public Benevolent Institute. So, we could apply for funding directly, so we would not be controlled by the systems that were not interested in doing things differently

– CHRISTINE

ADDITIONAL TRAINING

a bit more training on dealing with violent behaviors in the circles. I think that would actually help me to refresh on certain ways of dealing with that

– RUTH

I would learn more from seeing it modelled the way like when you do psychotherapy training, you do fishbowls or you watch videos of people doing sessions, even just to say, “Oh yeah, that’s similar to what I’m doing.” There’s really no feedback or information for me to look at to see whether what I’m doing is what it is or what it looks like, yeah. Whereas in the room, in a circle, I feel more confident that that’s all unfolding as it needs to ...

– RUTH

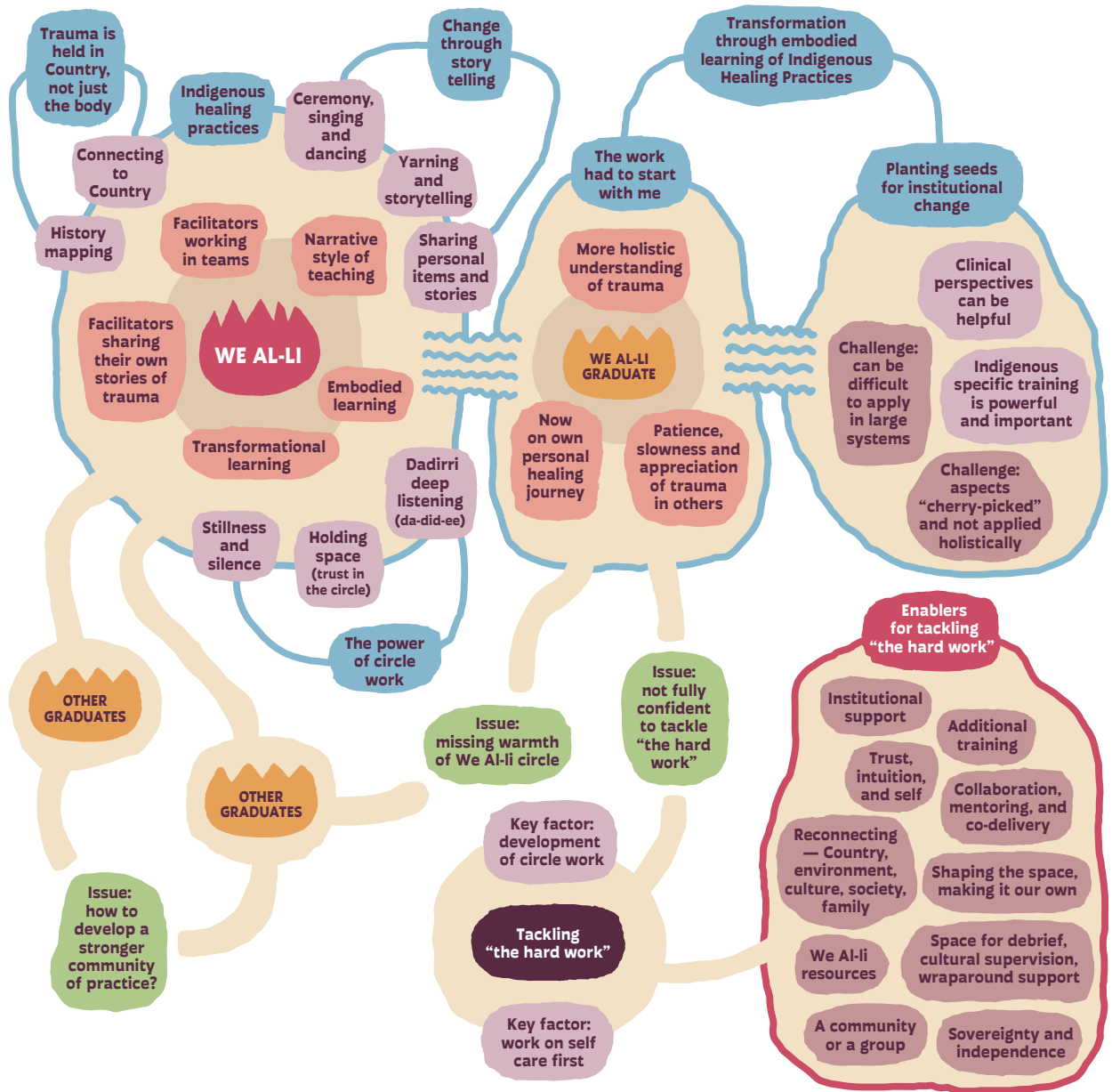
HOW CHANGE HAPPENS

The images below summarise how change happens according to the stories shared in this project. The images represent the present current reality (Part 1), the future we hope for (Part 3), and a bridge to get between the two (Part 2).

Change is going to happen slowly and incrementally. If it happened too fast, I would be worried. If it happens too fast, it doesn't stay, but when it happens step by step making it happen, then... yeah!

JUDY ATKINSON

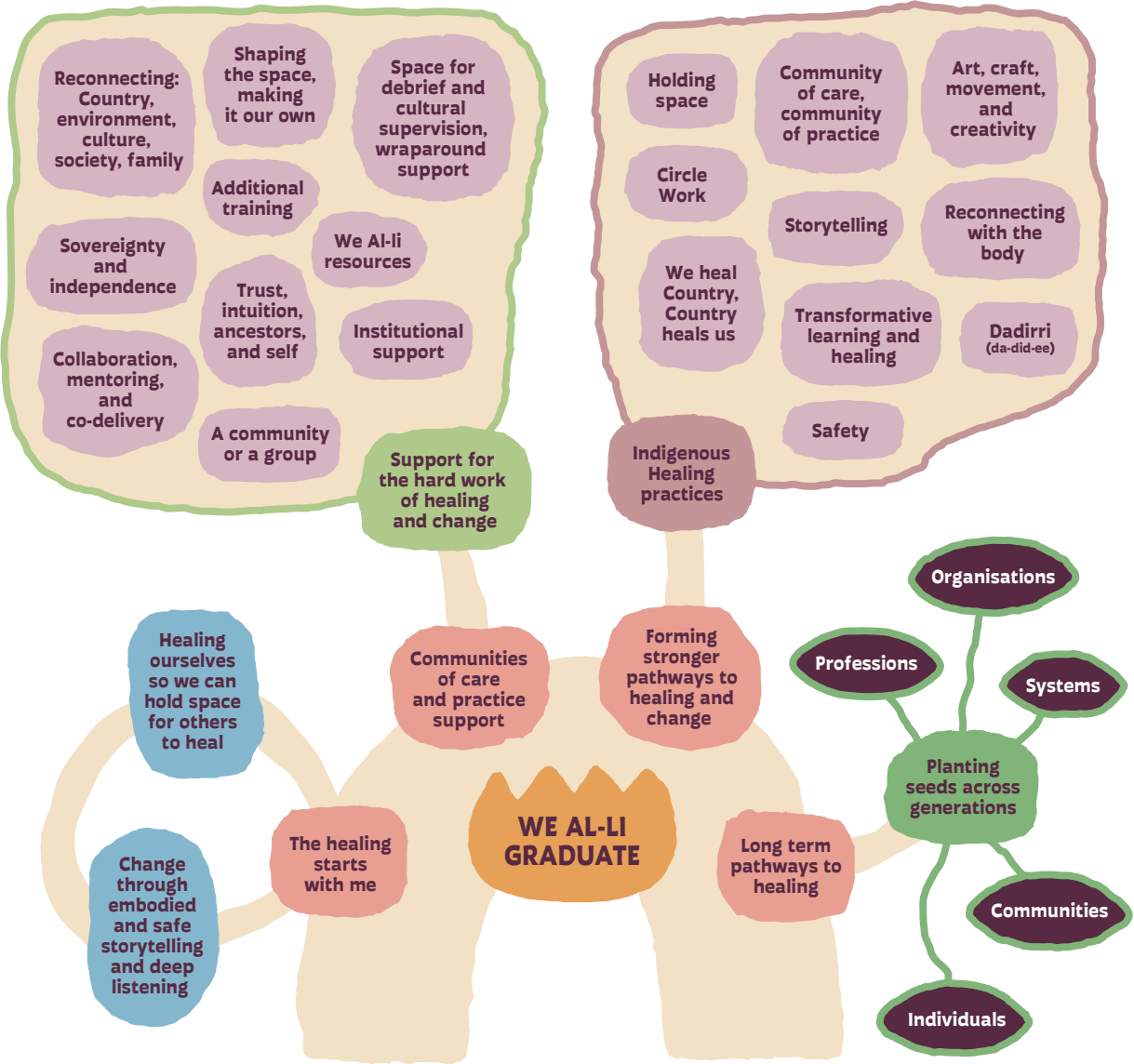
PART 1 CURRENT REALITY



THE CURRENT WE AL-LI GRADUATE EXPERIENCE

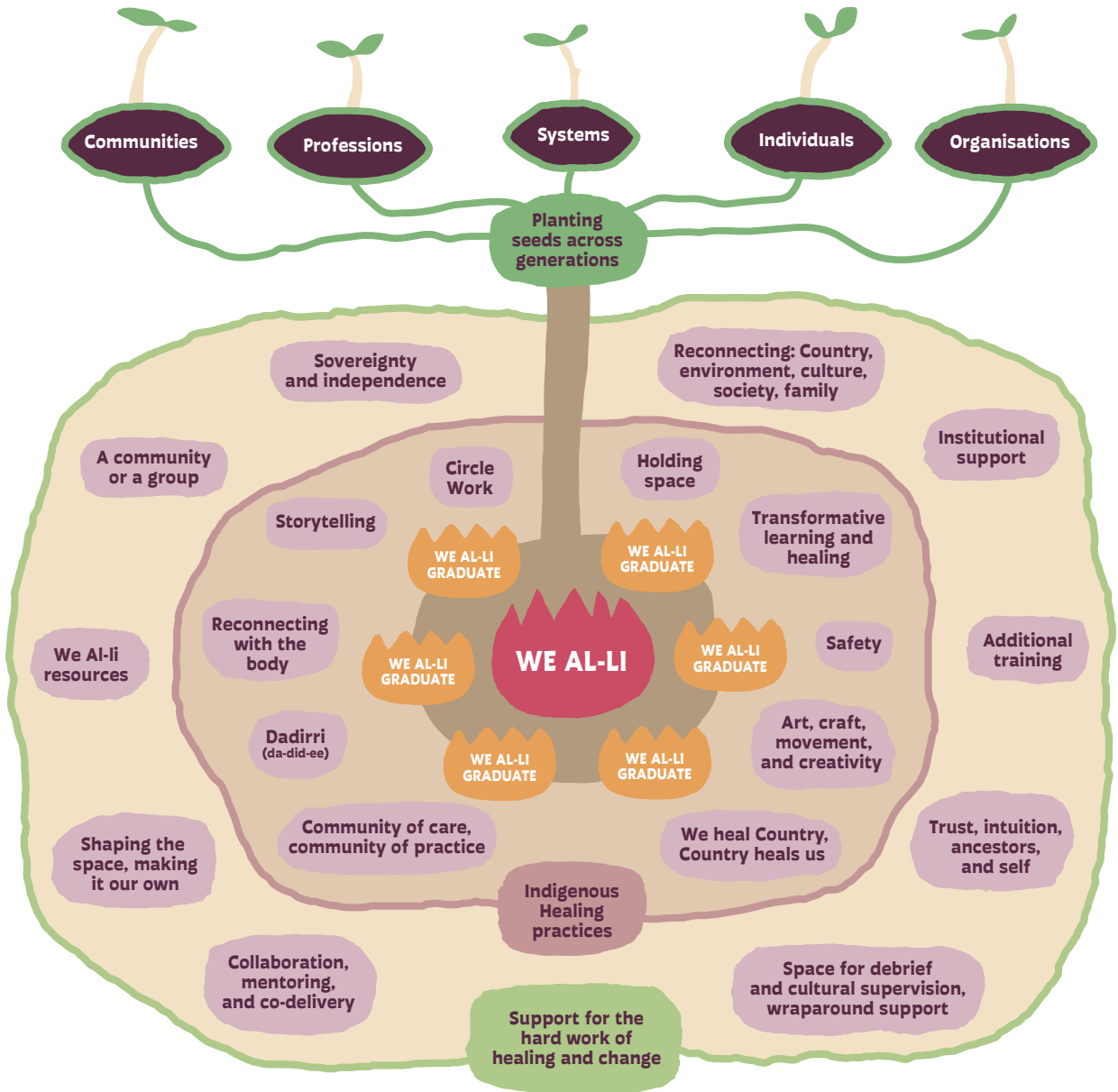
PART 2

PATHWAYS TO HEALING



**BUILDING A BRIDGE TOWARDS
ASPIRATIONAL FUTURES**

PART 3 ASPIRATIONAL FUTURE



THEORY OF CHANGE DRAWN FROM WE AL-LI AND GRADUATES' STORIES

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

KEY QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- How do we start to engage with communities that are fractured in themselves alongside the other things that come into communities (e.g. drugs)?
- Where and how will we co-create communities of care and practice to support Indigenous healing practice?
- How can we re-create and lead the We Al-li “fire” and “water” in our own places and spaces?
- What do we need to continue facilitating healing for ourselves and others?

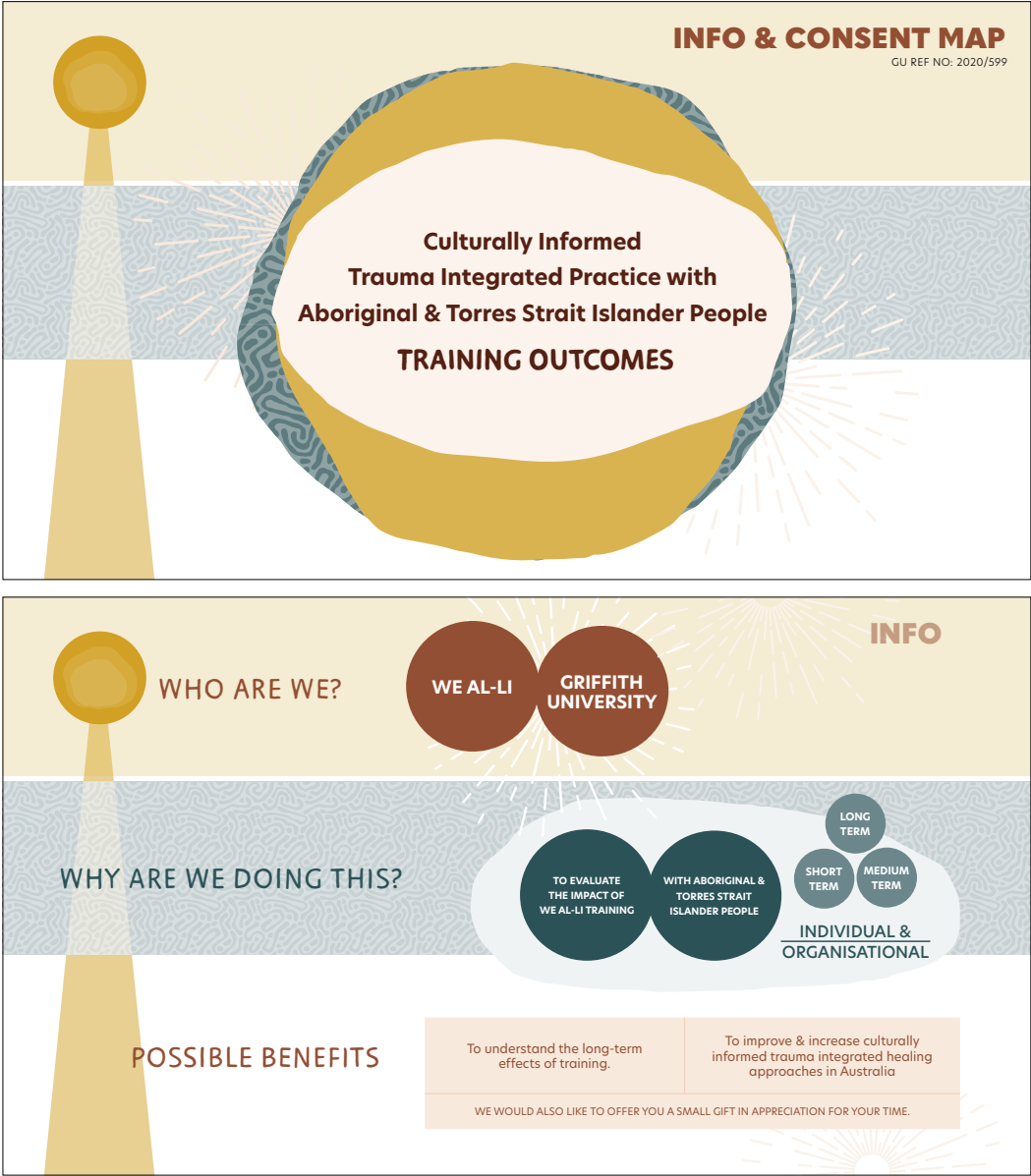
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: RESEARCH ETHICS INFORMATION PACK





INFO

WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO?

A 60-90 MINUTE YARN

ALWAYS YOUR CHOICE

ABOUT YOUR WE AL-LI TRAINING

AUDIO RECORDING

IN PERSON OR ONLINE

TRANSCRIBED

QUESTIONS & REFLECTIONS

YOU CAN SAY NO AT ANYTIME, AND THERE WILL BE NO HARD FEELINGS.

HOW COULD YOUR YARN BE USED?

articles // social media // presentations // other materials

You can also choose to have your yarn turned into visual art for a public ebook, documenting the outcomes of We Al-li's work.





INFO

Your participation is voluntary, you can say no, you can change your mind or stop anytime and there will be no hard feelings.

Remember that once things are published, we can't change them or take them back. We will always check with you before publishing.

YOUR PRIVACY

YOU DECIDE IF THE DRAFT IS OK, WE WILL REMOVE ANY QUOTES DON'T WANT SHARED.

WE WILL SEND YOU A DRAFT OF ANYTHING THAT WILL BE PUBLISHED.

AN ANONYMOUS COPY OF YOUR YARN MAY BE USED FOR OTHER RESEARCH PURPOSES.

YOUR YARN IS CONFIDENTIAL & WILL NOT BE SHARED WITHOUT CONSENT, EXCEPT TO MEET AUTHORITY REQUIREMENTS.

DATA WILL BE STORED IN SECURE DIGITAL STORAGE SPACES FOR 5 YEARS MINIMUM.

IF YOU CHOOSE TO BE IDENTIFIED, WE WILL COLLECT, ACCESS, USE & PUBLISH YOUR NAME & STORIES.





ETHICAL CONDUCT

INFO

We follow the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research

POSSIBLE RISKS

No big anticipated risks overall.

There is a chance online content could be 'trolled', which may be upsetting.

Yarn topics may be upsetting, support is available if you need it.

Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636 beyondblue.org.au // Lifeline: www.lifeline.org.au
 Social & Emotional Wellbeing & Mental Health Services in
 Aboriginal Australia: sewbmh.org.au

QUESTIONS & MORE INFORMATION

Contact details:
 Professor Naomi Sunderland at n.sunderland@griffith.edu.au
 Research Ethics Manager: research-ethics@griffith.edu.au
 For further information, consult the University's Privacy Plan at www.gu.edu.au/ua/aa/vc/pp



CONSENT

If you are comfortable to move forward with the research add your name and the date below.

Name

Date

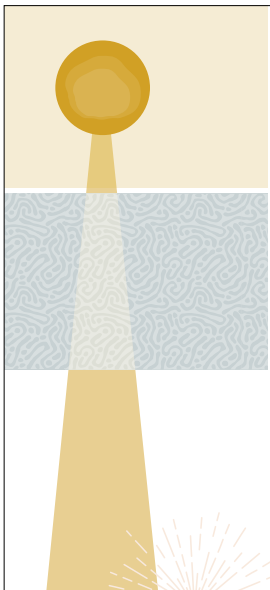
Please consider the following additional options and tick if you agree.

☐ The audio recording from my yarn can be retained by the Research Team for future research. You can withdraw this consent in the future, please contact the research team.

☐ My name or identifying information can be used in publications arising from this research.

☐ I understand that I have a choice to be identified or anonymous in the research.

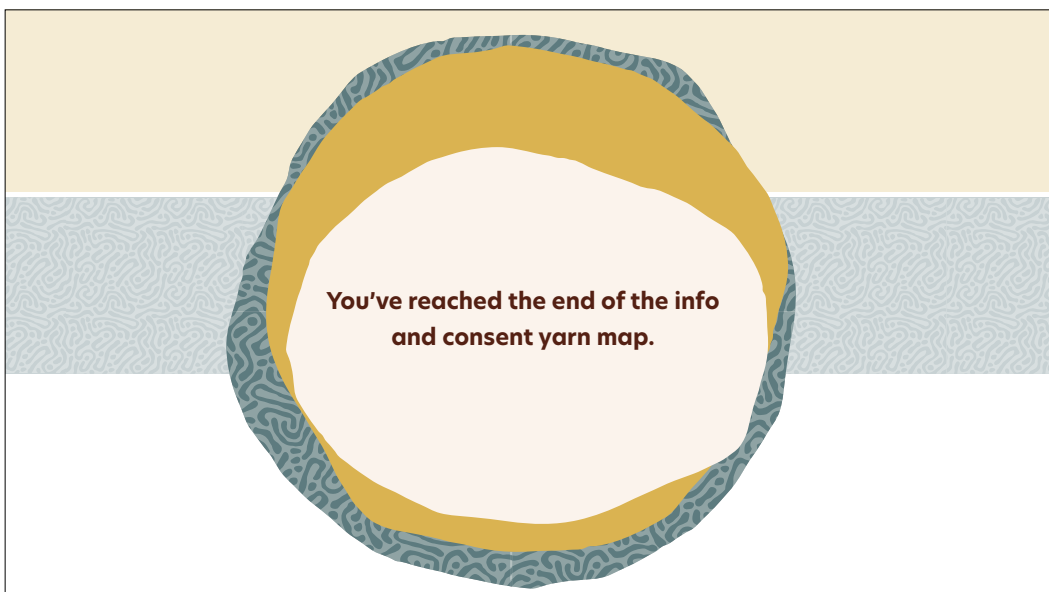
☐ I understand that the yarn will be recorded with my permission and the Research Team will work with my preferences and cultural protocols for use of the recordings.



CONSENT

Please confirm that you have read and understood the information and in particular have noted that (please tick each box that applies):

☐	I understand that my involvement will include a 60-90 minute yarn with a researcher.
☐	I understand that I have an option to have my yarn typed up and graphically designed as part of a publicly available ebook documenting the outcomes of We Al-li's work.
☐	I understand that I have a choice to be identified or anonymous in the research.
☐	I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction.
☐	I understand the risks involved.
☐	I understand that there is a chance that social media may be "trolled".
☐	I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research other than a small thank you gift.
☐	I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty.
☐	I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project.
☐	I agree to participate in the project.



APPENDIX 2: GUIDING YARN QUESTIONS

Intention of these questions: Research yarn facilitators sought to cover these questions with research storytellers via storytelling and conversation. The facilitator used these questions as prompts for conversations and storytelling but did not ask all questions depending on the flow of the yarn. Where possible, all topics were covered with each participant.

Getting to know you

- What would you like the research team and others who access this research to know about you?

Baseline knowledge and change over time

- What We AI-li training did you do and how long ago (roughly) was that training?
- How much did you know about trauma and its effects before the training?
- [if not covered in previous] How much do you feel you know about trauma and its effects now? (What has contributed to that knowledge? Or, if person feels they don't know much, what else is needed?)
- Do you think there have been noticeable changes for you since the training? How would you describe your journey over time?

Work and community related effects of training

- To what degree do you think the knowledge and approaches We AI-li offers can respond to critical needs in your communities? (seek honest critical reflection here, e.g. are other things required?)
- Have you noticed any changes in the way you work since completing the training? What are some examples?
- Have you noticed any positive or negative outcomes of those changes? What are some examples and evidence of those outcomes?
- What have been some external challenges or impediments to working in culturally and trauma informed ways?
- What have been some external enablers or supports for working in culturally and trauma informed ways?
- How would you describe your workplace before the training? (for example, workplace culture, ways of working, relationships with co-workers). Has this changed since the training and if so, in what way?

- Have there been any changes in policies or procedures within your workplace or networks that you would link to the We AI-li training and approaches?
- How competent do you feel in recognising and responding to your own trauma responses and triggers in your personal and professional life?

Readiness

- How ready do you feel to work with the extreme dynamics and effects of trauma in our communities such as violence, child rape, and suicide?
- How confident and safe do you feel in your work environment to recognise and respond to the signs and symptoms of trauma overall in clients, families, staff, and others? Can you give an example when you have demonstrated this? Or if the answer is no, why not and what do they suggest needs to be addressed?
- If you feel comfortable to share, can you tell me about the most challenging trauma related situation you've dealt with since doing the We AI-li training? (if yes, proceed to ask for that story). How do you feel the We AI-li training shaped your response to that situation, if at all? What else might have been needed to support you and others in that situation?

- Is there anything you would need more of to effectively implement the culturally informed trauma integrated healing approaches We AI-li offers?

Closing questions

- What is a key message you would like to share with We AI-li as someone who is implementing the knowledge and frameworks they offer?
- Are you feeling OK after our yarn today? (offer debrief or check-in call options and support numbers if needed)
- Is there anything else you'd like to say that you haven't already shared?

PATHWAYS TO HEALING: **STORIES OF CHANGE RESULTING FROM** **WE AL-LI'S CULTURALLY INFORMED** **TRAUMA INTEGRATED HEALING APPROACH**

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