

Keeping spirit strong

Research and co-design report

for the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Strategy

July 2020





HealingFoundation

Strong Spirit • Strong Culture • Strong People

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We acknowledge and honour all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have come before us, especially the Stolen Generations survivors, who did all they could to preserve their language, culture, kinship and connection to Country.

We stand on the foundations they built and honour their knowledge and strength which remain relevant in Queensland today.

We thank the more than 400 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from across Queensland who shared their hopes for a changed and healed future, by participating in the yarning process or the online alternate engagement process. We also thank the consultants and knowledge holders who led the co-design process, and Barry 'RAINMAN' Boland for the artwork which visually pulls together the voices of healing expressed throughout this report.

Although the stories have been told many times before, real change has not happened yet. We offer the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people committed to co-design, highlighting how accomplished our communities are in self-determination and leading lasting change.

PURPOSE

The Queensland Healing Strategy has arisen from *Our Way: A generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families 2017-37*. It is a key action under the *Changing Tracks Action Plan 2020-2022*. It also supports *Shifting minds: Queensland Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategic Plan 2018-2023* which identifies a strategic priority to renew, strengthen and integrate cross-sectoral approaches to social and emotional wellbeing, including adopting healing informed approaches.

We acknowledge the oversight and guidance of the Queensland First Children and Families Board.

This report *Keeping spirit strong*, links research and knowledge about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing and trauma, with the results of yarning about healing with more than 400 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Queensland. The voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are published in *Dreaming big*. Taken together, this evidence provides the rationale for the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Strategy *Leading healing our way*.

TRADITIONAL OWNERS

The Healing Foundation acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we live and work. We also pay our respects to the Elders and Stolen Generations survivors. We recognise the intergenerational trauma that remains and our commitment to build an Australia that can heal. We acknowledge all who will carry the healing spirit into the future.



**Queensland
Government**



**Queensland
Mental Health
Commission**

The Healing Foundation was commissioned by the Queensland Government and Queensland Mental Health Commission to develop the Queensland Healing Strategy.

Hopes, opportunities and our way

More than 400 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders from across Queensland have offered their voices to co-design the first Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Strategy. We are incredibly privileged and honoured to have heard their stories. They opened their hearts to gift and re-gift stories and the wisdom of generations to create a collection of insights, hopes, and dreaming to inform the strategy.

Five themes emerged from the consultations as priorities for action for healing in Queensland. These themes, while localised to Queensland, are consistent with other research and knowledge about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing, trauma and healing.

The evidence presented here in *Keeping spirit strong* – whether accessed through formal and informal research channels or shared by people participating in the consultation – combines to make a very powerful case for co-designing and collaboratively implementing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led healing programs that are:

- trauma aware, healing informed and safe
- focused on strong culture and identity
- community controlled and led
- preventative, restorative and holistic
- enlivened through strong partnerships
- evidence based.

This strategy marries the priority themes and principles of best practice healing and translates them into action.

Our time working with representatives of community, service providers, knowledge holders and government has been one of enduring respect and strength and sets us in good stead to continue a co-designed process towards better outcomes.

We honour the collective wisdom and desire to hold a space for those who are yet to come to the circle, and to those who waited for the opportunity but did not see it in their lifetime. We dream with you in mind but do not speak for all.

We acknowledge that the current efforts and the commitments outlined in the strategy give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders hope; hope that this is more than what we have experienced before. This commitment to develop the first ever Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander co-designed and led Queensland Healing Strategy may enable this hope to turn into trust.

We will continue navigating our way, as our ancestors have done before us, navigating their ways between islands and across plains, knowing that the stars would guide them home. We know that if we follow this wisdom from our culture, and restore our ways of being connected to culture, which has evolved survived and thrived, that this will lead us home, to healing and keeping spirit strong.

Navigating our way is the powerful step to now be taken, using a guiding strategy and implementation plan based on the priority themes from more than 400 voices, and enabling purposeful way making that prioritises healing.

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Why healing?

“Healing means my children have a better future with better opportunities.”

Brisbane online submission

“We must also support and enable families to identify and take control of their healing and support needs, and to develop and implement plans that reflect the hopes and goals they want for their children.”

Changing Tracks An action plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families 2017-19¹

Healing trauma directly addresses the source of social and emotional wellbeing issues faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Queensland today, supporting communities to understand the impact their experiences have had and to create and lead sustainable change.

The evidence in this report shows Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led healing approaches effectively address trauma, improve wellbeing outcomes, and deliver cost benefits.

For 60,000 years Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and nations lived self sufficiently with deep rooted culture, lore, and kinship connections.

Then came colonisation bringing wars, disease, famine, violence and the destruction and violation of cultural ways, sacred sites, families, and communities. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were denied their Country, knowledge, language, ceremonies, and identity. In Queensland, colonisation brought violence, disease and dispossession.² Laws for controlling the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were enacted at the end of the nineteenth century and persisted until the 1970s. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were forced to move from traditional lands to missions and reserves where all aspects of life were controlled.

For about a century, thousands of Aboriginal children were systematically taken from their families, communities and culture, many never to be returned. They were taken by the police; from their homes; on their way to or from school and, in Queensland, put in over 50 institutions, adopted or fostered by non-Indigenous people. They were often subjected to abuse. These children are known as the Stolen Generations.

The impacts of removal left deep and complex trauma. Unknowingly people passed trauma onto their children. This is known as intergenerational trauma and is manifested in symptoms such as broken relationships, disconnected families, violence, suicide and drug and alcohol abuse. This process continues today and must be stopped.

Stopping trauma is a shared goal for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, governments and the broader Australian community. However, despite the best intentions of government and significant investment to address the disadvantage experienced by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, there is little evidence of positive impact.³

1. Family Matters Queensland and Queensland Government 2017. *Changing Tracks An action plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families 2017-19* <https://www.communities.qld.gov.au/resources/campaign/supporting-families/changing-tracks.pdf>
2. Queensland Anti-Discrimination Commission 2017. *Aboriginal people in Queensland: a brief human rights history*.
3. The Healing Foundation 2015. *A Theory of Change for Healing*. https://healingfoundation.org.au/app/uploads/2019/04/HF_Theory_of_Change_A4_Mar2019_WEB.pdf

“We need to be able to make sense and meaning of the things that have happened to us and the events that have shaped us. Once this is achieved, we can overcome anything, and we can work towards being socially, economically, and environmentally independent.”

Virtual yarning circle submission

The Healing Foundation has gathered clear evidence that healing is fundamental to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people reaching their full potential (personal, cultural, social, educational, economic). Healing is about restoring the wellbeing, strength of spirit, family connections, and lore that has made Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures the oldest living cultures on Earth.⁴

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland hold distinct cultural rights, recognised under the *Queensland Human Rights Act 2019* (s28).⁵ Restoring wellbeing, strength of spirit, family connections and lore includes rights to practice beliefs and teachings, use languages, protect and develop kinship ties, and maintain relationships with the lands, seas and waterways.

Importantly, there is incontrovertible evidence that programs designed to tackle trauma – at its root causes not its symptoms – through culturally based practices showed benefits not only for participants but also provide substantial potential cost benefits for government. These include better returns from investments across education, health, justice and family wellbeing.⁶

To meet the goals of the *Our Way*⁷ and *Shifting Minds*⁸ strategies, it is vital the Queensland Government learns from the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and works collaboratively to recognise and address the negative outcomes arising from intergenerational trauma and re-traumatisation.

MURRI SCHOOL HEALING PROGRAM

The healing program at the Murri School in Brisbane combines therapeutic intervention, service coordination, family case work, family camps, cultural and group activities, and (re)connection with educational and sporting activities. It brings together family support workers, psychologists, medical and allied health professionals and trauma aware, healing informed teachers to create a culturally appropriate, supportive environment for students and their families.

A cost benefit analysis by Deloitte Access Economics found that on average, for every additional dollar invested in the healing program there was an \$8.85 return in benefits. The largest benefit from this found a more than eight times return on investment in decreasing usage of child protection services (\$17,105 per student) followed by improvements in mental health (\$4,425 per student).⁹

4. The Healing Foundation with Adams M, Bani G, Blagg H, Bullman J, Higgins D, Hodges B, Hovane V, Martin-Pederson M, Porter A, Sarra G, Thorpe A and Wenitong M 2017. *Towards an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander violence prevention framework for men and boys*. https://healingfoundation.org.au/app/uploads/2017/11/HF_Violence_Prevention_Framework_Report_Oct2017_V9_WEB.pdf
5. Cited in Winangali & Queensland Government 2019. *A Wellbeing Outcomes Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in Queensland* <https://www.csyw.qld.gov.au/resources/campaign/supporting-families/wellbeing-outcomes-framework.pdf>
6. See for example, The Healing Foundation submission to Productivity Commission Inquiry into the Social and Economic Benefits of Improving Mental Health 2019. https://www.pc.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/240415/sub193-mental-health.pdf
7. *Our Way: A generational Strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Families*
8. *Shifting minds: Queensland Mental Health Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategic Plan 2018-2023*
9. The Healing Foundation and Deloitte Access Economics 2017. *Cost Benefit Analysis of the Murri School Healing Program*. https://healingfoundation.org.au/app/uploads/2017/09/HF2017_Murri_School_Healing_Program_Report_V9_WEB.pdf

What is healing?

“Keeping spirit strong.”

Kummara Inala yarning circle



“Healing is addressing the trauma that has manifested in our families and individuals so that we can reach our full potential and self-determine our futures with pride and confidence.”

Mackay online submission

Healing enables people to address distress, overcome trauma and restore wellbeing. It occurs at a community, family and individual level and continues throughout a person’s lifetime and across generations.¹⁰ International best practice in healing involves combining traditional Indigenous cultural healing practices with western methodologies.

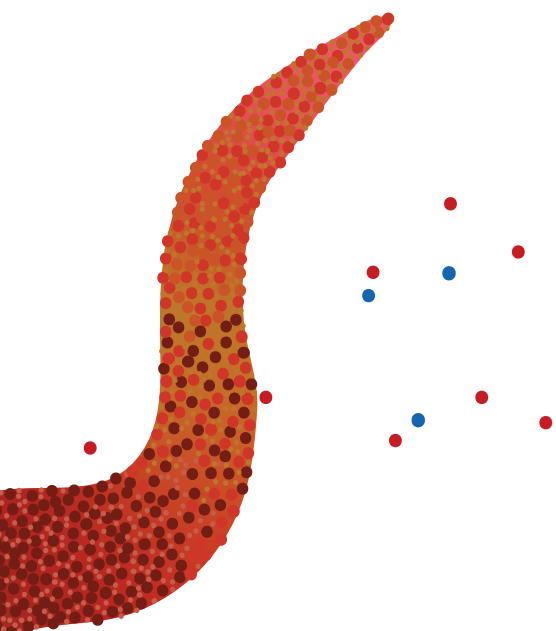
Over 400 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Queensland told us what healing means to them, how to enable the process of overcoming trauma, and how to restore wellbeing.

They emphasised that connection to spirit is integral in the journey to healing trauma. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spirituality is intrinsically linked to Country which owns them. Culture is the gateway to healing.

As a result, connectedness underpins spirituality and cultural life, which is why collective healing is essential. Everyone in the community is responsible for one another, creating a feeling of oneness and belonging.

People said that healing was a journey, a process, and a way forward which allowed communities, families and individuals to come to terms with trauma and to move beyond it. It is about knowing and understanding the truth, looking back in order to move forward.

Healing activities can include yarning circles, gatherings, healing camps, counselling, art, dance, song, weaving, cultural ceremony and culturally safe referral pathways. Family and community healing is recognised as ‘integral to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ wellbeing’¹¹



“Healing is quite large to me. Knowing and having that sense of belonging. Knowing who you are, where you come from and knowing who your mob is. You might have slipped up in the past but it’s part of your journey. Knowing what barriers you have had to overcome; to face adversity but we’re still here. I’m still here, I’m still healing.”

Rockhampton yarning circle

10. The Healing Foundation undated. *Glossary of Healing Terms* www.healingfoundation.org.au/resources/glossary-of-healing-terms/ (accessed 15 July 2020)
11. Muru Marri 2014. *A Resource for Collective Healing for Members of the Stolen Generations*, p15. The Healing Foundation. <https://healingfoundation.org.au/app/uploads/2017/02/Muru-Marri-SCREEN-singles-sml.pdf>



Four pillars of healing

Four domains need to be addressed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to heal.¹² These pillars are:

- **Safety** - creating safe spaces, healing places and identifying safe people to support healing
- **Identity** - building a strong cultural identity by reconnecting to cultural values and practice
- **Reconnection** - rebuilding relational support systems with family, community and services
- **Trauma awareness** - learning about the impacts of trauma on minds, bodies and spirits in order to find paths to healing.

Trauma aware and healing informed approaches based on these pillars can improve outcomes across a range of health and wellbeing domains including mental health, social and emotional wellbeing, family violence, child protection, substance misuse, sexual abuse, youth development, justice and corrections.

The creation of safe places where people can talk and access support is a crucial first step in the healing process, as this increases a sense of safety and enables the building of safe and healthy connections, which are essential elements of healing from trauma.¹³

Healing restores pride in cultural identity and connection to country. As well as strengthening a sense of identity and connectedness, cultural practices such as dance, art, song and storytelling stimulate the part of the brain that manages emotion and memory.¹⁴ Cultural practices that involve repetition and rhythm, such as weaving, playing didgeridoo, drumming and dance, are calming, trauma aware, healing informed processes central to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life.

12. The Healing Foundation with Adams M, Bani G, Blagg H, Bullman J, Higgins D, Hodges B, Hovane V, Martin-Pederson M, Porter A, Sarra G, Thorpe A and Wenitong M 2017. *Towards an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander violence prevention framework for men and boys*. https://healingfoundation.org.au/app/uploads/2017/11/HF_Violence_Prevention_Framework_Report_Oct2017_V9_WEB.pdf

13. The Healing Foundation 2015. *Growing Our Children up Strong and Deadly: Healing for children and young people*. <https://healingfoundation.org.au/app/uploads/2017/02/Growing-our-Children-up-SINGLES-updated-2015.pdf>

14. Perry 2009 in Blagg H and Tulich T 2018. 'Diversionary pathways for Aboriginal youth with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder'. *Trends and Issues in crime and criminal justice* No 557, August 2018. Australian Institute of Criminology. <https://www.aic.gov.au/publications/tandi/tandi557>

Key principles

The principles required to underpin best practice approaches to healing¹⁵ are:

1. Trauma aware, healing informed

A trauma aware, healing informed approach is imperative, based on a deep, nuanced understanding of the ongoing impacts of trauma on individuals, families and communities. These approaches recognise historical and contemporary truths and acknowledge the origins of trauma.

2. Culturally oriented

Healing initiatives draw on emerging evidence that increased connection to culture enhances a positive sense of identity, self confidence and hope, particularly among descendants of the Stolen Generations who may have become disconnected from their cultural traditions.¹⁶ Initiatives should support a focus on cultural identity and connection to Country as ways of reconnecting people to their cultural knowledge and strengthening cultural identity.

3. Self-determination

It is critical that communities are responsible for and control the design, development and delivery of healing programs. Initiatives need to be centred in self-determination and operate from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldview, and aim to empower not just individuals but families and communities.

4. Preventative, restorative and holistic

There is a need to emphasise preventative, restorative and holistic responses to intergenerational trauma.¹⁷ Adopting strengths based approaches to healing the body, mind and spirit improves people's "physical, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing by strengthening cultural connectedness and identity."¹⁸

5. Local partnerships

Significant time, energy and resources must be invested into working in partnership with local organisations funded to design and develop the healing programs implemented at each site, and in supporting those organisations to develop strong networks and partnerships with other local service providers in order to facilitate coordinated systems of care.¹⁹

6. Evidence based practice

Successful healing programs are created locally, have community support and respond to needs identified by the community. Evidence based approaches involve developing and transferring knowledge and resources,²⁰ seeing implementation as a process rather than a single event, and purposeful, active and integrated strategies that support program implementation.²¹

15. McCausland R, Nettheim A and Kang C 2018. *Intergenerational Trauma* (unpublished)

16. The Healing Foundation 2015. *Growing our children up strong and deadly*. The Healing Foundation, Canberra p. 6. <https://healingfoundation.org.au/app/uploads/2017/02/Growing-our-Children-up-SINGLES-updated-2015.pdf>

17. The Healing Foundation 2015. *Growing our children up strong and deadly*. The Healing Foundation, Canberra pp. 3-4. <https://healingfoundation.org.au/app/uploads/2017/02/Growing-our-Children-up-SINGLES-updated-2015.pdf>

18. McCausland R, Nettheim A and Kang C 2018. *Intergenerational Trauma* (unpublished)

19. For example: The Healing Foundation, undated. *A Partnership Approach* (Internal document); Muru Marri 2017. *Formative Evaluation of Bourke and Brewarrina Healing Project for The Healing Foundation*. The Healing Foundation, p5-6;

Arney F, McArthur M, Moore T, Chong A & Parkinson S 2015. *Evaluation Report for the Inter-generational Trauma Initiatives funded by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation*, Summary Report Australian Centre for Child Protection, University of South Australia p. 17.

Arney F, McArthur M, Moore T & Chong A 2014. *Evaluation Report for the Inter-generational Trauma Initiative at the Aboriginal and Islander Independent Community School (the Murri School)*, Final report, delivered to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation. Australian Centre for Child Protection, University of South Australia p. 3.

20. McKendrick J, Brooks R, Hudson J, Thorpe M, & Bennett P 2017. *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Programs. A Literature Review* p. 2

<https://healingfoundation.org.au/app/uploads/2017/02/Aboriginal-and-Torres-Strait-Islander-Healing-Programs-A-Literature-Review.pdf>

21. Fixsen DL, Naoom SF, Blase KA, Friedman EA & Wallace F 2005. *Implementation Research: A Synthesis of the Literature*. University of South Florida, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, the National Implementation Network, Tampa, FL. <https://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/sites/nirn.fpg.unc.edu/files/resources/NIRN-MonographFull-01-2005.pdf>; Fixsen DL, Blase KA, Naoom SF, & Wallace 2009. *Core Implementation Components*. *Research on Social Work Practice* 19(5), pp. 531-540. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1049731509335549>

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants in the consultations identified five key themes that must be addressed on the path to healing in Queensland. These are:



The voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders that contributed to development of the Queensland Healing Strategy are published in *Dreaming big*. The following sections bring together those voices and locate them in evidence and knowledge about wellbeing, healing and trauma.

“Healing is not just a strategy but also a process that enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to overcome trauma, decide their own story for the future, bring about long term generational change and restore wellbeing, on their terms.”

Professor Steve Larkin, Chair, The Healing Foundation

EXAMPLE – WHAT IS HEALING?

The Marumali Journey of Healing Model²² and Marumali Program[®] were developed by Stolen Generations survivor, Aunty Lorraine Peeters.

The program cuts through pain and confusion and allows survivors to find a safe path home to themselves, their families and communities. It adjusts to state/territory variations in how removal policies were implemented, and illuminates the transgenerational effects on survivors, their families and the communities they were removed from. It does this in a way, which contains and effectively manages the distress and risk that such realisations might otherwise invoke in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants.

The Marumali Program[®] was developed specifically to support the Stolen Generations to heal. However as all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been affected by removal policies to some degree or another, others can find meaning and draw strength from the program.

22. <https://marumali.com.au> (accessed 15 July 2020)

Tell the truth

“Truth being denied, not listened to or respected is one of the great challenges of healing.”

Brisbane online submission



“Truth is the antidote to racism.”

Gold Coast yarning circle

“It wasn’t until I started doing my own research and had access to policies that I truly realised that my mother was suffering from the impacts of intergenerational trauma.”

Stolen Generations survivor

The lack of a shared understanding about the truth of our history is a fundamental roadblock to healing for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. More than 85 percent of Australians believe it is important to learn about our shared history including the occurrence of mass killings, incarceration, forced removal of children.²³ The time for telling, sharing, discussing and understanding Australia’s true history is now.

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people also experience trauma as a result of ongoing racism, violence and disadvantage. There is a strong association between experiences of racism and poor mental health and drug use.²⁴ For people bearing a burden of trauma, it is also re-traumatising and can become a barrier to healing.²⁵ Internationally, research has found that truth telling is effective at changing the racial attitudes because once the truth was shared, people can acknowledge responsibility.²⁶

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have long called for a comprehensive process of truth telling about Australia’s history that not only encompasses the periods of colonial conflict and dispossession, but also acknowledges the strength and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and cultures.²⁷

Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participating in the consultations were very clear about their expectations for the impact of truth telling. Truth telling allows Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to work their own way through dealing with the past and present trauma in order to lay the groundwork for healing and true reconciliation.

Analysis by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare²⁸ in 2018 estimated, for the first time, that around 4,400 Stolen Generations survivors resided in Queensland in 2014-15 and of the State’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

23. Reconciliation Australia 2018. *2018 Australian Reconciliation Barometer*. https://www.reconciliation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/ra_2019-barometer-brochure_web.single.page_.pdf

24. Queensland Mental Health Commission 2020. *Don’t Judge, and Listen Experiences of stigma and discrimination related to problematic alcohol and other drug use* https://www.qmhc.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/qmhc_dont_judge_and_listen_report.pdf

25. The Healing Foundation 2017. *Bringing Them Home 20 years on: An action plan for healing*. <https://healingfoundation.org.au/app/uploads/2017/05/Bringing-Them-Home-20-years-on-FINAL-PRINT.pdf>

26. Gibson JL 2018. *Overcoming Apartheid: Can truth reconcile a divided nation?*

27. The Healing Foundation and Reconciliation Australia 2018. *Truth Telling Symposium Report* <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/truth-telling-symposium-report1.pdf>

28. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2018. *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations and descendants: numbers, demographic characteristics and selected outcomes*. Cat.no.IHW 195. Canberra, AIHW. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/indigenous-australians/stolen-generations-descendants/contents/table-of-contents>

“Mainstream community accepting appreciating and respecting the history of our country without racism or denigration.”

Townsville online submission

population almost one in three are descendants of the Stolen Generations. The report reveals chronic health issues, high levels of disability and widespread economic and social disadvantage among survivors and descendants and illustrates the direct link between the forced removals of tens of thousands of children from their families and the intergenerational disadvantage and trauma affecting communities today.

The evidence provided by the AIHW data ensures that the experiences of Stolen Generations survivors is formally recognised.

Our journey to truth telling must begin by enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to look at and understand the origins of trauma and the impacts it has had.

Among the non-Indigenous population in Queensland little is known of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories or the injustices perpetuated over the past 200 years. Formalised truth telling has the potential to unite all Queenslanders by giving them a greater connection to, and knowledge of, a shared history.

This truth telling and understanding acts as a foundation for healing and reconciliation. It is a pathway for Queenslanders to address racism.

EXAMPLE – TRUTH TELLING

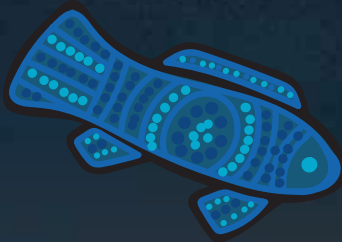
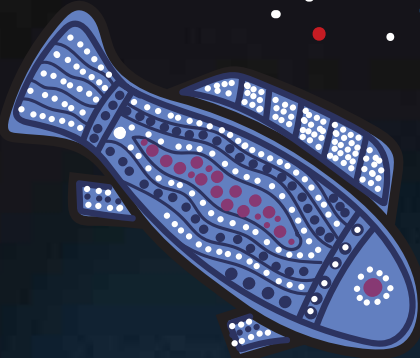
The Stolen Generations Resource Kit for Teachers and Students²⁹ was developed by The Healing Foundation in consultation with Stolen Generations survivors, teachers, parents and curriculum writers. It includes suggested lesson plans for Foundation Year through to Year 9 and professional learning tools for teachers. Each year level includes four activities that can be taught over a day, week, month or term, mapped to the Australian Curriculum.

“The schools kit is an important part of the ongoing healing of our nation. Our children are our future and we’re finally giving them the tools to better understand and frame discussions around truth telling and healing.

My hope is that all schools will one day soon be teaching our kids what really happened so that together we can create change that builds a better future for Australia.”

Ian Hamm, *Chair, The Healing Foundation Stolen Generations Reference Group*

29. The Healing Foundation 2019. *Stolen Generations Resource Kit for Teachers and Students* <https://healingfoundation.org.au/schools/>



Stop the trauma

“These actions have been done too many times. They have to stop – and have to stop now.”

Cherbourg Domos yarning circle

... Some [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Queensland continue to] live in unsafe situations that leads to their removal from their families, communities and cultures at more than eight times the rate of non-Indigenous children. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people also share a continued legacy of pain, trauma, fear, distrust and anger as a result, in part, of government decisions, policies and practices.

Our Way: A generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families 2017-2037

The importance of government and mainstream organisations understanding the issues affecting Aboriginal communities was emphasised, so these bodies could understand and recognise if their processes were insensitive or causing trauma and thus implement means of mitigating or preventing this.

Coalition of Peaks June 2020³⁰

Queensland communities were clear about their expectations for stopping trauma. Their highest priority is to heal the spirit of those who continue to suffer intergenerational trauma, within a holistic model of health and wellbeing.

Trauma³¹

Trauma affects the way people think and act and overwhelms their ability to cope and engage. It can affect a person for many decades and in many different ways. Common symptoms include fear and anxiety, difficulty with relationships, impulsive behaviour, feeling sad and hopeless, tired and confused.

Research has shown that people are not only affected by traumatic events they directly experience. Witnessing or hearing about trauma from a family or community member can also have an impact.

Unresolved trauma contributes to many of the social and health problems affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Some people may act out their pain from unresolved trauma in negative ways including physical or emotional violence, abuse or addiction.

Intergenerational trauma

If people don't have the opportunity to heal from trauma, they may unknowingly pass it on to others through their behaviour. Children are particularly susceptible to distress and may experience difficulties with attachment and other developmental issues, disconnection from their extended families and culture and high levels of stress from family and community members who are dealing with the impacts of trauma. A cycle of trauma is created where the impact is passed from one generation to the next.

In Australia, intergenerational trauma predominantly affects Stolen Generations survivors', children, grandchildren and future generations. Stolen Generations survivors might also pass on the impacts of institutionalisation, finding it difficult to know how to nurture their children because they were denied the opportunity to be nurtured themselves.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people understanding the origins of trauma and its impacts is fundamental to starting the healing process. Trauma is a state of high arousal in which severe threat or the perception of severe threat

30. Coalition of Peaks 2020. *A Report on Engagements with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People to Inform a New National Agreement on Closing the Gap* <https://coalitionofpeaks.org.au/resources/>

31. The Healing Foundation undated. *Glossary of Healing Terms* www.healingfoundation.org.au/resources/glossary-of-healing-terms/ (accessed 15 July 2020)

“I am trying to seek help to heal

But I don’t want to deal with...

...being called “ATSI” and labelled as a “complex case”

Because I try to tell a doctor that my spirit feels weak

...being told to “get over it”

Because if I could do that I would have done it already

...being hand balled from one service to another

Because I don’t fit into their boxes.”

From poem ‘I am’ by Erikka Dunning, Mununjali and Wangerriburra woman

overwhelms a person’s capacity to cope. Overwhelming stress disrupts the connections between the various systems of the body, and compromises a person’s physical and psychological health as well as their daily functioning.³²

For government investments in closing the gap to succeed, historical and contemporary, individual and collective trauma must be addressed as a root cause of disadvantage across a broad spectrum of social and economic outcomes, instead of merely treating its symptoms such as health impacts and over representation in the justice system. This requires systemic changes to policy, legislation, service systems, and the way trauma is recognised and addressed.

Effective steps include acknowledging the reality of collective and intergenerational trauma and their impacts, and embedding the need for culturally relevant, trauma aware and healing informed services in organisational policies, systems and practices. Staff and management at all levels must be equipped and supported to provide services in this way for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland. There is an urgent need for action to ease the burden on Stolen Generations survivors, many of whom are already elderly and all of whom will be eligible for aged care by 2023, and who are likely to have multiple and complex needs.³³

Trauma aware, healing informed practice³⁴ is a strengths based approach to healing that is based on an understanding of, and responsiveness to, the impacts of trauma. It emphasises physical, psychological, and emotional safety for people and communities seeking help and for the helpers, and creates opportunities for people and communities affected by trauma to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment. It recognises the prevalence of trauma and is sensitive to and informed by the impacts of trauma on the wellbeing of individuals and communities.

Best practice healing embraces Indigenous knowledge and wisdom and other intellectual and cultural frameworks. This includes providing individual support as part of broader collective healing approaches, and supporting cultural and spiritual renewal concurrently with relevant psychological and therapeutic support.

32. Kezelman C, Stravropoulos P and the Blue Knot 2018. *Talking about Trauma guide to screening and treatment for primary health care providers*. <https://www.blueknot.org.au/Resources/Publications/Talking-about-Trauma-For-Health-and-Other-Service-providers>

33. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2018. *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations aged 50 and over*. Cat No. IHW 199 Canberra, AIHW <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/indigenous-australians/stolen-generation-aged-50-and-over/contents/table-of-contents>

34. The Healing Foundation undated. *Glossary of Healing Terms* www.healingfoundation.org.au/resources/glossary-of-healing-terms/ (accessed 15 July 2020)

“The biggest priority for our community is to heal the spirit of those who continue to suffer intergenerational trauma within a holistic model of health and wellbeing whole of person care.”

**Indigenous Wellbeing Centre,
Bundaberg**

Many people do not understand that trauma plays a role in their own lives and behaviours, and developing this understanding can be transformative. Where workforce training enables workers to better understand the impact of trauma and grief on the communities where they work, their confidence to recognise and address trauma increases, which in turn, better positions service providers to assist in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing.

Common elements of a trauma-informed service model³⁵ include understanding trauma and its impacts, creating safe places, employing culturally competent staff, actively involving trauma survivors in their healing, sharing power and governance through community co-design, providing integrated holistic care, and supporting safe relationship building to promote healing.

EXAMPLE – STOPPING TRAUMA

Interacting with aged care staff, general practitioners, dentists and other services is often difficult for Stolen Generations survivors, as everyday events can trigger the original trauma of forced removal, particularly if a situation brings back the lack of control Stolen Generations survivors experienced when they were taken from their families.

In collaboration with Stolen Generations survivors and professional bodies, The Healing Foundation has produced fact sheets that provide practical tips for caring for survivors, tailored for general practitioners, dentists and aged care workers.³⁶

“The fact sheets mean that we do not have to repeatedly tell our stories, or have to explain ourselves or be questioned why to be able to get the care we need.”

Ian Hamm, *Chair, The Healing Foundation Stolen Generations Reference Group*

35. Atkinson J 2013. *Trauma-informed services and trauma-specific care for Indigenous Australian children*. Closing the Gap Resource Sheet No 21. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/indigenous-australians/trauma-informed-services-and-trauma-specific-care-for-indigenous-australian-children>

36. The Healing Foundation 2019. *Working with Stolen Generations* <https://healingfoundation.org.au/working-stolen-generations/>



Heal through culture

“Our cultural knowledge was not taken but it was suppressed.

We still hold it; it just needs to be restored. We sit and listen to Elders, family, and Country. We trust each other and share the worry we carry.”

St George Elders

Culture is the story behind and within every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person. Culture gives purpose, identity and connection, acting as a compass, guiding people through challenges while being safely anchored in life, lore, Country, family and spirit.



Four elements of culture

(knowledge shared with permission by Anthony Dewis at the Cairns virtual yarning circle)

Engaging with culture is a critical element of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life that works to effectively heal trauma. Participants in the yarning circles identified an intrinsic connection between culture and wellbeing particularly connection to Country; the need for safe places to practice culture; the importance of lore, language and dance; and the importance of traditional healing and ceremonies.

“Being connected to culture and finding your identity gives you purpose and you can become healthier when you know yourself and where you come from.”

Minyama online submission

“Healing means a lot of things to me, peace, connection to family, to Country and culture that was stolen from us.”

St George men’s group yarning circle

Stronger connections to culture and Country build stronger individual and collective identities, a sense of self-esteem, resilience, and improved outcomes.³⁷

As part of the Mayi Kuwayu Study of Aboriginal wellbeing³⁸, Bourke and Wright et al reviewed literature connecting Indigenous culture and wellbeing in Australia and internationally. They found that the “vast majority” report positive relationships between culture, health and wellbeing. Going beyond relating measures of individuals’ own cultural identity or engagement to their outcomes, Dockery³⁹ demonstrates that there are positive outcomes for young children where their parents transmit cultural identity and knowledge. He found more apparent positive associations in major cities and inner regional areas, indicating that identity can provide a protective effect against stresses associated with living as a minority Indigenous culture.

Strong culture and strong family connections enable children to grow up strong. Stolen Generations who grew up away from culture and family experience significantly greater disadvantage across a number of social and economic outcomes compared to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were not removed.⁴⁰ Despite the impact of European contact the richness and durability of Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures has continued, and will continue, to enable their communities to overcome the myriad problems that continue to be imposed upon them.⁴¹

The yarning circles indicated that men’s business, women’s business and children’s groups were working well across several communities as a healing modality. Yarning circles and cultural camps run through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations were also identified as positive steps towards addressing trauma and cultivating healing.

37. The Lowitja Institute 2018. *Journeys to Healing and Strong Wellbeing Final Report*. <https://www.lowitja.org.au/page/services/resources/Cultural-and-social-determinants/mental-health/journeys-to-healing-and-strong-wellbeing-final-report>

38. Bourke S, Wright A, Guthrie J, Russell L, Dunbar T & Lovett R 2018. Evidence Review of Indigenous Culture for Health and Wellbeing. *The International Journal of Health, Wellness, and Society* 8(4): 11-27. doi:10.18848/2156-8960/CGP/v08i04/11-27. See summary: https://mkstudy.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/MAK001_Summary-report_A4-Online_FINAL_V6.pdf

39. Dockery AM 2020. Inter-generational transmission of Indigenous culture and children’s wellbeing: Evidence from Australia. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 74 (2020) 80–93 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2019.11.001>

40. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2018. *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations and descendants: numbers, demographic characteristics and selected outcomes*. Cat. no. IHW 195. Canberra, AIHW. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/indigenous-australians/stolen-generations-descendants/contents/table-of-contents>

41. McKendrick J, Brooks R, Hudson J, Thorpe M, & Bennett P 2017. *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Programs. A Literature Review* p. 2 <https://healingfoundation.org.au/app/uploads/2017/02/Aboriginal-and-Torres-Strait-Islander-Healing-Programs-A-Literature-Review.pdf>

“Healthy community with connectedness to Country, family and spirit.”

Mitchell online submission

Healing often begins with connecting and reconnecting with family, community, histories and cultures. This connection allows for the restoration of cultural practices, ceremony, language, art, and culture. An important element for this journey is resolving land access issues in order to ensure sites of significance can be accessed and connected with.

A flow on effect from resolving land access is having the ability to make places for healing available to assist with the establishment of healing support networks.

It has been made clear by the yarning circles that the priority for healing through culture is creating a healthy community with connectedness to Country, family, and spirit.

EXAMPLE – HEALING THROUGH CULTURE

First Nations Hope and Healing Camps⁴² engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in the Townsville area who are aged between 11 and 18, who have previously experienced or are currently experiencing vulnerabilities. Most of them are experiencing some form of disconnection to their culture, and have faced negativity associated with their First Nations cultural identity throughout their young lives.

Focussing on hope and healing, the camps are designed to enhance the cultural, social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in support of their transition to adulthood.

During the camps, the young people are able to enjoy an environment where their First Nations cultural identity is embraced and celebrated. Each camp includes a variety of cultural experiences through foods, painting, stories, dancing, songs, Women’s Business, Men’s Business, and visits to sacred sites led by Elders and others from community.

“I’m really glad that I came on these camps, it really showed me who I am and what I will be in the future. I thank all of you guys for showing me who I am and what am I capable of doing.”

Camp participant

42. Taylor A (undated). What does healing look like for you? First Nations Hope and Healing Camps. Queensland Healing Strategy. The Healing Foundation <https://healingfoundation.org.au/app/uploads/2020/06/Case-Study-First-Nations-Hope-and-Healing.docx.pdf>

Communities decide

“We should own our own healing.
Give us proper self-determination
– not a place where they can
override it.”

Gold Coast yarning circle



Healing initiatives designed, implemented, and evaluated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more likely to produce lasting, positive changes. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders are ready to assume leadership for healing, however the responsibility for many of the systems, structures and resources are controlled directly and indirectly by governments.

“The most important change that needs to happen to help our community heal is for us to be the determiners of our future, for our community, for our families, for ourselves.”

Brisbane online submission

Self-determination is seen as essential by yarning circle participants who want to be able to hold decision making powers “for their mob, about their mob”. For them nothing has significantly changed while governments have been making decisions for them. They want local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governed and operated initiatives and grass roots entities to take the lead. Funding bodies and decision makers must work to support, resource and sustain these community led approaches.

Self-determination is the most fundamental of all human rights and is grounded in the idea that people are entitled to control their own destiny. It has been described by the United Nations Human Rights Committee as the ‘essential condition for the effective guarantee and observance of individual human rights and for the promotion and strengthening of those rights.’⁴³

Self-determination works because strategies, programs and policies reflect the interests, values, vision and concerns of the people who will be affected by the strategy, and will focus on what they think is important. Self-determination also means that the decision makers must face

the consequences of their decisions, whether positive or negative, so the quality of decisions improves.⁴⁴

The journey to self-determination starts by empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to make decisions about their trauma and healing through healing leadership to drive change. Organisations who lead this change must be trauma aware and healing informed, recognising healing as a capacity requirement and valued workforce skill.

The ability to cultivate leadership skills is central to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s empowerment and healing journey. In cultivating leadership, people are able to positively influence their families and communities, whilst providing supportive networks for each other. This allows empowerment and resilience to be maintained and strengthened while contributing to community wellbeing and shared values.⁴⁵

Healing leadership at the political, organisational and community levels, that is informed by evidence about the impacts of and best practice responses to intergenerational trauma, is critical for healing.⁴⁶

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities must be given the power to decide what path is best to treat trauma and access healing. Control and power must be invested at a community level in order to change the way programs, initiatives, investments, legislation and policies are implemented.

43. Behrendt L, Jorgensen M and Vivian A 2016. *Self-Determination: Background Concepts*. <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/ResearchAndReports/self-determination-background-concepts>

44. Behrendt L, Jorgensen M and Vivian A 2016. *Self-Determination: Background Concepts*. <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/ResearchAndReports/self-determination-background-concepts>

45. Dudgeon P, Walker R, Scrine C, Cox K, D’Anna D, Dunkley C, Kelly K, & Hams K 2014. Enhancing Wellbeing, Empowerment, Healing and Leadership in Dudgeon, P., Milroy H. and Walker R (eds) *Working together : Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and wellbeing principles and practice*. 2nd edition Australian Government Department of Health & Ageing. <https://www.telethonkids.org.au/globalassets/media/documents/aboriginal-health/working-together-second-edition/working-together-aboriginal-and-wellbeing-2014.pdf>

46. McCausland R, Nettheim A and Kang C 2018. *Intergenerational Trauma* (unpublished)

Analysis of significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing, empowerment and leadership programs confirms that no single approach or program can be made applicable across all communities. People need to have a sense of ownership not only over the issues but the solutions for this to be both effective and empowering.

The support and engagement of community throughout the design, implementation and evaluation of programs is a critical factor in their

effectiveness. One of the critical elements of an effective healing program is the readiness of individuals and communities to take on such a journey through articulating its needs and being willing to participate.⁴⁷ People must have options and pathways that meet their own preferences and capacity.⁴⁸

It has been made clear by the yarning circles that the priority is for communities themselves to determine their healing future, for their families and for themselves.

“Happy is content, strong is determination to be self-autonomous. Courage is to do something yourself, rather than rely on others which can hinder personal growth in accountability for self and others. Strong must be an individual trait before it can be a community strength. Strong individuals make strong communities and content individuals make happy communities.”

Torres Strait submission

EXAMPLE – COMMUNITY LEADING

Participants in the 2018 Kaurareg healing discussions reported the need for a forum with all stakeholders to work out how agencies and government departments can recognise and respond to Kaurareg people. These conversations then need to translate into policy to ‘ensure that Kaurareg is recognised and included’. In addition, agencies need to develop ways to acknowledge, recognise and respect traditional owners and their sacred sites and stories and then embed such recognition into policy.

Participants at the healing forum wanted an apology from the agencies, churches and courts that were part of the policies of removal and which have caused trauma and distress for the Kaurareg nation. This was deemed a necessary first step to the healing process.⁴⁹

47. McCausland R, Nettheim A and Kang C 2018. *Intergenerational Trauma* (unpublished)

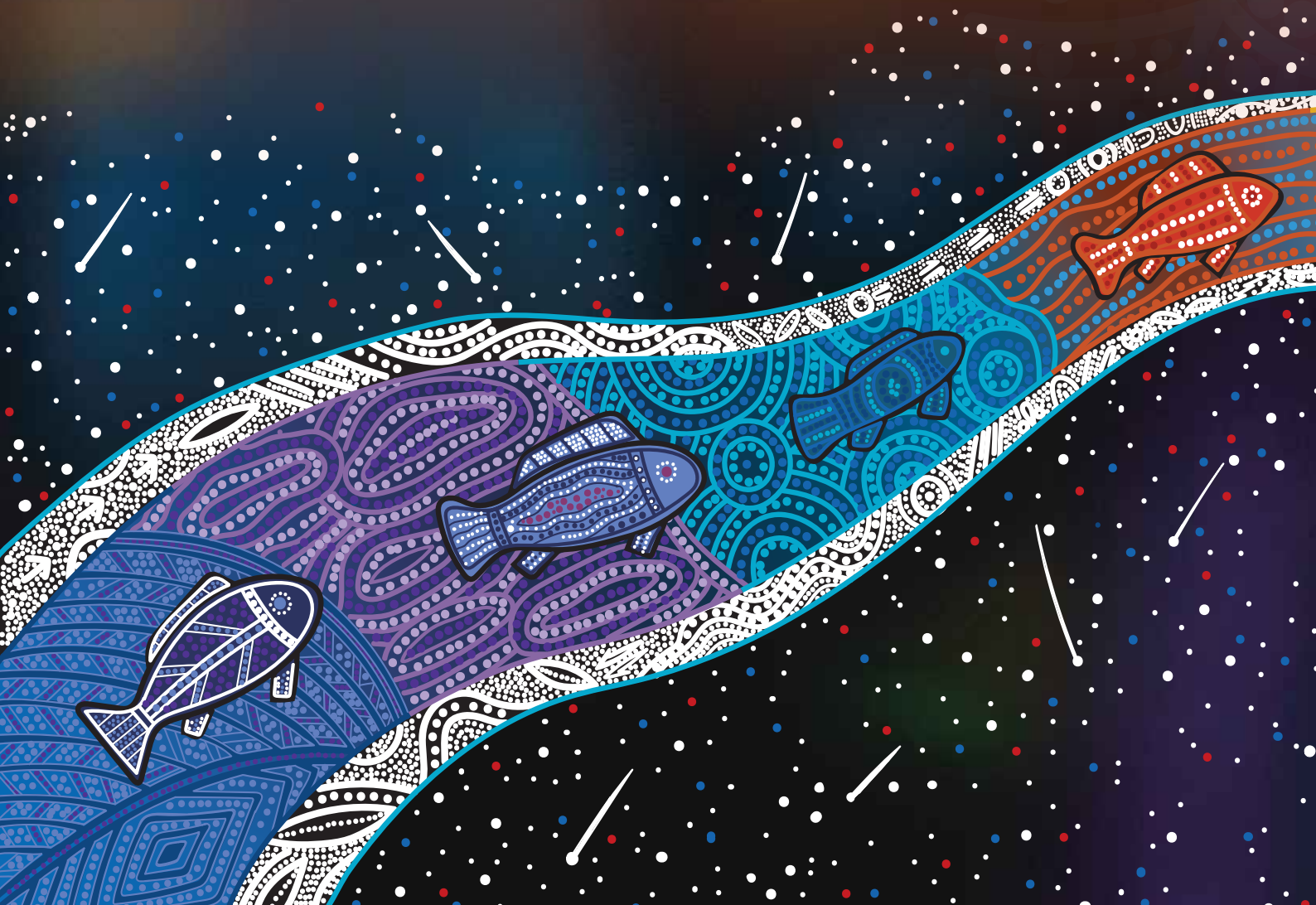
48. Dudgeon P, Milroy H, and Walker R (eds) 2014. *Working together : Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and wellbeing principles and practice*. 2nd edition Australian Government Department of Health & Ageing. <https://www.telethonkids.org.au/globalassets/media/documents/aboriginal-health/working-together-second-edition/working-together-aboriginal-and-wellbeing-2014.pdf>

49. The Healing Foundation 2018. *Kaurareg Healing Forum Report* <https://healingfoundation.org.au/app/uploads/2019/09/Kaurareg-Healing-Forum-Report.pdf>

Walk alongside

“We Elders know the westernised world needs to understand our way of doing things. White mob needs to fit in with us, not us with them.”

Masig Island Healing Forum



“Trust and respectful relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the wider Australian society is important for holistic and sustainable healing. A lack of trust and respect in relationships is often based on a lack of awareness, knowledge and understanding. Thus, it is important that the wider Australian society are involved in and support the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s histories, cultures and the profound intergenerational impacts of colonisation.”

Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council yarning circle

To ensure effective change takes place it is important for governments to walk alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, collaboratively and transparently. Traditional government approaches to trauma and healing need to be reconsidered and remodelled to invest in the more than 60,000 years of cultural knowledge that is integral to effective healing solutions.

Participants in yarning circles repeatedly said that there must be a change in the culture of government systems that are intended to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing. Governments need to respectfully provide support for community driven relationships through genuine collaboration and co-design across legislative, process, practice and policy levels.

The importance of working with government on realistic deliverables and timeframes that drive real change was reconfirmed throughout the yarning circle process. By supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to lead the way, government is supporting communities to challenge social injustices.

This is why the concept of empowerment is seen as an effective and appropriate healing strategy. Specifically, it is a means of redressing the damage and trauma experienced from a history of social injustices and preventing their recurrence, enhancing wellbeing, empowerment, healing and leadership.

This approach is consistent with the *Our Way* strategy⁵⁰ which states that governments and services should provide mechanisms and supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families, communities and organisations to participate in and drive decision making about the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and gives an undertaking to:

- build and transfer capacity to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations to provide services that respond to the needs of their communities
- ensure policies and mechanisms to facilitate the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families in all decisions that affect them
- recognise the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to drive local solutions to local issues.

50. Family Matters Queensland and Queensland Government 2017. *Our Way: A generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families 2017-2037* <https://www.communities.qld.gov.au/resources/campaign/supporting-families/our-way.pdf>

“We don’t want to be told how to do this we want to be supported to do this our way, the old way but with new things included. We know how to evolve with the times, that’s what we do and that’s who we are, but we can’t evolve unless it’s our way.”

St George Elder

Organisations including government agencies that have roles in working alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities must have the workforce capability to work effectively with people and communities impacted by trauma and to support healing. The journey to walk alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people begins by really listening to, and building on, existing community strengths. Circumstances will be different in different places. In each place, the healing challenges are unique and complex problems which require and deserve unique responses. In order to engender such responses, local decision making and flexibility is needed to allow for never before seen approaches to be embraced within mainstream government systems. These will not be novel approaches for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, but will be a significant change in the way the Queensland Government works with communities to achieve shared goals and embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and decision making in all processes.

Defining success, strengths and aspirations needs to happen at a community level to contribute to a clearer understanding of community wellbeing. This will enable policies to be better informed by local aspirations and more responsive to contextual and historical particularities which makes the experience of wellbeing unique for the community involved.⁵¹

EXAMPLE – WALKING ALONGSIDE – NATIONAL YOUTH SUMMIT

At Australia’s first National Youth Healing Forum held at Mt Tambourine, Queensland in March 2017, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people came together to discuss cultural identity, safety and wellbeing and how to address the impact of intergenerational trauma on their lives. The Forum created a platform to start the development of our next generation of healing leadership and ensure the voice of young people is at the centre of creating and leading change.⁵¹ Participants identified the following enablers and supports that would equip them to become effective young leaders:

- a strong and proud affiliation with culture and identity
- current leaders setting a good example and demonstrating what a good leader looks like
- eliminating lateral violence
- building upon the strengths in the community, as we too often have a deficit focus
- celebrating success and acknowledge people’s achievements so that they feel valued and to keep people motivated
- keeping the big picture in mind and remaining focused on our goal which is to improve the lives of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander brothers and sisters, their families and our communities.

51. Dudgeon P, Walker R, Scrine C, Cox K, D’Anna D, Dunkley C, Kelly K, & Hams K 2014. Enhancing Wellbeing, Empowerment, Healing and Leadership in Dudgeon, P., Milroy H. and Walker R (eds) *Working together: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and wellbeing principles and practice*. 2nd edition Australian Government Department of Health & Ageing. <https://www.telethonkids.org.au/globalassets/media/documents/aboriginal-health/working-together-second-edition/working-together-aboriginal-and-wellbeing-2014.pdf>

52. The Healing Foundation 2017. *Our Healing Our Way: Leading and shaping our future*. National Youth Healing Forum report. https://healingfoundation.org.au/app/uploads/2017/12/HF_National_Youth_Healing_Forum_Report_Nov2017_V7_WEB.pdf

Appendices



Appendix 1

The Healing Foundation

“The Healing Foundation provides the tools, evidence and frameworks for people to develop healing activities in their communities. We meet communities where they are at. When they tell us what they wish they knew – and we can provide them with research, a tool, a case study. All the research is there, and by our own researchers. That’s empowering in itself.”

Fiona Petersen, CEO

The Healing Foundation is a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation that partners with communities to address the ongoing trauma caused by colonisation, racism and actions like the forced removal of children from their families.

Our work helps people create a different future. We work with communities to create a place of safety, providing an environment for Stolen Generations survivors and their families to speak for themselves, tell their own stories and be in charge of their own healing.

Founded following the National Apology to the Stolen Generations, we have assisted more than 45,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members in their healing journeys, funded more than 175 community organisations to lead and develop healing projects, established an impressive body of evidence and provided grants for local commemorative events.

The Healing Foundation is the national leader in trauma aware, healing informed practices and research into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing. Our studies are unique, valuable and highly regarded both locally and internationally.

In Queensland, The Healing Foundation is leading a culturally safe, healing centred co-design process to facilitate the development of a Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Strategy as part of the *Our Way* generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and Families. This process is designed, delivered and led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Appendix 2

Development process and partners for developing the Healing Strategy

The *Our Way* generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families seeks to significantly shift how government designs, commissions and delivers services with, and devolves decision making to, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In recognition of the importance of enabling healing and addressing trauma to strengthen families, Action 6.11 of the associated *Changing Tracks An Action Plan 2017-19* is to design a Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Strategy.

Shifting minds: Queensland Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategic Plan 2018-2023 identifies a strategic priority to renew, strengthen and integrate cross-sectoral approaches to social and emotional wellbeing including adopting trauma aware healing informed approaches, in order to facilitate the systemic changes required to achieve good mental health and wellbeing.

The Healing Foundation was contracted to lead a culturally safe, trauma aware healing informed and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led co-design process for developing the Queensland Healing Strategy.

The most critical component of the co-design process was to listen to the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders, including through the time of the COVID-19 social distancing restrictions.

Literature affirms that relationships, respect and trust are key to effective engagement and partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and often require a sustained relationship between groups of people working towards a shared goal. For this reason, The Healing Foundation selected locations where they had existing relationships, networks and healing collaborations.

Culturally safe spaces

The Healing Foundation worked with local community organisations to ensure that we created a place of safety. We provided a safe space for Stolen Generations survivors and their families and community members to speak. Facilitators had social and emotional wellbeing backgrounds and a trained counsellor was available at most yarning circles for participants to debrief as needed.

Safe environments were created by using cultural symbols and protocols, inviting and welcoming people into this space, at the yarning circles. This included a ribbon representing 60,000 years of Indigenous knowledge, a short animated video about intergenerational trauma, a yarning stick and a song to invite people to feel comfortable and safe to share.

The Queensland Knowledge Holders

The Queensland Healing Knowledge Holders were invited to oversee and inform the development of the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Strategy. They were selected based on their diverse knowledge, expertise and experience as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with lived experiences of healing, thought leaders, academics and service providers who have a strong connection to our people and Country in Queensland, and a commitment to healing for our community.

Representation includes members of The Healing Foundation's existing reference and advisory groups including the Stolen Generations Reference Group and independent members:

- **David Wragge**, Wakka Wakka and Knowledge Holder, Co-Chair and The Healing Foundation Stolen Generations Reference Group Committee Member
- **Sheryl Lawton**, Bidjara and Knowledge Holder, Co-Chair and CEO, Charleville Western Areas Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Services Ltd
- **Noeleen Lopes**, Ghungalu woman and the CEO of Gallang Place Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation and The Healing Foundation Board Member
- **Matthew Cooke**, Aboriginal and South Sea Islander from the Bailai (Byellee) people, CEO, Nhulunyu Health Service Gladstone and Deputy Chair of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO)
- **Tarryn Cora**, Darumbal Traditional Owner, Youth Worker and Co-ordinator of the Danoona Dance Troupe
- **Scott Gorringe**, Mithaka, Director, Murrimatters Consulting
- **Julie-Ann Lambourne**, Torres Strait Islander woman descending from Mabuig and Darnley Islands, Senior Consultant, Tagai Management Consultants
- **Letitia Smith**, Goreng Goreng and Bundjalung, Placement Support Officer, CQID
- **Dr Vicki Saunders**, Gunggari, Research Director
- **Fiona Petersen**, Wuthathi (Shelburne Bay) descendant with family roots in the Torres Straits, CEO, The Healing Foundation
- **Leann Wilson**, Bidjara, Kara-Kara and South Sea Islander descendent, Deputy Chair, The Healing Foundation, Executive Director, Regional Economic Solutions.

Appendix 2 – Continued

Online surveys and submissions

In recognising that solutions are already out there in community, we offered a range of ways for people to have their say and tell us stories about healing, what healing initiatives are already working in community and what healing or what keeps spirit strong for them, including 77 online survey responses from across Queensland:

- Individuals were given the option to respond by participating in yarning circles, completing the online survey, share a case study about a healing initiative or program in their community, having a yarn over the phone, filling in a postcard with a message, or sharing a creative piece on what healing means for you, such as poetry, art, images, songs etc.
- Organisations were encouraged to make a submission on behalf of their organisation or share a case study to share healing initiatives or programs in their community.

Torres Strait Healing Forums

To avoid duplicating a recent process, The Healing Foundation asked Torres Strait communities if they would consent to contributing material derived from healing forums held in the Torres Strait during 2018.

In 2017, The Healing Foundation formed a partnership with Mura Kosker to further healing priorities identified in the 2015 Torres Strait and Kaurareg Aboriginal People's Healing Strategy by implementing community healing forums across three Island communities at a local level. Torres Strait communities were invited to nominate to host their own healing forum through an expression of interest process. The successful islands were Kaurareg (Thursday Island), Iama Island and Masig Island. The forums were a place for constructive dialogue between a diverse range of key stakeholders, including community members, leaders, Elders and representatives of government and non-government agencies. Reports from these forums can be found at:

- **Masig Healing Forum**
<https://healingfoundation.org.au/app/uploads/2019/09/Masig-Healing-Forum-Report.pdf>
- **Kaurareg Healing Forum**
<https://healingfoundation.org.au/app/uploads/2019/09/Kaurareg-Healing-Forum-Report.pdf>
- **Iama Healing Forum**
<https://healingfoundation.org.au/app/uploads/2019/09/Iama-Healing-Forum-Report.pdf>

Yarning circles

Yarning circles are a way for families and groups to come together in a safe and supported environment. They draw on cultural protocols and promote harmonious, creative, and collaborative ways of communicating to encourage responsible, respectful and honest interactions between participants.

Yarning circles were guided by experienced cultural facilitators leading and guiding productive discussion and seeking community input on their healing aspirations and priorities.

The Healing Foundation engaged with local stakeholders, including Family Wellbeing Service providers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Organisations, Community Justice Groups and existing networks and relationships to manage these yarning circles. Through the yarning circles, The Healing Foundation engaged with a diverse range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Queensland, including young people and Elders, men and women, people with lived experience of trauma and healing, parents, community members and leaders.

Yarning circles and participation forums were held in:

Brisbane	Cherbourg Domos Kummara, Inala Inala Elders	10 March 2020 19 February 2020 9 March 2020
Cairns	Virtual yarning circle Virtual yarning circle	27 April 2020 29 April 2020
Gold Coast	Bond University students Community members	17 February 2020 18 February 2020
Rockhampton	Central Queensland Indigenous Development (CQID) (Rockhampton, Bundaberg and Hervey Bay) CQID (Rockhampton and Longreach) Helem Yumba	11 May 2020 13 May 2020 7 May 2020
St George	Goolburri Goondir Elders St George Aboriginal Housing Company St George Men's Circle St George Women's Circle South West Indigenous Corporation (SWIC)	14 February 2020 12 February 2020 13 February 2020 13 February 2020 13 February 2020 11 February 2020
Yalari	Year 10 students	25 February 2020
Yarrabah	Virtual yarning circle	28 April 2020

Appendix 2 – Continued

Partners

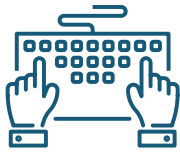
Local community led and Aboriginal community controlled organisations were involved in the co-design process including:

- Central Queensland Indigenous Development
- Cherbourg Domos
- Deadly Inspiring Youth Doing Good
- Gallang Place
- Goolburri Family Wellbeing Program
- Goondir Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Medical Service
- Helem Yumba
- Inala Elders
- Kummara
- St George Aboriginal Housing Company
- Wuchopperen Health Service
- Wontulp Bi Buya College
- Gurriny Yealamucka Aboriginal Health Service
- Yarlari – Educating and Empowering Children
- Yarrabah Council
- Bond University
- Catholic Education Services – Diocese of Cairns
- Pryce Centre for Arts and Culture

Presentations and discussions were held with:

- Queensland First Children and Families Board
- Queensland Family Matters Leadership Group
- Family Wellbeing Services
- Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women regional Practice Leaders and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Practice Leaders
- Queensland Healing Strategy Reference Group.

77 ONLINE SURVEY



39 POSTCARDS



8 CASE STUDIES



3 ORGANISATION RESPONSES



3 CREATIVE RESPONSES



290 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
(162 YARNING CIRCLES + OTHER ENGAGEMENT)



420 ENGAGEMENT

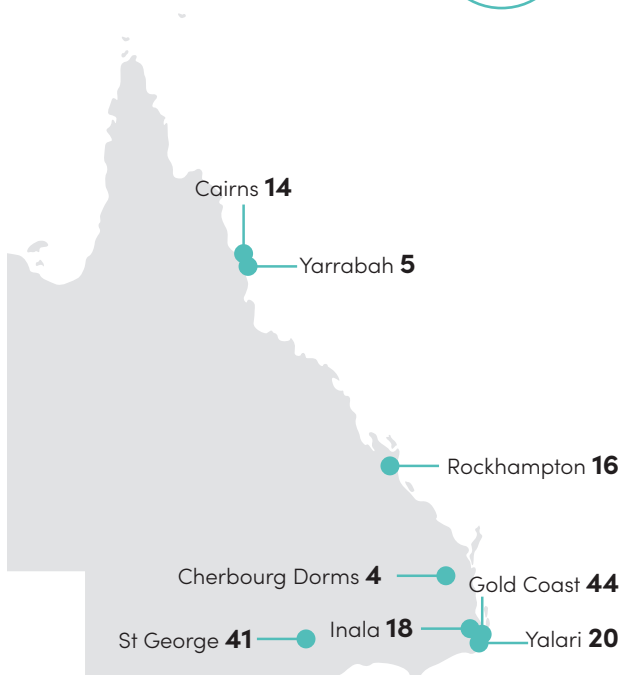
ONLINE SURVEY

77

Female 59	Adult 63	Aboriginal 49
Male 17	Child 2	Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander 5
Prefer not to say 1	Elder 5	Torres Strait Islander 6
	Senior 7	Non-Indigenous 17

YARNING CIRCLES

162



OTHER ENGAGEMENT

128

Emails and website responses	22
Pre-engagement	27
Governance	28
Practice Leaders	9
Partners	7
Consultations and forums	35

POSTCARDS

39

Aboriginal	36
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander	1
Torres Strait Islander	1
Non-Indigenous	1

OTHER RESPONSES

14

Case studies, Organisational responses, and Creative responses



Story of the painting

The artwork used throughout this report was created by Barry 'RAINMAN' Boland.

The painting is about the journey of "Healing Stream Healing Dream". It is a sister painting to the Queensland Healing Strategy for The Healing Foundation. The importance of this painting are the celestial elements such as the stars and also the spirit beings and our ancestors and how they guided and navigated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders over the seas and the land and our Healing Dream.

The Emu in the sky, when standing straight up, means it is time for celebration and ceremony which is around June in the cooler months. In this healing place there is restoration for **Man Guwaybila Mars, Woman Murrdhi Gindamalaa Venus** and the planet for gender identity and LGBTQI multi-coloured society that is a part our world today.

The Rainbow Serpent a creator being hovering and watching over the dreams of people as they journey through their healing journey. Once they

have been restored, they can then make way to the egg that represents their future dream and purpose in life.

Healing Stream is when people journey upstream and find a place to rest and be reborn from the traumas and challenges of life in an ever-changing world. The black and white symbols represent the traditions and culture of our ancestors that embrace us and are our borders to protect us as we find a place to rest in the Healing Stream.

The sea turtle represents wisdom, resilience, strength and tradition as it always comes back to a place it is familiar with to lay her eggs so the next generation can be born to live and discover life in the big ocean, the big world.

This painting has a stereoscopic element that requires you to use 3D glasses to see within it other elements of the painting.



HealingFoundation

Strong Spirit • Strong Culture • Strong People