



HealingFoundation

Strong Spirit • Strong Culture • Strong People

*Collective healing for members
of the Stolen Generations*

SUMMARY REPORT

National Workshop, 1-2 September 2015, Crowne Plaza Coogee Beach



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Muru Marri

Report prepared for the Healing Foundation by Muru Marri –
Ilse Blignault & Rachelle Arkles, November 2015.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the spirit of respect, we acknowledge this country as belonging to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia.

To our Stolen Generations members and their families, we remember you and honour you for your courage.

This report summarises the outcomes of a national workshop on collective healing for Stolen Generations members and their descendants, held in September 2015 and funded by the Healing Foundation. Its contents reflect the collective knowledge and experience of ten organisations from around Australia that received funding for projects under the second or third rounds of the Healing Foundation's Stolen Generations Initiative.

We acknowledge the leadership of the Healing Foundation's Stolen Generations Reference Committee and the contributions of workshop participants. The workshop was coordinated by Caitlin Mullins from the Healing Foundation and facilitated by Benny Hodges. Donna Hensen painted the special stones that people took home. Two members of the Muru Marri team at the School of Public Health and Community Medicine at UNSW Australia, Ilse Blignault and Rachelle Arkles, acted as scribes and prepared this report.



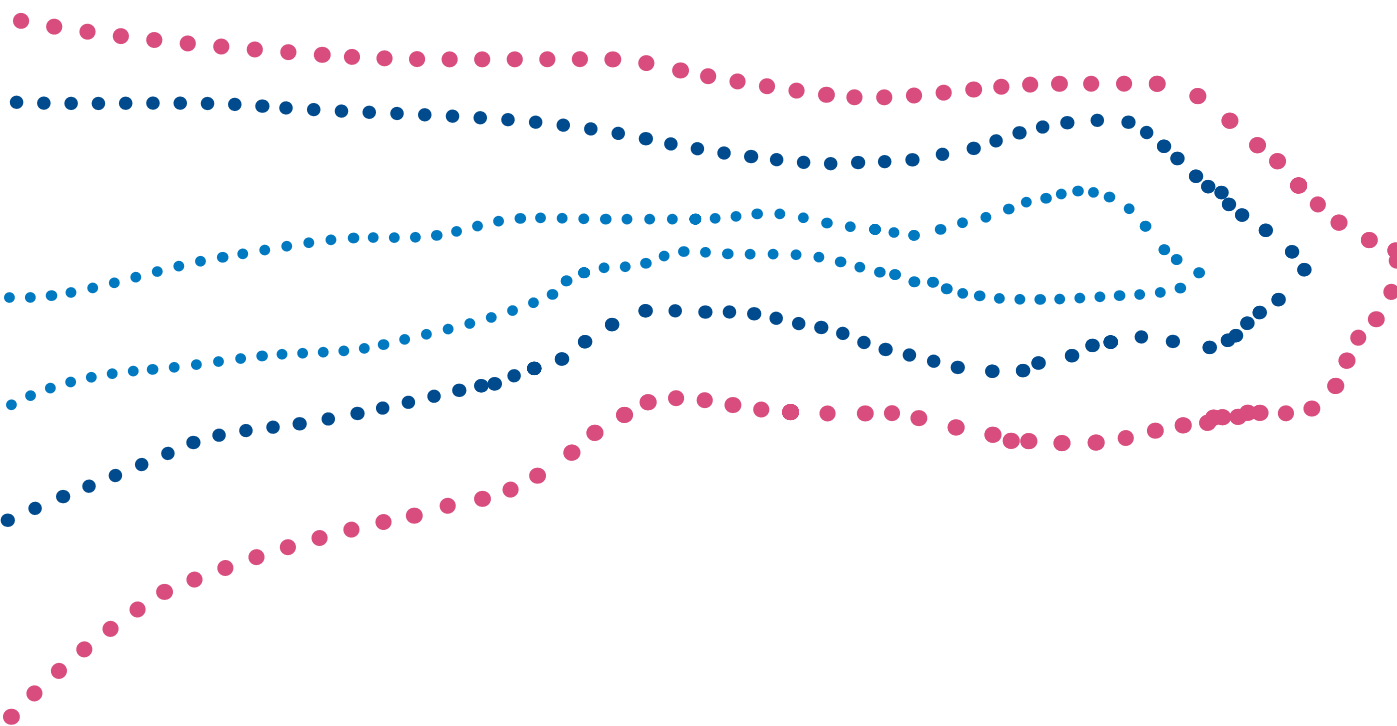
Stolen Generations members, organisations and services at a collective healing gathering, September 2015

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ACRONYMS

AMS	Aboriginal Medical Service
BTH	Bringing Them Home
HREOC	Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
KBHAC	Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation
KRSGAC	Katherine Region Stolen Generation Aboriginal Corporation
KSGAC	Kimberley Stolen Generation Aboriginal Corporation
NSW	New South Wales
NTSGAC	Northern Territory Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation
Qld	Queensland
SA	South Australia
SEWB	Social and Emotional Wellbeing
UNSW	University of New South Wales
WA	Western Australia



INTRODUCTION

Background

The Healing Foundation is a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation with a focus on building culturally strong, community led healing solutions. It supports organisations around the country to design and deliver healing programs that work for their communities.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, healing is a holistic process which addresses mental, physical, emotional and spiritual needs and involves connections to culture, family, community and land. The Healing Foundation knows that healing works best when solutions are culturally strong, developed and driven at the local level, and led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Healing Foundation is committed to working together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to create their own healing responses, developing the evidence base for best practice Indigenous healing, and sharing this emerging evidence with communities, government and non-government organisations around Australia.

The Healing Foundation's Stolen Generations Initiative was designed to meet the unique healing needs and aspirations of Stolen Generations survivors, with a focus on collective healing. Between 2013 and 2014, the Healing Foundation funded 31 projects under this initiative, representing an investment of almost \$1.5 million. In 2015 another 8 projects were funded, along with a review of the first two years of the initiative ¹ and this national workshop.

The Healing Foundation also commissioned Muru Marri at UNSW Australia to develop a resource that could be used by Stolen Generations members, organisations and groups to design, implement and evaluate effective collective healing responses ². In developing the resource, an earlier national workshop with key stakeholders was held in June 2014.

Workshop aims and format

The September 2015 workshop was designed to provide ample opportunity for representatives from ten Stolen Generations organisations to share their experiences and learnings from projects undertaken over the past year.

To assist participants in preparing presentations and facilitate information exchange and collective learning, a general outline was provided in advance. They were asked to give a short description of their project (including the target group, activities undertaken, and the overall goals), as well as examples of how the project had contributed to changing participants' lives and the critical success factors (what they did in the project that was critical to supporting and achieving this change).

This report presents a summary of the collective healing project presentations and the general discussion.

Report structure

The body of this report is divided into four sections:

- Opening session
- Presentations (in the order in which they were presented)
- Reflections
- Key themes and conclusion.

The appendices contain a list of participating organisations and individuals (Appendix A) and the various organisational logos and the stories behind them (Appendix B).

1 *Healing for Our Stolen Generations: Sharing Our Stories*

http://healingfoundation.org.au/wordpress/wp-content/files_mf/1454631079HealingforOurStolenGenerationsSharingOurStories.pdf

2 *A Resource for Collective Healing for Members of the Stolen Generations*

http://healingfoundation.org.au/wordpress/wp-content/files_mf/1439528405MuruMarriSCREENsinglessml.pdf

OPENING SESSION

The Welcome to Country by Dharawal Elder Uncle Les Davison was followed by an introduction from Florence Onus, Chair of the Healing Foundation's Stolen Generations Reference Committee.

Florence Onus gave an overview of the Healing Foundation's *Stolen Generations Initiative*, explaining that through this initiative survivors and their descendants have participated in a range of collective healing activities including: yarning circles; peer support groups; structured workshops and programs; trips on country and reconnection to cultural sites; healing gatherings and camps; cultural revitalisation activities such as bush medicine and bush foods, art and crafts, music, song and dance, language, ceremony and transfer of knowledge from Elders; documentation of survivors' stories through poetry, song writing, storytelling, art and drama; and reunions for those from institutions, dormitories or missions.

The Healing Foundation has placed emphasis on capacity-building activities that empower Stolen Generations members to lead and develop healing solutions in their communities. *A Resource for Collective Healing for Members of the Stolen Generations* was designed to strengthen good practice and encourage the inclusion of collective healing responses in services provided to Stolen Generations members, particularly first generation survivors.

The outcomes of the *Stolen Generations Initiative* to date are impressive. An analysis by the Healing Foundation of the 31 projects funded in 2013 and 2014 found that:

- 77% of participants reported an increased sense of belonging and connection to culture
- 72% of participants reported increased understanding and strength in caring for their trauma and grief in healthy ways
- 68% of participants reported increased confidence in utilising available support services.



Left to right: Jody Jackson, Florence Onus, Aunty Lorraine Peeters and Jessie Cobbo at a collective healing gathering, September 2015

PRESENTATIONS

Kimberley Stolen Generation Aboriginal Corporation Wuggubun Stolen Generation Gathering

Background

In 1995, the then Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) held an inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families. Members of the Commission came to the Kimberley and over 400 people attended hearings in Broome and Halls Creek. As a result of the inquiry, Stolen Generation working groups were formed in each Kimberley town. In 1996, the Kimberley Stolen Generation Committee was formed with representatives from all the working groups. In 2001, the Committee was incorporated as the Kimberley Stolen Generation Aboriginal Corporation. KSGAC carries out activities and projects that acknowledge the experiences of members of the Stolen Generations and help them come to terms with their journeys.

Organisation, resources and services

Based in Broome, KSGAC has a Board of Directors from across the Kimberley. Resources include Stolen Generation Commemorative Flowers or Sorry Day Flowers and CDs. Services and programs include Link-Up services, counselling services, support and referrals for Stolen Generations members, a support worker with the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and healing programs.

Project description and target group

The Wuggubun Gathering took a group of Stolen Generations members who had been removed to institutions and missions across the Kimberley and their families back to country.

The target group for this two day event was first generation Stolen Generation members and their families:

- Time is of the essence
- The first generation is getting older and know they may not see each other again
- Some of the Elders were lost to the trip due to this reason
- Recognition of the Stolen Generations people is unfinished business.

Goals and objectives

Under leadership and direction from the Stolen Generations members and following safe and ethical practice, the project sought to:

- Provide connection back to country
- Build on traditional cultural strengths
- Promote inclusivity of family and Stolen Generations community
- Provide Stolen Generations education to younger generations
- Connect Stolen Generations members to services
- Respect individual journeys
- Provide engagement and ownership for Kimberley Stolen Generations members.

Activities included travelling together, healing art program, yarnning circles, oral history collation on video, reconnection and bonding, being together, leadership from senior Elders, discovering relatives, a concert by some of the senior Elders and a video recording.

Changes

- The joy of being together was obvious on the faces and in the speeches – *“Celebrating is healing”*
- A change of attitude in the younger generation who saw the old people in their element and got to feel their pain. Also the enjoyment of hearing about the older women talking about their childhoods and lots of laughter – *“I now understand”; “When is the next one?”*
- Others in the community saw the Stolen Generations bus and saw them as somebody.

Critical success factors

- A common purpose – *“Healing of our Elders, their way”*
- A deliberate strategy
- Recognising that *“It’s about the journey”*
- Unity and common bonds – *“The special relationship they shared as children”*
- Staff professionalism and dedication
- Funding from the Healing Foundation.

The way we work (organisational culture) is also critical:

- KSGAC introduced a credo so that all new staff know that the work they do is because of the Stolen Generations – *“This organisation is about Stolen Generation people”*
- The office is their home – *“They can sit down have a cuppa, talk, watch a bit of TV; we also run arts and crafts programs so they can make things for the organisation; there is still ongoing healing where they sit and talk with each other”*
- The organisation is their place – *“You tell us what to do”*
- This particular gathering is what the Elders want.

The Wuggubun Gathering built a greater understanding of Stolen Generation people’s experiences while allowing them to cope and manage their trauma in a culturally appropriate manner.

Collective healing is the first step in allowing Stolen Generations Elders to begin their healing process. In the words of one senior Stolen Generations Elder and community host for this gathering: *“We must embrace to overcome all pain, hurt and suffering. Love conquers all.”*

WARNING: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are warned that the following photos may contain images of deceased persons



Sixty Stolen Generations members from across the Kimberley region came together with their families at Wuggubun, June 2015



Wuggubun - Elders Georgina Dodson-Suliman and Ida Moore trace their hand

Link-Up (Qld) Aboriginal Corporation Still Bringing Them Home

Organisation and services

Link-Up (Qld) began in 1984 with one staff member and was incorporated on 17 July 1988. The organisation's vision is to *"enhance the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by reuniting those over the age of eighteen years who have experienced enforced separation from their families and communities through adoption, fostering, removal and institutionalisation."*

The ultimate goal is reunions including family reunions, back to community reunions, back to country reunions and graveside reunions. The organisation's multimedia department creates a photo album/DVD for each client to document their healing journey – *"a special memento"*.

Project description – healing camps

Increasingly, Link-Up (Qld) is working with Stolen Generations clients at the community level by conducting healing camps and connective art programs. These events are planned and delivered by the counsellors and caseworkers on top of their work with individual clients.

Over the last two years Link-Up (Qld) has conducted four healing camps around the state: at Kindilan and Woorabinda in 2013 and at Mt Tamborine and Lake Tinaroo in 2014. The camps aim to create an environment where healing is viewed as a spiritual process that encourages trauma recovery, therapeutic change and cultural renewal.

Project **goals** are for Stolen Generations clients to have increased capacity to manage loss, trauma and grief in healthy ways; to be more positive about their healing; to be more engaged with counselling, health and support services available to them; and to feel more equipped to support their families in understanding their healing journeys. The project also promotes Link-Up services.

Activities include music workshops, art therapy, basket weaving, pampering for the ladies and storytelling – *"(It's) another book of knowledge that oral history"*.

The **Mount Tamborine Healing Camp** was held at the Queensland Convention & Camping Centre on Mount Tamborine in the Gold Coast hinterland from 2–4 May 2014. Thirty Stolen Generations clients (including Elders, men and women and new and existing clients) attended the camp, which featured a variety of pampering and relaxation activities and therapies. These activities draw on the extensive skills and talents of Link-Up (Qld) staff and external facilitators.

Link-Up (Qld) also supported the **Cherbourg Dormitory Gathering Healing Camp** in April 2015. This event was attended by more than 40 survivors representing three generations of dormitory residents.

Changes

- Clients report that these healing camps make positive contributions to their healing journeys. They enjoy meeting new people and finding lost relatives amongst the groups and the quiet, calming environment away from the stresses of their lives. Many comment on the sense of unity they feel at the camps through connection and gathering together
- Link-Up staff become their family when they can't find their family.

Critical success factors

- Services are provided in a sensitive, confidential and culturally appropriate manner
- Support is offered before, during and after reunions and healing camps
- Queensland is a huge state; collective healing events are tailored to local community needs but strive for the same positive outcomes.

Link-Up (Qld) used the 2015 Apology celebrations to launch their 16 track CD *Walking Proud*. This CD was produced in house with songs and stories derived from and written by Stolen Generations clients during music therapy workshops at the different healing camps.

Nunkuwarrin Yunti of South Australia Inc./Link-Up SA *Reunion to Self & Healing Arts Therapy Program*

Project descriptions

Reunion to Self is an innovative collective healing program for members of the Stolen Generations, developed by Link-Up SA in 2014 in response to an identified need and in consultation with first, second and third generation clients. Clients come to Link-Up to undertake a journey of healing. Unfortunately for many, reunions with family or return to country are not possible due to the absence of information needed to gain definitive records. Even clients who do achieve reunions can experience ongoing distress and disconnection if strengthening those relationships is not possible.

Reunion to Self enables healing for these people through a series of six day trips and an overnight camp. The program aims to reduce isolation and distress and develop sustainable relationships with peers and with local places of cultural significance and the communities and stories connected to those places. Clients learn to overcome the effects of trauma and grief in their lives through increased self-awareness, emotional support, cultural immersion and involvement in healing activities. The program strengthens cultural identity and draws upon the dreaming story of Tjilbruke whose trail they follow throughout the program.



Reunion to Self participants at Mt Lofty Summit

In the words of Uncle Ivan Tiwu Copley, Peramangk Elder:
“Regardless of whether you know your country ... The country knows you.”

Reunion to Self has finished and Link-Up SA staff are trying to rework it³. Elements have been integrated into existing service models and have informed other healing activities such as art-based therapies and traditional healing practices. The Healing Arts Therapy program, described below, is an example.

“The practice of arts has always been a way our mob made sense of our place in the world. Traditional art was as much a part of everyday life as sharing a meal. It was our written language, the way we practiced culture and sustained our spirits and holistic wellbeing.”

Target group

The Healing Arts Therapy program is open to Stolen Generations members and their descendants who have made a reconnection but still search for identity and belonging. It also caters for those who are yet to undertake the journey to reconnect with kin, country, culture and spirit. Participants were mainly invited from within the Link-Up SA and SEWB/BTH counsellors' client bases.

Goals

- To explore participants' sense of identity and journey of healing through art making
- To offer a safe space in which their stories of trauma and removal, healing, identity and spirituality could all be expressed and acknowledged
- To encourage participants to see themselves as Aboriginal artists, no matter what their artistic skill level.

Activities undertaken

The Healing Arts Therapy program combines traditional Aboriginal and contemporary arts practice. Two workshop rounds were delivered, each consisting of four daily sessions held over four weeks. The sessions covered body drawing, photography, sculpture and message sticks, and painting spirit. At the workshop conclusion a public exhibition was held.

The Growth and Empowerment Measure (GEM) was used to support the evaluation.

Changes

“The program empowered Stolen Generation survivors to develop their identity ... Firstly as an Aboriginal person and secondly as an Aboriginal artist. This space provided a forum for their stories to be heard; for some for the first time. The healing in sharing and being able to tell their story was influential in being able to express it creatively and artistically. The narratives came out in many forms. The clients were able to make a spiritual connection with themselves which broke down the barriers which held them in the dominant trauma stories and helped them to move into their own alternative stories.”

Having others come to see their work on display at the exhibition was extremely affirming.

³ For more details about this innovative project, see the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet healing portal at <http://www.healthinonet.ecu.edu.au/related-issues/healing/promising-practice/promising-practice-stories>.

Critical success factors include:

- Reflecting on and learning from previous positive experiences and outcomes working with Stolen Generations members and their descendants, such as Reunion to Self
- Creating a safe space and gathering a highly skilled and supportive team:
The activities were designed and led by a Link-Up SA counsellor and supported by a SEWB counsellor, psychologist and other support workers. An integral component of the success of the program was the hiring of artist and facilitator Sabine Cavus and guest presenter photographic artist James Tylor.
- Adopting a strengths based, narrative approach:
“Each participant was encouraged to invest themselves, their emotions, hopes, fears and spirit into the artwork they produced. To witness themselves as artists, as Aboriginal people, and to risk externalising that in their art pieces for others to view in a final exhibition. This was achieved by ensuring all facilitators held this vision and reflected this back to participants. The key to the project’s success was that the participants themselves took this notion on, explored it and ultimately owned this vision for themselves.”



Reunion to Self project

Katherine Region Stolen Generation Aboriginal Corporation

Katherine Healing Projects

Background

The Katherine Region covers an area of around 346,000 square kilometres and the town itself fluctuates with a general population of about 9,000 – 11,000 people. Members of the Stolen Generations come from all over the Northern Territory including Croker Island, Kahlin Compound in Darwin and the Bungalow in Alice Springs. Over the past year, Katherine Region Stolen Generation Aboriginal Corporation (KRSGAC) has been working on two healing projects funded by the Healing Foundation and auspiced by Katherine Regional Aboriginal Health and Related Services.

Project goals, target group and descriptions

KRSGAC has been working towards partnering with Aboriginal services and other organisations in Katherine, to form a strong foundation for sustainable support mechanisms for all Stolen Generations members and their families. The focus has been on:

- Connecting with family
- Identifying healing pathways – as individuals and groups
- Sharing culture.

“Our projects have taken us on a journey of healing and stories of hope.”



Katherine Region Stolen Generation Aboriginal Corporation

Activities

Both projects have involved community oriented activities and used two way learning methods. KRSGAC has worked largely with the Stolen Generations women: teaching them the culture, taking them to sacred places (e.g. Katherine Gorge or *Nitmiluk* – Cicada Dreaming) for ceremonies and gatherings, holding workshops on traditional medicine (e.g. bush medicine and healing massages) and supporting talking circles where they are able to speak for themselves and share their worldview of traditional ways and culture – *“so they know their belonging, connection and spirituality as well”*.

Yarning circles are structured to assist in facilitating a workshop for people to share their stories and listen to one another, utilising health practitioners to ensure professional support. The women have also shared their stories more broadly through events such as Sorry Day and talks to schools.

Capacity building workshops have included the Marumali program, Dr Judy Atkinson’s trauma workshop, Certificate IV in Governance (ORIC) and Certificate I in Business Administration.

Challenges and changes

Even though the KSGRAC is a small group they are working to help guide other Stolen Generations members and their families and build on their strengths including through activities that will enable them to connect with culture and family. Working towards positive change for the Katherine Region has not been easy – *“It’s been a struggle to try and cover such a large geographical area and over 80 members”*. Nevertheless there has been a shift in attitudes towards particular behaviours and awareness with Stolen Generations members.

“Our protectors have been humiliated, ostracised and let down by society and our governments and we are finding it hard for them to join us in the fight. We understand our cultural obligations, but we also know times change things and we need to bring our men with us on this journey. We have a lot of work to do.”

“Overall the projects have given a lot of opportunities for the Stolen Generation members to reflect on themselves and see things from another angle. It has also created a foundation for structure and change.”

Critical success factors include:

- A strong committee: all female though they would like to engage more men in the process and the projects
- Funding from the Healing Foundation
- Auspicing by Katherine Regional Aboriginal Health and Related Services
- Taking the *Bringing them Home* report as a guide – *“We are following the recommendations on a community level”*
- Proceeding slowly and deliberately: asking people what they want to do and having objectives that are achievable – *“We are in the first stages of structuring our healing pathway and finding ways to help our people heal”*
- Using available tools and creating new tools e.g. a log frame (program logic model), referral pathways for individuals and strategic planning
- Building partnerships with health services and other community organisations
- Sharing culture and connecting to country.

Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring involves keeping a record of who attends the activities, events or workshops and trying to find out why members aren't attending.

Two Aboriginal women will be evaluating the projects to see how we can improve the way we do things and we will hopefully use the small but significant report for future funding. This will include:

- Participatory interviews with Stolen Generations members who are not currently engaging in activities to uncover the issues
- Observation – taking notes on particular events or activities to feed into the evaluation
- Gathering evidence – reports or data
- Photos – to capture the events for reporting
- Surveys – to capture information that impacts on members or about what needs to change
- Collecting stories – to use our oral and aural traditions again.

“Our country is like our mother, it nurtures us – Taking care of country is like taking care of our people. We need to support one another and to sit down in country and connect to family ... The land is our foundation, like our families are to each one of us. If we have no foundation, we lose our spirit.”

Northern Territory Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation Men's Healing Camps

Organisation and services

Northern Territory Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation (NTSGAC), based in Darwin, was formally incorporated in 1998 to respond directly to the needs and concerns of members of the Stolen Generations, their families and communities. NTSGAC runs the Top End Link-Up service, assisting people to undertake family tracing and family reunions with counselling support. The Kahlin Compound 100 Year Commemoration, held on the site of the old Kahlin Compound and other locations around Darwin in 2013, was a major event.

The female Project Officer runs fortnightly activities with the older ladies while the male Wellbeing Officer, in addition to assisting with reunions, has been working with the men and taking them on healing camps.

Project description and target group

The project involves taking second and third generation men of the Stolen Generations out to healing camps on country – *“We can't take the first generation men because of ill health”*.

Goals and activities

The goal is *“getting fellas back there [to country]; having that connection”*.

There have been two camps so far and another is planned soon. The first trip was to Kakadu. Two of the men had mothers who had walked there so there was a connection for them. The second trip was to Daly River where some of the other men are from. The bottom line is *“having the connection with that story”*. The outcome *“starts off small and then grows”*.

NTSGAC is planning to start father and son groups – “*That’s for first gen men who can’t get around much so we are trying to get their sons coming down*”.

Critical success factors include:

- Recognising the need for, and the value of, collective healing
- Building connections to country and the stories it holds
- Honouring the experiences and memories of the first generation survivors, while also caring for their descendants.

“We need to as an organisation ensure that we don’t take the attention off the Elders.”

Bringing Them Home Committee (WA) Inc. Stolen Generations Healing Camps

Organisation and activities

The Bringing Them Home Committee (WA) is based in Perth. Through the National Sorry Day commemoration and other activities the organisation seeks to create an awareness of the trauma of the Stolen Generations and the ongoing intergenerational effects. Advocacy for the full enactment of the 54 recommendations of the *Bringing them Home* report (HREOC 1997), still largely unmet, is a major focus. Recently members have developed a model for a healing centre based on joined up SEWB services hubs with collective healing at its foundation.

Project description and target group

Funding from the Healing Foundation is being used to support collective healing camps for Stolen Generations survivors from missions at Roelands, Marribank, Wandering and Sister Kate’s.

Goal, objectives and process

The purpose is to build strong cultural and spiritual bases for first generation survivors of the Stolen Generations, their families and communities.

The project involves conducting three 3 day residential cultural healing camps for survivors from the three missions, with 10 or more survivors participating in each. At the end a collective strategy is produced and endorsed by the survivors for future activities that address leadership, cultural healing, language enrichment and trauma and transgenerational trauma issues.

The process has followed that outlined in the *Resource for Collective Healing for Members of the Stolen Generations* and makes use of the Resource during the camp workshops:

- Survivors from the former missions agree to form a local project team to plan, implement and evaluate their cultural healing camp
- Survivor leaders and local cultural leaders develop informal partnerships to address the cultural needs of survivors
- Workshop participants are presented with a copy of the Resource to gain an understanding of its concepts and give feedback to the facilitators
- Learnings help inform other programs currently occurring or planned for the future.

Activities

The first healing camp was held on 9–11 May 2015 at Roelands Village, with survivors as leaders and 17 participants. The next one will be held at Marribank.

The Roelands healing camp had the following components:

- **Red Dust Healing program** session with Tom Powell on Saturday morning
- **Leadership** session with Carol Innes on Saturday afternoon
- **Language cultural enrichment** with Denise Ali-Smith on Sunday.

Extras achieved: Roelands secured extra funding for an intensive three day Red Dust Healing program for 12 Roelands Mission survivors and descendants. Denise Ali-Smith, linguist and Roelands survivor, agreed to provide a second cultural enrichment workshop without charge.

Changes

The program has changed participants' lives through:

- Understanding and discussing how removal from family and country had a profound negative impact on our wellbeing
- Understanding why we were rejected and how trauma and grief is passed down through generations resulting in imbalance of our families
- Leadership showing how survivors can organise and strengthen family connections (e.g. calendar of events for survivors to reconnect to each other and family, share stories)
- Cultural enrichment (shared history, skin groups, totems and kinship connection renewal), strengthening identity and sense of worth in ourselves and our families and communities.

Critical success factors

At Roelands, survivors:

- Formed a local project team led by Les Wallam, Roelands Manager and survivor, and designed a project plan using *A Resource for Collective Healing for Members of the Stolen Generations*
- Adopted the existing safety risk management plan at Roelands Village
- Developed an Aboriginal project team of ten including: program coordinator, camp supervisor, language trainer, cultural mentor Elders, healing session facilitator, transport drivers, lunch caterer, note taker/report writer, bookkeeper and Aboriginal health worker (from the AMS).

The project has promoted three powerful themes:

- Connecting with and understanding the concept of spiritual healing
- Cultural enrichment with language and family/kinship trees to reflect on how this can encourage belonging to country and to people
- Leadership building for survivors to take healing forward to families and communities to share the learnings, encourage participation in developing future healing pathways.

"We are starting to saturate Noongar country with healing programs. Red Dust heals because it works ... spirit of cooperation; bringing people together. We have run about 16 Red Dust Healing workshops in places where there have been cluster suicides ..."

Healing for Stolen Generations survivors is new territory and we believe it is best done safely and successfully by the people who were there. These people have somehow endured and survived things that a person probably shouldn't be able to and no one else has the answers. Even though we know we aren't the only people who have survived genocide, for people who have been removed even reconnecting with who they are and how they feel is confusing. We have worked hard to ensure we provide a culturally safe and spiritually rich space to support our Stolen Generations to reconnect. We know now that while the program has developed solid foundations for healing, each group of survivors will separately adapt it to their different needs.

We sincerely thank the Healing Foundation for the initiative it took in supporting the development of the *Resource for Collective Healing for Members of the Stolen Generations* and in making additional resources available for its adaptation and adoption by WA Stolen Generations survivors.

Link-Up (NSW) Aboriginal Corporation 2015 Healing Weekend

Organisation, services and programs

Link-Up (NSW) Aboriginal Corporation was founded in 1980 to assist Aboriginal people of the Stolen Generations; those who have been fostered, adopted or raised in institutions under government policies of their time. It was the first Link-Up organisation to be established nationally.

Services and programs provided include reunification, Hidden Carers Program, Family Link Program, Community Builders and a Royal Commission counsellor supporting clients who are participating in the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse process. Family Link supports Aboriginal children and youth who are at risk of being removed or have already been removed by finding other relatives who may be able to provide kinship placement options.

Link-Up (NSW) usually holds two healing camps each financial year; this year according to their funding specifications they are doing three healing camps.

Project description and target group

Healing weekend for Link-Up clients held in Toukley NSW on 26–28 June 2015.

Invitations were sent to Link-Up clients. It was a big camp with about 45 clients attending as well as four carers, 14 staff and five BTH/SEWB workers from other organisations.

Goals and objectives

The healing weekend was designed to:

- Provide a good variety of engaging activities for women and men
- Provide opportunities for people to relate to others
- Provide opportunities to share experiences of separation and hardship and feel more relaxed and less isolated
- Help participants feel more accepted as a person affected by the Stolen Generations.

Activities

Bara Barang provided Welcome to Country from the local Darkinjung people.

The campfire went the whole time, with people sharing “*amazing stories*” around it. Activities included art work (painting on canvas and also providing some blank boomerangs and clap sticks for participants to work their magic on), didgeridoo painting, beading and fishing. “*The artwork was a great healing form. Interacting and talking while doing the art, it flows while you are doing the painting ... Connection with the art ... Different symbols.*”

Changes captured in the formal evaluation

Feedback on the camp was collected via a short survey. The ten questions included simple rating scales with space for comments and open ended questions.

One question asked about participants’ feelings at the beginning of the weekend. Replies included “*Anxious*” (especially for those at their first camp), “*Stressed*”, “*Mixed emotions*” and (for those who had been before) “*Excited to see old friends and to see my family members*”.

Another question asked about their feelings afterwards. Participants said things like:

- “*(I feel) good because I know there are people out there in my situation and the organisation to help me.*”
- “*Good or great after meeting a lady who I haven’t seen since being a teenager. Knowing my journey to find my roots will be ongoing so that my family and extended family will know their background.*”
- “*Opened up my mind to other things. Also I feel I found something I lost long ago.*”
- “*Accepted ... I felt part of a community.*”

Link-Up staff and other workers also benefited from the weekend; some gained greater understanding of the experiences of the Stolen Generations Elders while others discovered members of their own extended family.

Critical success factors

Critical success factors highlighted in the survey included shared experiences, reconnecting and coming home:

- “*It’s amazing how it makes you feel to know you’re with people who understand you and you understand them.*”
- “*Knowing that other people are going through similar things and we all have different stories and can relate to each other.*”
- “*[The] opportunity to meet with brothers and sisters again and to meet others to share our stories and hopes.*”
- “*To me this is a powerful homecoming. Sharing our emotions and strengths. Helping to guide our people to move forward.*”

Connecting Home Inc. Men's Country Healing Camp

Organisation and services

Connecting Home is a state wide organisation looking after South East Australia. Services and programs include case management, group healing and education and awareness.

The case management program has six key elements or life areas and outcome measures:

1. **My identity** – records, referring to Link-Up
2. **My life** – basic needs such as housing and utilities
3. **My safeguards** – supporting people through violence etc.
4. **My health and wellbeing** – spirituality and physical and mental health
5. **My rights** – custody issues, support through the process of litigation or compensation
6. **My community and belonging** – connecting with other Stolen Generations survivors.

The group healing program is connected to and an extension of case management and uses the same outcome measures. Healing groups and camps are designed to support clients in identifying similar outcomes and becoming ready to participate in a group.

Project description and target group

Funding from the Healing Foundation enabled the Men's Country Healing Camp for Stolen Generations men of different ages including those from interstate. The organisation doesn't stick strictly to state boundaries. Workers recognise that, with time running out, this might be the only experience the older men get.

"It's about creating a space where you are welcome to come and feel you belong"

Activities include fishing, boat trips and bush walking with youth, passing on the learning from the Elders, yarning and sharing stories and supporting and connecting with each other. Creating different levels of stories by stars e.g. for adults, young children and older people. They start to see the importance of symbols rather than words and to understand these stories.

Before any camp the staff prepare with their clients e.g. making sure that the guys with substance use issues are able to cope. They continue to support the men as needed after the camp – *"He's another man who hasn't found his land yet"*.

Asked what it is about the camping experience that is so healing, Christopher Arnott replied:
"I think it's the connection with land, the connection with other people while you are on the land... The land is therapeutic for all people. It's where we do our healing work. The connection to land is very important. People have been rejected by family or society. The land is not going to do that."

Chris linked his own thoughts and experience at the camp with his previous work:

“Working with Stolen Generations makes me think of my time as an Aboriginal Social Worker at the Children’s Hospital in Melbourne. One time a very small baby passed on. I went up to that ward and asked what happens next and the nurses told me that they wait until a quiet time and then wrap the baby like a small doll then carry the baby cuddled in their arms up to the mortuary part of the hospital. I made a request to carry the baby myself as I felt that it would be better that an Aboriginal person did this — to carry the baby up to its next place — a Coolamon in human shape. Carrying this baby was an incredible honour that I will never forget.

In my Stolen Generations work, a number of times I have felt like our work is providing some sort of last experience for clients who have not much time left on this Earth. As workers we act as Coolamons, to carry the spirit of the child taken so long ago. We bear witness to the incredible experiences that these people have had. We walk along their journey for a short while, honoured by the experience.”

Coota Girls Aboriginal Corporation Coota Girls Collective Healing

The system used to forcibly remove Aboriginal children in New South Wales was established under the Aborigines Protection Act 1909-1969 and consisted of the Aborigines Protection Board 1909-1939, the Aborigines Welfare Board 1940-1969 and the Children’s Training Homes constituted under the Act: the Cootamundra Domestic Training Home for Aboriginal Girls 1912-1969 and the Kinchela Aboriginal Boys Home 1924-1969. For sixty years the methods used to forcibly remove Aboriginal children in NSW did not change: children were removed from their parents to be trained and indentured as domestic servants and farmhands for wealthy non-Aboriginal households and farms. This system operated in parallel to the NSW Child Welfare system in NSW until it was dismantled by the Aborigines Act in 1969.



Coota Girls gathering, November 2013

Background

In order to provide trauma informed care to members of the Stolen Generations it is necessary to ask ‘what happened to you?’ Only then can service providers avoid retraumatising those who access their services.

What happened to survivors of the Cootamundra Domestic Training Home for Aboriginal Girls 1912-1969? Known as ‘Coota Girls’, survivors were forcibly removed from protective parents and placed in a Children’s Training Home constituted under the Aborigines Protection Act 1909-1969. They remained under the control of the Aborigines boards until they turned 18. Children were told their families had rejected them and were taught to fear and avoid Aboriginal people. The children were neglected and abused in the Home and forcibly assimilated to ‘think white, look white, act white’. They were trained as domestics and when aged 15 years were sent on mandatory ‘placements’ as domestic servants in wealthy non-Aboriginal households under harsh conditions, with their wages paid to the Boards.

It is 46 years since the Aborigines Protection Act was repealed and survivors of the Cootamundra Girls Home are now aged between 46 years and 86 years. Since 2000, survivors have been advocating for measures of ‘collective rehabilitation’, so they can be supported to heal each other from the human rights abuses they experienced in the Home, along with practical measures to help overcome the entrenched disadvantage they face as a result of removal. These needs were most recently articulated in the ‘All One Statement’ collectively drafted by survivors in 2010. Frustrated by the inability to obtain the type of support they require, survivors of the Cootamundra Girls Home have formed their own organisation and are seeking to establish the human rights framework advocated by the *Bringing them Home* report. Coota Girls request support be provided within a human rights framework and discourage the use of models developed outside this framework. Rehabilitation is an essential component of reparations for human rights abuses and needs to take the form of ‘collective rehabilitation’ for survivors of the Cootamundra Girls Home.

Project description and target group

At a gathering funded by the Healing Foundation in 2013 survivors of the Cootamundra Girls Home formed the Coota Girls Aboriginal Corporation, which aims to meet the social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing needs of survivors of the Cootamundra Girls Home and their descendants. This has given survivors, for the first time, the capacity to control the type of support they receive and the manner in which it is provided. This is a major step towards Coota Girls being able to obtain the ‘trauma informed’ support they require.

The Coota Girls Corporation was supported by the Healing Foundation to meet with survivors of the other Children’s Training Home constituted under the Aborigines Protection Act 1909-1969, the Kinchela Aboriginal Boys Home. Both organisations are seeking the resources they require to implement the *Bringing them Home* recommendations with survivors and descendants in parallel gender specific programs of reparations for the human rights abuses they suffered in the government-run homes. This would meet the needs of a large proportion of Stolen Generations in New South Wales.

Goals

The aims of the Coota Girls Corporation are articulated in the ‘All One Statement’ which was collectively drafted by survivors of the Cootamundra Girls Home in 2010 and updated in 2015. The aims reflect the *Bringing them Home* report recommendations and the United Nations Basic Principles and Guidelines for reparations for human rights abuses.

Activities undertaken so far include incorporation, governance training, funding applications, hosting collective healing gatherings (i.e. measures of 'collective rehabilitation'), developing educational resources for service providers, participating in the NSW OCHRE Healing Forum, meeting the NSW Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, working in partnership with survivors of the Kinchela Aboriginal Boys Home to have survivors' rights to reparations for human rights abuses recognised by the NSW Government and participating in the NSW Upper House inquiry into reparations for Stolen Generations by making a presentation at a Parliament House event, hosting a tour of the Cootamundra Girls Home, appearing as witnesses to the inquiry and providing a submission requesting funding for the 'All One Statement 2015'.

Challenges and changes

- The failure to implement the recommendations of the *Bringing them Home* report
- A lack of resources to meet the needs of survivors of the Cootamundra Girls Home, as articulated in the 'All One Statement'
- The lack of understanding of the burden of trauma and disadvantage generated by forcible removal under the Aborigines Protection Act 1909-1969
- The lack of commitment by service providers to the *Bringing them Home* recommendations and the introduction of 'new' models of collective healing developed outside a reparations framework.

"It's not an easy thing to bring survivors of the Cootamundra Girls Home together for healing gatherings. Many are frail and elderly and it takes a lot of stamina. Everyone makes the effort because the only time they feel really safe is when they are together. Even though vulnerable, Coota Girls are also fiercely independent. Coota Girls possess a collective courage that comes to life when they are together, and maintaining their connections to each other is key to maintaining their wellbeing."

The Coota Girls have found within themselves:

- For the first time, their own voice, to speak about matters that concern them
- Collective courage to achieve collective outcomes for Coota Girls and their descendants
- Empowerment
- Confidence
- Determination to achieve the outcomes articulated in the 'All One Statement'.

Critical success factors include:

- The need to remain connected to each other is a strong drive shared by all members
- An age-related urgency to achieve reparations
- The need to take a stand to prevent those who do not understand the human rights abuses experienced by Coota Girls from retriggering their trauma – whether witting or unwitting, this threatens the survival of Coota Girls.

Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation

Healing Our Way

Organisation and programs

Kinchela Boys' Home Aboriginal Corporation (KBHAC) aims to assist the survivors of the Kinchela Boys Home, their families and communities to recover their identity, dignity and wellbeing. This includes full-as-possible reconnections of members to families, communities, culture and land.

KBHAC recognises the legacy of not only members' experiences of removal but also the physical, sexual, emotional and cultural abuse they experienced. A strong focus of KBHAC programs is healing unresolved trauma and suffering, including intergenerational effects.

KBHAC works to empower KBHAC members to take more control of their own futures and assist them to improve the quality of their lives.



Kinchela Boy Michael Welsh and Darryl Kickett at a collective healing gathering, September 2015

Project description

The **90th Anniversary Commemoration of the opening of Kinchela Boys Home** and honouring the memory of all the Stolen Generations boys who went through this institution.

Target group

Kinchela Boys Home survivors and their descendants, including the families and descendants of those who have passed on; the local Aboriginal community and the broader community of Kempsey and surrounding towns on the Mid North Coast of NSW.

Goals

While it was recognised that the weekend would bring out many stories of sorrow, sadness and despair of what life was like in the home, its main purpose was to promote a journey of reflection, growth, survival and healing.

It was intended as a “healing process not just for the men of Kinchela Boys Home but their families, their friends, the community of Kempsey surrounding Kinchela Boys home and the many people who have been influenced one way or another by the stories, lives, strength, survival and fighting spirit of a Stolen Generations child”.

Activities

The three day event held from Friday to Sunday incorporated a range of activities: an art exhibition at the Dunghutti-Ngaku Aboriginal Art Gallery housed in the annex of the Kempsey Visitor Information Centre, a Site Recognition Ceremony at South West Rocks School, the official 90th commemoration event at Kinchela, a dinner dance, a touch footy match and a community barbeque.

As part of their workshop presentation the KBHAC team showed a video clip of the official commemoration event featuring the **opening of the gate** at the front of Kinchela by the NSW Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and the men walking through, watched by their families and the community.

Uncle Michael Welsh explained the significance of the gate:

“I always had the feeling that something was there... Today, now that something is gone. It’s no longer in my life as a torment. In this journey ... It’s empowered me; what I know about that gate and what those people did to reprogram our brains. The gate brought me to the place and it freed me. I want them to tell the truth and let us get on with our lives.”

“The gate was missing⁴. [I thought] I want to build this gate and make it important ... Although we were in the home we were alone. It makes me happy and proud right now when I see these guys walking through the gate. That’s power. I made this gate.”

Family members were very touched by what they saw, as were others from the general community – “That community sees their own healing as part of the Kinchela men”.

Critical success factors include:

- By the men for the men
- Support from others including funding and expertise.

A personal perspective on the importance of collective healing, read by Peter Coombes on behalf of Uncle Michael Welsh:

“This company [KBHAC] has helped to ease the pain and allow my healing process to begin. I felt damaged and screwed up and controlled. I have treated my family the same way as I was treated in KBH. To change this way of life there needed to be change to break the cycle and take control of my life. Reconnecting with other KBH brothers has supported this change for the better. KBHAC has allowed us to redirect our lives and begin to heal ourselves, thus then allowing us to begin the healing of our children. This company could not achieve that if the Board was not made up of KBH men and allowing experienced people to assist us to reach our goals. To be able to make the correct decisions direction can only come from those of us who have experienced what it is to be a KBH boy. The knowledge comes from within us, from firsthand experience.”

.....
4 One half of the original gate is now in the National Museum of Australia in Canberra.

REFLECTIONS

In the final session workshop facilitator Benny Hodges asked everyone to reflect on all they had heard during the workshop and to say what message they would take away: *“What’s the story from the last two days that stayed with you?”*

Participants had grown up in different ways on different countries, held different positions in their organisations and their answers were varied but most had found the workshop very moving and inspirational, as well as informative.

Common responses included:

- healing as a journey
- unfinished business
- courage
- strength in numbers
- the power that comes from sharing and learning from others
- the power of symbols and ceremony
- possibly more than anything, the important role of the Stolen Generations Elders and first generation survivors in providing leadership and sharing their wisdom and experiences
- women and men, sisters and brothers, working together
- healing starts with them then ripples out to the family and community to become transgenerational healing.

“We are tired of being told what to do and we want to have a say in what affects us.”

“We are working in the worst human rights abuses in Australian history but it’s joyful working with people of courage.”

“We still have a lot to do. These people [first generation survivors] need us to be putting in more of an effort.”

“What we need to do is keep that first generation face present and alive.”

“All those men are the gate to the healing and wellbeing of their own families.”

“Doesn’t matter which country you come from, never let the story die but continue it wherever you are.”

“Unfinished business ... the frustration from the years in working in this space. The answer is in the room that might help me get over this to move forward, but I always feel a sense of unfinished business leaving a forum like this.”

“How strong can we be? Connecting our spirit back to family, country, lore and spirituality.”

KEY THEMES AND CONCLUSION

This workshop was a valuable learning experience for everyone there. Key threads or themes that ran across the two days of presentations and discussion were: the need for locally tailored healing responses; community partnerships; programs that are both trauma informed and culturally appropriate; connection to country and culture; strong leadership; and ongoing evaluation, reflection and knowledge exchange. These are briefly discussed below.

Locally tailored responses

The workshop highlighted the diversity of the Stolen Generations, reflecting different experiences of colonisation and its impacts around Australia and the absolute necessity for locally informed, tailored responses. Each person also has their own story.

Community partnerships

There was considerable diversity among workshop participants and their organisations. Available resources including organisational structure and governance, staffing levels, worker skills and funding all affect what can be achieved. Community support and partnerships are essential to successful outcomes and sustainability⁵.

Trauma informed and culturally appropriate programs

Good practice in collective healing for members of the Stolen Generations is, above all, about safety – caring for people before, during and after an event or activity and connecting them with services as needed. Good practice reflects an Aboriginal worldview and is informed by the experiences documented in and the recommendations of the *Bringing them Home* report.

The **transgenerational** nature of trauma and the resulting need for transgenerational healing responses was emphasised throughout the workshop. Educating the younger generations including school children was regarded as very important and very affirming.

Connecting to country and culture

Connecting to country and culture were common themes across the projects; equally relevant in remote areas of Western Australia, the Northern Territory and the southern states.

Leadership by the Stolen Generations for the Stolen Generations

Leadership and participation from Stolen Generations Elders and first generation survivors was another common theme (and was well illustrated in the workshop itself). The workshop's balance of women and men was appreciated by everybody. The KRSGAC women wanted to know: *"How do we engage men in our projects?" "How do we build the family with our men again?"*

Evaluation

It is becoming increasingly clear that collective healing approaches deliver many benefits and provide an important complement to other government and community driven healing responses. More work is needed to capture the positive changes at individual, family and community levels and identify the necessary conditions for change and explain how and why healing works. This will both strengthen the work currently being undertaken and encourage broader support for collective healing approaches. Workshop participants reported using a variety of data collection methods: surveys, interviews, observation, photos and videos. One project had employed the Growth and Empowerment Measure (GEM). When selecting tools for this purpose it is good to involve both program providers and participants in discussions as well as talk to the developers and others who have used the tools for their insights and tips to use them successfully.

⁵ Sustainability can mean different things: from extending the life and reach of a project to building individual and community capacity.

Conclusion

In striving to build the evidence base, rather than asking the question ‘Does collective healing work?’, it would be better to ask ‘What works for whom in what circumstances, in what respects, how and why?’ These are complicated questions for a field of practice that is still emerging. Workshops such as this where people come together to share their experiences bring us closer to the answers.

Reflecting on the project processes and outcomes and using the insights to inform the next project as well as sharing experiences and learnings more broadly will keep the field moving forward. Building and maintaining a peer network to support each other and exchange information and ideas is a great idea, not only for program participants (especially those who were not part of an institution) but for workers and service managers too.

Seven years after the National Apology, the lack of recognition is still hurtful for many members of the Stolen Generations who live traumatised and depressed, believing that nothing will ever be done for them. Time is running out, especially for the first generation survivors. In this context the work of the Healing Foundation to consolidate and build on the work already being done in the community by Stolen Generations members, organisations and groups to provide collective healing responses has added importance and urgency. We need to continue to work together: sharing our stories, validating the work to date and building the evidence base.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: List of Workshop Participants

Organisation	Name
Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation	Uncle Michael Welsh
Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation	Peter Coombes
Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation	Tiffany McComsey
Coota Girls Aboriginal Corporation	Aunty Lorraine Peeters
Coota Girls Aboriginal Corporation	Kerrie Kelly
Bringing Them Home Committee (WA)	Jim Morrison
Bringing Them Home Committee (WA)	Darryl Kickett
Kimberley Stolen Generation Aboriginal Corporation	Mark Bin Bakar
Kimberley Stolen Generation Aboriginal Corporation	Ken Riddiford
Katherine Region Stolen Generation Aboriginal Corporation	Madeleine Bower
Katherine Region Stolen Generation Aboriginal Corporation	Miliwanga Sandy
Northern Territory Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation	Yvonne Bradley
Northern Territory Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation	Daniel Fejo
Link-Up (Qld) Aboriginal Corporation	Jody Jackson
Link-Up (Qld) Aboriginal Corporation	Jessie Cobbo
Link-Up NSW Aboriginal Corporation	John Trikilis
Link-Up NSW Aboriginal Corporation	Dianne Royce
Link-Up NSW Aboriginal Corporation	Donna Cavanagh
Nunkuwarrin Yunti of South Australia Inc./Link-Up SA	Alucius (Lou) Turner
Nunkuwarrin Yunti of South Australia Inc./Link-Up SA	Elke Colbert
Connecting Home Ltd	Lisa Zammitt
Connecting Home Ltd	Christopher Arnott
ATSIHF Stolen Generations Reference Committee	Florence Onus

APPENDIX B: ORGANISATIONAL LOGOS AND THEIR STORIES



Kimberley Stolen Generation
Aboriginal Corporation

Kimberley Stolen Generation Aboriginal Corporation

The chains are family links. White hands symbolise the European presence and taking of children. Woman and baby represents the love and loss between mother and child. Concept by Kimberley Stolen Generation members, based on a painting by K. S. McGuire 2001.



Nunkuwarnin Yunti of
South Australia Inc.

Nunkuwarnin Yunti of South Australia

Our name was adopted from the dialects of the two largest clans in the southern region – Ngarrindjeri and Narungga – to represent the community, the services and the spirit in which they are provided. Nunkuwarnin Yunti means ‘Working Together – Doing Right Together’ and proclaims our belief of one community sharing a united vision for the future. Our logo, designed by Aboriginal Artist Max Mansell, is a pictorial reminder of our name. It represents ‘the diversity of Indigenous Australians in colour and culture, and all cultures of the world building bridges of understanding together as one with colourful cultures’.



Katherine Region Stolen Generation Aboriginal Corporation

The boomerang resembles the children coming back to the family, when you take a family away like a boomerang they come back. The hands resemble the families coming back home.



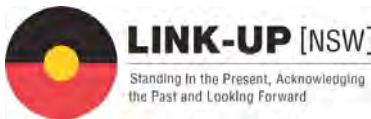
Northern Territory Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation

The empty coolamon is the carer that holds you when you are born and cradles you afterwards. It’s like your mother, for the babies that were taken away.



Bringing Them Home (WA)

The Bringing Them Home (WA) logo portrays the WA blue hibiscus, used to represent our stolen children. We give out hundreds of imitation hibiscus (used on lapels and other clothing), provided by the Kimberley Stolen Generation Aboriginal Corporation, at events around Sorry Day each year. Some Aboriginal artists when portraying Stolen Generations themes may also portray stolen children as flowers.



Link-Up (NSW)

The Link-Up (NSW) logo, which incorporates the Aboriginal flag and its colours, is over 30 years old.



Connecting Home

Our logo was designed by Marcus Lee, an Aboriginal graphic designer in Melbourne who identifies as a second generation survivor. The logo has several meanings, the first incorporating the outline of a house which represents the importance of the journey home for survivors and having a safe place in terms of Connecting Home (this agency). The use of the boomerang is to mark the logo as being Aboriginal and is a symbol of community, but also marks the returning of survivors to home and community. The use of the concentric circles is representative of the great importance of circles to community. If you look at the shape of the inner circles you will see the shape of a person standing within the home: arms, legs and head. This represents a person almost being reborn or finding themselves and stretching up and being proud.



Coota Girls Aboriginal Corporation

The logo “sitting on the well, waiting for family to come and take us home” has been made into a pendant.



Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation

The KBHAC logo has two parts. The first is ‘Taking Control of Our Future’ which expresses the self-determination of the men and what they are doing through the creation of their organisation and through the organisation looking after themselves and their families. The second part is the Aboriginal flag with the question mark in the middle. The meaning behind the logo is best articulated in the words of the song ‘Why’ which was written by the late Uncle Roy Read who went through Kinchela:

Why was I taken from my family, to be stripped of my culture, my identity, to be told I wasn't black, I was just darker than the rest, why, tell me why I was placed in a government home, through no fault of my own even though with all the other kids I still felt so alone, the touch of a mother's love I never knew why. Why did they tell me oh such lies, to say I had no family, that I was an only child the touch of a mother's love I never knew, why, maybe you can tell me why



The five-petal Native Cotton, Desert Rose, or Native Hibiscus as we know it, symbolises the scattering of the Stolen Generations and their resilience to the eugenic policies of Australia. This was initially proposed by KSGAC members and later endorsed by the National Sorry Day Committee. It is wholeheartedly supported by the National Stolen Generations Alliance. This flower was adopted because it is found widely across Australia and it is a survivor. Its colour denotes compassion and spiritual healing.



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