

FLORENCE ONUS



Florence Onus is a descendant of the Birri-Gubba and Kairi/Bidjara clans of north east Queensland.

She is the 4th generation of women from her family to be forcibly removed from land, culture and family.

“My grandmother and my mother were both trained and sent out as domestic servants on properties.”

“They weren’t allowed to speak their native language or practice cultural ceremonies,” Florence said.

“And then I became part of the Stolen Generations when I was removed from my family to be raised in a white foster home.”

Her two older sisters were sent to Rockhampton to live with nuns, while Florence and her two other siblings went to Townsville foster homes. There Florence spent most of her childhood.

“I embarked on my healing journey when at 21 my mother attempted suicide. With family support I became her full time carer and together we began the journey of healing.”

“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 inter-generational trauma.”

Florence has four adult daughters and is a grandmother. She is passionate about breaking the cycle of trauma through healing, education, cultural identity and spiritual nurturing.

Florence is an educator and lecturer at James Cook University, and an advocate for social justice. Her maternal grandfather died in custody in the early 60s following his arrest as an agitator.

She’s also the Chair of The Healing Foundation’s Stolen Generations Reference Committee which she describes as “a catalyst to assist families and communities to heal.”

Florence is The Healing Foundation’s official BTH20 spokesperson. She says on the 20th anniversary of the report we should understand that there’s still a long way to go in the Stolen Generation’s healing journeys.

“There needs to be an increase in healing resources for the Stolen Generations and our families to heal from the trauma, pain and suffering that we’re still dealing with today,” she said.



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