

The Marumali Program: Healing for Stolen Generations

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OVERVIEW

There are an estimated 10,625 people who directly experienced the trauma generated by forcible removal, an estimated 25,844 children (second generation) who have been living with parents affected by forcible removal, and an estimated 40,612 grandchildren who continue to experience the effects of their grandparents' removal.¹ Two models developed by Aboriginal people have been evaluated and consistently identified as 'best practice' to assist those who have been forcibly removed—Link-Up family tracing and reunion services, and the *Marumali Journey of Healing*. Both seek to restore what the children lost when they were removed. This chapter provides insight into the *Marumali Journey of Healing* which works in harmony with Link-Up family tracing and reunion services to restore connections to Aboriginal identity and social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. The *Marumali Journey of Healing* is grounded in Aboriginal knowledge systems, and restoring connections to spirit and spirituality is key to recovery. Counsellors are encouraged to work in collaboration with other agencies, and a number of workshops have been developed to support this. As well as training Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander counsellors, workshops have been developed to train other mental health practitioners to work in partnership with Aboriginal counsellors.

THE TRAUMA OF FORCIBLE REMOVAL OF ABORIGINAL CHILDREN

Aboriginal children have been forcibly separated from their families and cultures since European occupation of Australia.² The term 'Stolen Generations' refers specifically to the Aboriginal children who were deliberately and systematically removed from their families using laws, policies and practices which relied on compulsion, duress or undue influence 'forcible removal' during the years 1910 to 1972.² In contrast to children removed following the adoption of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle from the late 1980s, children removed during these years were raised in non-Aboriginal institutions and families and required to adopt their cultural values and ways of life.

One principal effect of the forcible removal policies was the destruction of cultural links. This was of course their declared aim. Culture, language, land and identity were to be stripped from the children in the hope that the traditional law and culture would die by losing their claim on them and sustenance on them.^{2(p202)}

The trauma generated by these policies was experienced by thousands of children over a 62-year period up until 1972. However, the source of this trauma was not acknowledged until the *Royal Commission Into Aboriginal Deaths In Custody* (RCIADIC) drew attention to policies and practices of forcible removal in 1991. The Royal Commission reported:

The horror of a regime that took young Aboriginal children, sought to cut them off suddenly from all contact with their families and communities, instil in them a repugnance of all things Aboriginal, and prepare them harshly for a life as the lowest level of worker in a prejudiced white community.^{3(p30)}

While these policies and practices were a ‘history that few Australians know’, they were ‘a living legacy amongst many Aboriginals today’.³

Following removal, children were placed in non-Aboriginal institutions and foster and adoptive families and many were assigned new names and birth dates to prevent their families from locating them. The children were told either that their families had rejected them or that they were dead.^{2(p154)} The systematic programs of racial denigration implemented in institutions established to create a ‘servant class’ of domestics and labourers were not brought to light until the *National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families* exposed them in 1997:

The assimilation policy seemed to demand that the children reject their families. The tactics used to ensure this ranged from continual denigration of Aboriginal people and values to lies about the attitudes of families to the children themselves.^{2(p200)}

To prevent the children from returning to Aboriginal Australia as adults, programs of racial denigration were targeted toward their parents, their families and Aboriginal people in general:

Nothing could have prepared me for the days I spent with my co-Commissioners listening as people spoke the truth of their lives for the first time. They recalled being told that their parents had given them away because they did not love them. And they told me what it was like to be taught to hate Aborigines and then turn that hate against your own history, your own mother and yourself.^{2(p1)}

The National Inquiry heard harrowing first person testimonies from more than 500 adult survivors about the human rights abuses they experienced, and the burden of trauma and the impact it had on their lives. Although the National Inquiry recommended ‘the development and implementation of a program of research and consultations to identify *the range and extent of emotional and wellbeing effects* of the forcible removal policies,’^{2(p341)} this recommendation has yet to be implemented. In 2007, almost a decade after the National Inquiry, an evaluation of the *Bringing Them Home* Counselling and Indigenous Mental Health Programs reported:

It became apparent that there is, in fact, very little published literature specifically relating to best practice strategies for meeting the social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) needs of Stolen Generations groups. Although there is an emerging body of literature on SEWB approaches, and also on mental health approaches for Aboriginal Australians, this literature has tended to focus on the Aboriginal population as a whole, rather than specifically on the Stolen Generations.^{3(p126)}

The National Inquiry stated ‘principles for responding to the effects of forcible removals must be developed from an understanding of Australian history as having included ‘gross violations of human rights’ and the response provided within a human rights framework.’^{2(p274)} However, the Commonwealth Government rejected the human rights basis of the *Bringing Them Home* (BTH) report, and until the National Apology in 2008, remained firm in its resolve that Aboriginal children were only forcibly removed if there was ‘good reason’ to do so, and the ‘treatment of separated Aboriginal children was essentially lawful and benign in intent.’⁴ The establishment of a stand-alone *Bringing Them Home* Counselling program in response to tabling of the *Bringing Them Home* report reflected the Commonwealth Government’s understanding of what had happened, rather than what the *Bringing Them Home* report recommended. It is not surprising therefore that these programs have been found to be largely inadequate and/or culturally inappropriate.⁵

The United Nations Special Rapporteur, Theo van Boven, quoted in the *Bringing Them Home* report, made the following points:

It is well-established that for many victims of gross violations of human rights, the passage of time has no attenuating effect; on the contrary, there is an increase in post-traumatic stress, requiring all necessary material, medical, psychological and social assistance and support over a long period of time.^{6(para135)}

Many who experience gross violations of human rights object to the use of the term post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), because their reactions are normal and understandable, given what they have experienced. Professionals experienced in working with those who have experienced human rights violations support such an approach:

PTSD participates in a process that converts a social and political problem into psychopathology. ‘D’ stands for disorder. There is probably nothing helpful for a victim of human rights violations than to classify his or her suffering as a mental illness. Furthermore, PTSD pretends that the trauma is over, that we are dealing with the consequences of a past event. It thus cannot grasp long-lasting chronic traumatic situations, nor can it understand why symptoms might appear only many years after the original traumatic situation. Last but not least we have to state that PTSD is an individual diagnosis, incapable of understanding the destruction of family structures in trauma, and also that the list of symptoms PTSD lists is absolutely incomplete.^{7(p3)}

The on-going traumatic effect of forcible removal should include the impact on survivors when they learned:

- what they had been told as children was untrue;
- that they and their families had been targeted for forcible removal for the purpose of assimilation;
- that forcible removal was lawful at the time and deliberately done; and
- of their situation in the national and historical context of the Stolen Generations.

The long-term psychological effects of programs of racial denigration targeted toward Aboriginal children have yet to be understood by anyone other than those who experienced it.

In order to avoid causing further harm, services targeted to address long-standing trauma in any population need to be ‘trauma-informed’ services. Trauma-informed services are based on an understanding of the vulnerabilities or triggers that service delivery might exacerbate in the client group, so they avoid re-traumatising those they seek to serve.⁸ The reluctance to fund research in this area has hindered the development of the specialised support services the Stolen Generations require. This leaves survivors relying on mental health service providers recognising that they have experienced ‘gross violations of human rights’ (as defined by the United Nations) requiring a response within a human rights framework (preferably using a ‘reparations’ approach). Many members of the Stolen Generations were removed in *the absence of neglect or abuse*, and their parents were *prevented* from protecting them. If survivors are counselled to accept that their removal was purely a protective measure, then human rights abuses will continue to be perpetuated.

If ‘trauma-informed’ services are to be provided, practitioners must be adequately prepared to work with the ethical principle of ‘do no harm’ as central to service provision. To enable this, it is critical that Aboriginal mental health practitioners are supported and are able to define the burden of trauma attributed to policies and practices of forcible removal, and to identify best practice responses to address this. Profiles of trauma also need to be developed which document the core features defined as traumatic in forcible removal placements in non-Aboriginal institutions and foster and adoptive families. Common strategies used to ‘assimilate’ children in

each type of placement, and common triggers which contain the potential to reactivate trauma, also require understanding and documentation.

Any risks posed to Stolen Generations through counselling delivered by non-Aboriginal mental health practitioners in the current environment need to be identified and strategies developed to manage these. Aside from dealing with the trauma arising from human rights abuses, there is a need to take account of the impact of forcible removal in the context of Aboriginal concepts of social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB). The inability of mainstream concepts of psychological trauma to articulate with, or accommodate, Aboriginal concepts of SEWB has long been recognised.⁹

THE BURDEN OF TRAUMA ASSOCIATED WITH FORCIBLE REMOVAL

The cause of the specific type of trauma seen in the Stolen Generations ceased 40 years ago with the end of Aboriginal-specific forcible removal policies in 1972, and this was further strengthened with the introduction of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle from 1987.

The **primary burden of trauma** associated with forcible removal has been borne by those who directly experienced forcible removal during the years from 1910 to 1972. Nationally, an estimated 10,625 (or one-in-ten) people aged 45 years or older report being forcibly removed.¹

The **secondary burden of trauma** associated with forcible removal lies with those other than the individuals forcibly removed, such as their families and communities. Nationally 43 per cent, or an estimated 92,300 of those aged 15 years or older, report a relative was removed.¹⁰ The children (second generation) constitute 28 per cent of the 43 per cent who reported their relatives were removed (estimated to be 25,844 people, most of whom would be aged 30 years or older). The third generation (grandchildren) constitute 44 per cent of the 43 per cent who reported their relatives were removed (estimated to be 40,612 people aged 15 years or older).¹⁰

The **future burden** is the ongoing legacy of not adequately addressing the burden of trauma in the population of people who directly experienced it, and the transgenerational transmission of social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing problems as a result of connections that were severed or attenuated by past government policies.

In total there are an estimated 10,625 people who directly experienced the trauma generated by forcible removal, an estimated 25,844 children (second generation) who have been living with parents affected by forcible removal, and an estimated 40,612 grandchildren who continue to experience the effects of their grandparents' removal.

TRAUMA GENERATED BY HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Forcible removal of Aboriginal children and subjecting them to systematic programs of race-based denigration, fall within United Nations classifications of 'systematic discrimination': 'persecution on social, political, racial, religious or cultural grounds in a systematic manner or on a mass scale' and meet international definitions of 'gross violations of human rights'.¹¹

The policy response to the *Bringing Them Home* report was crucial to preventing the burden of trauma from being carried into the future. Unfortunately the investments in the *Bringing Them Home* Counselling and Aboriginal Mental Health programs between the years 1998 to 2009 failed to reach or benefit members of the Stolen Generations.^{5, 12, 13} As a result, these programs have not functioned as 'rehabilitation' services for the Stolen Generations.

Until the full set of recommendations from the *Bringing Them Home* report are implemented and some remedy is provided for the harms suffered by survivors, present day 'triggers' or reminders will continue to evoke the painful re-experiencing of the trauma associated with forcible removal. Each time this trauma is reactivated, it continues to be transmitted to subsequent generations.

RESTITUTION AND REACTIVATED TRAUMA

The National Inquiry found that a key objective of forcible removals was to sever the link between the child and his or her family, community and culture.^{2(p260)} Family reunion was identified as 'the most significant and urgent need of separated families' and 'the beginning of the unravelling of the damage done to Aboriginal families and communities by the forcible removal policies'.²

Going home is fundamental to healing the effects of separation. Going home means finding out who you are as an Aboriginal: where you come from, who your people are, where your belonging place is, what your identity is. Going home is fundamental to the healing processes of those who were taken away as well as those who were left behind.^{2(p318)}

However, the systematic programs that accompanied the 'assimilation' of Aboriginal children often resulted in survivors recovering their identity against a background of denial and denigration of Aboriginality:

... it might be that the person who's trying to go back to their community really struggles with how to deal with that return and really needs quite a lot of help in adjusting to the old identity that they believe they were brought up with and this new sense of identity which they feel is much more their real identity, and that's a very complex issue to come to terms with in any individual person as well as within a family.^{2(p311)}

As a result, the process of restoring Aboriginal identity can be a complex process which involves re-connecting with family, land, culture, ancestors, spirituality and community, while managing and overcoming traumatic stress reactions activated or re-activated by confronting the government sanctioned human rights abuses they and their family experienced, the derogatory and racist comments found in their 'files', and their fears they will be rejected by their families and communities, and finding what they had been told as children about their removal, their parents, and other Aboriginal people were true. These processes are interconnected and interdependent, and cannot be understood in isolation from each other.

While traumatic stress reactions may underlie the experiences and responses of the Stolen Generations, the consequences of forcible removal on health and wellbeing are far-reaching as a consequence of being disconnected from sources of Aboriginal identity and social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing.

Our identity as human beings remains tied to our land, to our cultural practices, our systems of authority and social control, our intellectual traditions, our concepts of spirituality, and to our systems of resource ownership and exchange. Destroy this relationship and you damage—sometimes irrevocably—individual human beings and their health.^{14(p15)}

Therefore, strategies which restore connections to social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing are likely to ease traumatic stress reactions and contribute to healing and recovery over time, irrespective of whether clinical interventions for long-standing untreated post-traumatic stress disorder are available or not.

ABORIGINAL MODELS OF RESTITUTION

The *Bringing Them Home* report recommended that 'services to redress these effects had to be designed, provided and controlled by Aboriginal people themselves'.^{2(p277)} Aboriginal models work within Aboriginal concepts of SEWB to restore Aboriginal identity and social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing—see Chapter 4 (Gee and colleagues).

Two models developed by Aboriginal people to assist those who have been forcibly removed have been evaluated and consistently identified as ‘best practice’^{2,3}: *Link-Up* family tracing and reunion services and the *Marumali Journey Of Healing*.^{5, 15, 16} Both models seek to restore what the children lost when they were removed and are ‘trauma informed’. Both programs have been operating continuously for 32 years and 15 years respectively, with both models working in harmony with each other. Both support family tracing and reunion in conjunction with a variety of strategies to manage reactivated trauma.

The evaluation of the *Bringing Them Home* Counselling and Aboriginal Mental Health programs reported:

There is a lack of documented material concerning mental health approaches specifically for Stolen Generations members, and the key program identified in the review was the Marumali Program. Many BTH and Link-Up staff consulted had undertaken this program, and all spoke extremely highly about how useful this training was.^{5(p37)}

In the face of a poorly directed government response, ‘first generation’ survivors of Cootamundra Domestic Training Home For Aboriginal Girls were forced to rely on each other to deal with the aftermath of forcible removal policies. The remainder of this chapter will focus on the *Marumali Journey of Healing* developed by Aunty Lorraine (a Cootamundra survivor) to support the family tracing and reunion process.

THE MARUMALI JOURNEY OF HEALING PROGRAM

Marumali is a Kamilaroi word meaning ‘put back together’. The aim of the Marumali Program is to increase the quality of support available for survivors of forcible removal undertaking their healing journeys. The Marumali model offers an effective framework, structure and process which supports the healing of survivors of forcible removal, whether removed to institutional care, foster care or adoptive families. The pathway to recovery involves mind, body and spirit and is holistic in that culture, identity and reconnecting with family, community and country are central to the healing journey.

The *Marumali Journey of Healing* model offers a comprehensive, coordinated and risk-managed approach which cuts through the pain and confusion and allows survivors to find a safe path home to themselves, their families and their communities. Reconnecting with spirit and spirituality is seen to be a core healing tool to overcome the grief and loss experienced by those who were forcibly removed.¹⁷ While the program was developed specifically to support the members of the Stolen Generations to heal, all Aboriginal people have been affected by removal policies to some degree and may draw meaning and strength from the program.

In the words of Aunty Lorraine:

“ Ten years ago, as a Wailwan/Bidgera woman removed and institutionalised at age four, it was frustrating to find a lack of appropriate support to heal from my experiences. It was fortunate that the mental health professional I consulted at the time had some knowledge of removal policies, and reassured me that I was having normal human reactions to extremely traumatic circumstances. Reassured I was experiencing normal human distress, I felt empowered to observe, study and seek to understand my own journey of healing in order to help others. The Marumali Journey of Healing model was developed by documenting my own healing journey over five years, from 1994 to 1999. My first publication about this journey was titled ‘The Years that Never Were’¹⁸ and my second publication identified ‘what helped and what hurt’ as I ‘reclaimed my identity through the pain’ (Peeters and Kelly, 1999).¹⁷

The Marumali Journey of Healing was presented for the first time as a keynote address at the NSW Aboriginal Mental Health Conference held in Sydney in 1999. At the conference, it was recommended the body of work I had developed and the Marumali Journey of Healing model be copyrighted, published and circulated within Aboriginal communities, Link-up organisations and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs), to enhance the healing process for Aboriginal people.^{17(p139)}

In response, assisted by Shaan Hamann who has a degree in Adult Education, I developed a five day training workshop for Aboriginal counsellors to provide them with the understanding they needed to support us on our healing journeys. ”

The Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing (now Department of Health) (DoHA) funded a pilot *Marumali Journey of Healing* workshop in Sydney with experienced Link-Up NSW case workers and counsellors. An external evaluator, Professor Gail Garvey, was contracted by the Department to evaluate the pilot workshop. The evaluation was very positive and the Department agreed to support the delivery of the *Marumali Journey Of Healing* workshops to train Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander counsellors and case workers employed in Link-Up services and ACCHOs from 2000.

The *Marumali Journey of Healing* model and workshop was endorsed by co-author of the Ways Forward report, Professor Beverly Raphael (Letter of Support, 2000) and Aboriginal organisations Link-Up NSW (2001) and the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) (2002) as being a safe, effective and culturally appropriate model to use with survivors of forcible removal.

The *Marumali Journey of Healing* has been variously identified as a ‘good practice,’ ‘promising practice’ and ‘best practice’ Aboriginal model of healing for those who have been forcibly removed, by the Moving Forward Conference (2002), the evaluation of the *Bringing Them Home* and Indigenous Mental Health Programs.^{5, 16}

The National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing 2004–2009 identified the *Marumali Journey of Healing* as an initiative that achieved the key result area of ‘recognising and promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander philosophies on holistic health and healing.’¹⁵

HEALING THE STOLEN GENERATIONS

The *Bringing Them Home* Report highlighted that ‘only Indigenous people themselves are able to comprehend the full extent of the effects of the removal policies’ and recommended that ‘services to redress these effects must be designed, provided and controlled by Indigenous people themselves.’^{2(p312)}

The trauma of policies and practices of forcible removal has been compounded by the widespread denial about what actually happened to us, and this has included denial by mental health practitioners. Survivors of forcible removal carry heavy burdens of trauma and this can frighten practitioners who do not understand it, where it comes from, or how to heal it. A core belief of the Marumali Program is that, when survivors of forcible removal embark on a healing journey, they are experiencing normal human distress and suffering in response to what they went through, rather than showing symptoms of mental illnesses or disorders.

For many years, those of us who tried to get assistance to heal were misdiagnosed, left to flounder in our distress, or met with blank stares from non-Aboriginal mental health practitioners that left us feeling that our pain had no meaning and made no sense.

While many who were forcibly removed may be afraid to undertake a healing journey because of the pain it will reawaken, there is no need to be afraid—with support from others we are able to confront this pain and heal from its effects. Our journey of healing is one of recovering our culture and identity as Aboriginal people even though this reactivates our trauma. For many reasons, we are a unique group with unique healing needs, and out of necessity have had to become the experts of our own trauma and healing. We have learnt a lot about the long-term and transgenerational effects of removal by observing our own healing journeys, and assisting each other to heal.

As survivors, we have clear views about what needs to happen to support other survivors to heal. We ask that our views are heard and our knowledge respected, since no other group has experienced what we did at the hands of governments and their agencies. For us, healing involves mind, body, spirit, spirituality, family, culture and sometimes (if we are lucky) country. It is about finding our ‘belonging place’, whatever that might mean to each of us. How we were removed, and the diverse experiences we had following removal, have created unique individuals, and the ‘belonging place’ we find for ourselves will reflect this diversity. A lot has been learnt from facilitating more than 200 five day workshops throughout Australia for the past 13 years with nearly 2000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers from all walks of life, groups of survivors themselves, and inmates in jail about the effects of forcible removal.

THE EFFECTS OF REMOVAL: DISCONNECTION

Although the means of removal may have varied, most of us shared some common experiences. We were deliberately and systematically cut off from our families, our culture and our Aboriginality. We had our heads filled with negative stereotypes about Aboriginal people; we were told our mothers and families did not want us, and were forced to act and speak like non-Aboriginal people. We were punished if we acted ‘naturally’—that is, if we spoke, felt and thought like Aboriginal people. I would like you to take a moment to stop and think about this. What if this had happened to you or your children? How would you feel now?

Many of us were also subjected to a range of abuses: physical, emotional and sexual. As kids, in order to survive, many of us had to detach ourselves from what we really felt and thought, and try not to feel anything at all. We were powerless. To be fully present during those times might have destroyed us. It was as if we had to play dead, emotionally and spiritually, in order to survive. Our spirits had to hide.

As a result, many of us left important parts of ourselves behind, and have paid, and continue to pay, a high price in our everyday lives. Disconnection of mind from body, thinking from feeling, and spirit from mind and body are core issues that many removed people struggle with inside themselves, as well as the more obvious disconnections from family, country, language, history, culture and spiritual heritage.

Many of us have lived lives of fear, and have been running from ourselves—and sometimes our Aboriginality—ever since. Some of us don’t trust anyone, including ourselves. Many of us who grew up in institutions feel most comfortable with each other. Others have become good at putting their feelings on hold and withdrawing when life gets difficult. Some use alcohol and other substances to drown the pain and anger inside. Feeling like an outsider is common to all of us. Many still don’t know who they are, where they have come from, and where, if anywhere, they ‘belong’. Many say they feel ‘empty’ inside.

Despite this, those of us who survived have developed an incredible strength. When the chips are down, we know we can do whatever we need to do, to survive. Although we have this strength, many of us also have special vulnerabilities. Every removed person has their own set of triggers, shaped by their experience of removal, and these can tap into the pain buried deep inside and unleash strong reactions. At certain points in our lives, usually in response to certain events, these triggers can lift the lid on our pain and destabilise us. Whether a trigger will set off a healing journey will depend on what else is happening in the person’s life. If they are not safe enough or strong enough to face the pain of healing, they can just close down and keep going. It is very dangerous to push someone to heal before they are ready to do so. No one has a right to set another person’s healing agenda. Nor is it possible for one person to ‘heal’ another. Each of us needs to be recognised as the expert of our own healing, and it is crucial that we are able to control the speed, direction and outcomes of our own healing journey. This includes the right to refuse to look at any removal issues at all until we feel ready to do so.

Today we have a better understanding of what happens when you isolate Aboriginal children from their families and forcibly remove their Aboriginal identity from them and replace it with another. No one warned us what we might go through as adults, that something might trigger our trauma and set off a volcano of feelings and memories that would shatter the identities that were imposed on us as children. For many of us, our healing journey will be triggered by an event in our lives. This may take us by surprise. We might have thought we were okay and did not have any Stolen Generations issues to deal with. Some might not even identify as Aboriginal people. But once our memories start to resurface, our healing journey has usually begun.

Once a healing journey begins, it cannot be stopped. Memories that had to be ‘disremembered’ in order to survive come flooding in, accompanied by a volcano of emotions. We see this as the spirit coming back to life to reconnect with mind and body.

The first stage of our journey can be a stage of crisis. For example, I started crying and couldn’t stop—I cried for days on end. We might be full of anxiety, fear, grief and loss, and think we are losing our minds.

It is important that good quality support is available to help us through this stage of crisis, to reassure us that many other survivors have successfully used this time to begin a healing journey, and to offer us some guidance about what to expect. Often there are spiritual dimensions to this part of the journey that only other Aboriginal people can understand. It is important that Aboriginal counsellors are available to explain these things to us, and to non-Aboriginal mental health practitioners if they are involved, so that we are not misdiagnosed early on.

DISCONNECTION IS THE DISEASE: RECONNECTION IS THE CURE

Reconnecting with and healing our spirit can be a painful and difficult path to follow—all those memories of things we wanted to forget, layers of pain and bottomless grief and loss to deal with, before we can even start to think about reconnecting or reclaiming anything. Without guidance and support on our journey, many survivors could become overwhelmed or even give themselves over to mental illness, suicide or substance abuse as a way out. Others might be at risk of ‘acting out’ their distress in violence or other self-destructive behaviours.

The Marumali Program provides an overview of the healing journey and how it might unfold. It identifies the core issues that need to be addressed at each stage of the journey, the risks associated with these issues and how to anticipate and manage these risks to ensure a safe passage for the survivor. It aims to help people who were removed to face the pain, and to work through it in manageable steps so that they can reclaim their identity and eventually arrive at a place of peace and strength.

The Healing Journey

The healing journey may include:

- learning about removal policies
- making sense of memories as they come up
- taking stock of what has been lost
- accessing files and reports written about us
- putting all the pieces together to find out what really happened to us and why
- finding out who our family is and where we are from
- facing our demons
- reconnecting mind, body and spirit
- reclaiming our spiritual heritage
- working through issues of blame
- retracing our steps
- looking at what has been taken, left behind or unlearned, and
- replacing some of the mainstream values implanted by others with relearned Aboriginal values.

Some may choose to reject their Aboriginality altogether, and that is okay too. The journey is about finding out who we were and who we are now, in light of all that has happened to us. We want to heal from our past, so that our future belongs to us.

The Marumali model is only a guide and each journey will be as different as the experiences of removal were. For some it will be a long journey, for others it will be short. It depends on what actually happened as part of removal process. For many of us, the journey will be lifelong. The healing journey is a circle, and many of us will go around the circle many times as we deepen our healing each time our memories and experiences are triggered. The importance of recognising the removed person as the specialist of their own healing cannot be overstated—they need to be able to control what happens, and when, as well as what does not happen.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ABORIGINAL COUNSELLORS

We invite non-Aboriginal mental health practitioners to assist us to do this healing work, but in a way that allows us to determine what is done and in what way.

The overview of the healing journey provided above should help to explain why we need Aboriginal counsellors as guides to our healing. It can be a barrier to effective healing if a non-Aboriginal counsellor dabbles in core issues for reclaiming our Aboriginal identity and spiritual heritage. For this, we need authentic Aboriginal input, which reflects the diversity in Aboriginal cultures, not ‘mainstream’ interpretations of what it is to be Aboriginal.

The Marumali Program recommends that if non-Aboriginal counsellors become involved during our stage of crisis, they should look for removal in our history, and if they find this, to refer us as soon as possible to Aboriginal counsellors in Link-Up services.

Link-Up case workers and counsellors are highly skilled in cultural and spiritual matters and the delicate consultations required to reconnect us with our Aboriginal families and communities. For this reason, it is recommended that no journey of healing should be embarked upon without the involvement of Link-Up case workers at key stages of the journey.

THE NEED TO CONSIDER THE SECOND AND THIRD GENERATIONS

The pain of forcible removal has been shared by the children and grandchildren of the Stolen Generations. The National Inquiry recommended that reparations programs should also be directed to descendants. Within a human rights framework, the descendants of the Stolen Generations are classified as ‘victims’ of forcible removal with legitimate rights, since they too have been ‘deprived of community ties, cultural and language and entitlements to traditional land.’^{2(p342)} The government’s refusal to address forcible removal within a human rights framework has resulted in a lack of recognition of the unique set of harms suffered by the descendants of the Stolen Generations.

Aside from living with deeply traumatised parents who require support when their trauma is reactivated, the toll taken on the social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of descendants is likely to include living in isolation from other Aboriginal people, experiencing higher levels of disadvantage, a family reluctance to engage with government agencies or Aboriginal-specific services, and an inability to obtain the three parts required for proof of Aboriginality. The absence of protective factors such as connection to kinship and family is likely to have affected resilience, particularly in relation to mitigating the racism experienced in wider Australia.

Population health outcomes for the Stolen Generations suggest that around one-in-ten of those who were forcibly removed were likely to be diagnosed with a mental illness, an alcohol-related problem, to experience discrimination, or to be incarcerated.¹⁰ While these events would have impacted on children in the family, the effects of living with one or more parents affected by human rights abuses and dealing with the periodic reactivation of unaddressed trauma are not captured by these statistics.

The lack of any recognition that forcible removal had even occurred until 1997 left many survivors and their children without a framework to understand themselves or the burden of trauma carried by their family. Many who were forcibly removed tried to protect their children from this knowledge, and others have been unable to speak of their experiences. Learning their parents had been targeted for human rights abuses is likely to have had a sudden, direct and traumatic impact on many descendants.

Yet, the impact of forcible removal on the second and third generations has yet to receive any attention or recognition. There is an urgent need to support the second generation in particular to begin the process of describing and documenting the transgenerational burden of trauma they have carried and the impact this has had on their social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing.

DELIVERY OF MARUMALI JOURNEY OF HEALING WORKSHOPS

Since 2000, the first author 'Aunty Lorraine' has personally delivered more than 220 *Marumali Journey of Healing* workshops to 2,500 participants.

Workshops for the Social And Emotional Wellbeing Workforce

Participants are required to have had previous training as counsellors. The program provides a basis for identifying and understanding common indicators of long-standing trauma associated with forcible removal and an overview of the healing journey and how it may unfold. It offers clear guidelines about what type of support is required at each stage of the journey. It identifies core issues to be addressed and some of the risks associated with each stage (including misdiagnosis), suggests appropriate strategies to minimise the risks, and offers indicators of when the individual is ready to move on to the next stage of their healing journey. Trauma is managed using protective factors drawn from Aboriginal concepts of SEWB. Reconnecting with spirit and spirituality is seen as a core healing strategy to overcome the trauma associated with forcible removal.

An important aspect of the training is the need to respect the rights of the survivors of the removal policies to control the pace, direction and outcome of their own healing journey.

The workshops consist of:

- a five day *Marumali Journey of Healing* workshop for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who work with Stolen Generations. 160 workshops have been delivered since 2000.
- a two day *Marumali Journey of Healing* workshop for non-Aboriginal collaborators/counsellors. 30 workshops have been delivered to 450 non-Aboriginal counsellors since 2000.
- a two day Risk Management workshop for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal workers. 15 workshops have been delivered since 2009.

Participants who successfully complete the five day workshop and two day risk management workshop gain competency against the national competency unit Assess and Support Client's Social and Emotional Wellbeing, which forms part of the Health Training Package-HLT07.

The overwhelming majority of workshop participants (94 per cent) have rated the *Marumali* training as 'excellent'. Many have identified it as a 'life-changing' experience.

A one day workshop has been developed to support non-Aboriginal practitioners working in a range of settings, including the health sector, corrective services and child protection services, to recognise and respond to the burden of trauma for families with a history of forcible removal.

Workshops for Survivors of Removal Policies

A number of *Marumali Journey of Healing* workshops have been delivered for survivors of forcible removal policies, including groups who grew up together in institutions.

Twenty-seven workshops have been delivered in correctional facilities in Victoria.

In 2011, the Healing Foundation supported the *Marumali* program to develop and successfully pilot workshops for Aboriginal children in Out-of-Home Care; parents of children in Out-of-Home Care; and young people who are descendants of the Stolen Generations.

Tips for Practitioners

Before an Aboriginal client presents, Aboriginal and other service providers need to:

- Recognise that many Aboriginal people who were forcibly removed are survivors of gross violations of human rights and require a response within a human rights framework—this cannot be delivered by providing counselling as a stand-alone response;
- Establish connections to the nearest Link-Up service in advance of accepting Aboriginal clients;
- Ensure access to cultural mentors to inform their own practice and to refer Aboriginal clients to.

When an Aboriginal client presents:

- If an Aboriginal client presents in crisis, recognise the crisis may relate to 'extreme trauma' generated by *gross* violations of human rights. Ask yourself the question: 'Am I competent to provide the services this person requires?'
- Take a detailed history—look for evidence of forcible removal;
- If there is a history of removal, discuss referral to Link-Up services.

Non-Aboriginal practitioners need to:

- Avoid providing cultural input to Aboriginal clients who have been forcibly removed—refer to a cultural mentor;
- Work in collaboration with Link-Up case workers and counsellors and cultural mentors.

Remember: Link-Up case workers are highly skilled in the delicate consultations required to reconnect us with our Aboriginal families and communities. Cultural protocols for families as well as communities need to be followed and no journey of healing for members of the Stolen Generations should be embarked upon without the involvement of Link-Up case workers at key stages of the journey.

REFLECTIVE EXERCISES

Throughout this text, and particularly in Chapter 12 (Walker and colleagues), readers are asked to reflect on their own cultures and values. Sometimes this requires reflecting on our common humanity. This chapter describes how many of us were deliberately and systematically cut off from our families, our culture and our Aboriginality. We had our heads filled with negative stereotypes about Aboriginal people, were told our mothers and families did not want us, and were forced to act and speak like non-Aboriginal people. We were punished if we acted 'naturally'—that is, if we spoke, felt and thought like Aboriginal people.

Take a moment to stop and think about this and consider the following questions/discussion:

1. What if this had happened to you or your children?
2. How would you have felt then? How would you feel now?
3. This chapter provides a particular perspective on the impact of forcible removal on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. Discuss these perspectives and your thoughts on this issue.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Aunty Lorraine Peeters developed the *Marumali Journey of Healing* program and delivers all workshops (2000 to the present). Shaan Hamann is a second generation member of the Stolen Generations and assists in the delivery of many Marumali workshops. Kerrie Kelly co-facilitates Marumali Risk Management workshops with Aunty Lorraine. They have assisted Aunty Lorraine to publish articles and develop education resources for workshops.

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