

# **Bangawarra Naa**

Ways of making and seeing

Creative Aboriginal knowledges

An interpretation and reflection of traditional Dharug Aboriginal Australian creative  
psychological healing practices

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I hereby certify that the work embodied in this exegesis and exhibition is the result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other University or Institution.

(Signed)

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## **PERSONAL NOTE**

Embarking on this research four years ago my goals were to demonstrate that creativity in making and seeing, Bangawarra naa, has the potential to make a positive contribution to Aboriginal emotional, social and mental health. This investigation affirms through a heuristic inquiry and narrative portrayal the value of traditional creative knowledge. Within this dissertation both visual form and written analogies demonstrate that making is of scientific knowledge and seeing is a psychological process that remains valid within the realms of contemporary theories and practices.



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## VISUAL CREATIVE WORKS BY LIZ CAMERON

The collection of sketches, paintings and photographs

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## **ABSTRACT**

# **Bangawarrara naa**

Ways of making and seeing through creative Aboriginal knowledges.

Translation: 'Bangawarra' is an Australian Aboriginal Dharug word meaning ways of doing or making, 'naa' refers to deep and multiple ways of seeing.

A culmination of life's work as a practicing Dharug Artist within the realms of psychological creativity processes in traditional healing practices.



**Fig: 1**

**Title:** Fingerprints left on the earth

**Descriptive storyline:** Visual spirituality is a web of cultural knowledges, entwined within all living things. The land represents pathways travelled by ancestors, who left symbols of profound cultural importance.

This dissertation, investigates explores, analyses and illustrates Australian Aboriginal creative healing practices from a Dharug standpoint. The term Dharug refers to an Aboriginal Nation surrounding the North West region of Sydney, and focuses on the Murramurra clan group of the Hawkesbury River. Unlike other Indigenous worldwide populations, Aboriginal Nations purposely consisted of small groups based on the lores of Ancestral philosophies that place importance to natural harmonious lifestyles. Underlying theories of small group structures within many Aboriginal Nations is founded on the principles in sustainable living where our natural environmental are maintained, balanced and protected by not overburdening valuable resources. As such, small communities often consisted of ten to thirty peoples, living in harmonies relationships with all living things.

Within this dissertation expertise lies within Dharug Murramurra communal knowledge systems of psychological creativity within traditional healing. From this perspective, I argue that creativity within healing has the capacity to communicate cultural meaning and spiritual messages in addressing physical, emotional and social health through a restorative holistic framework. This dissertation defines the importance of creativity or ways of making (Bangawarra) and the need to revitalise traditional healing practices in addressing the ongoing inequities of loss, grief and trauma since colonisation within Australia.

Within this research I examine and demonstrate that visual creativity within traditional Dharug healing practices are expressions of both cultural and spiritual significance, rather than being categorised under western theories of art. I therefore propose to debunk the myths that spiritual visual makings are more than just a physical projection by exposing creative processes that illustrate healing.

As Dharug philosophies base knowledge through evolving processes, I highlight the importance of therapeutic approaches within making and seeing as having relevance in contemporary society.

Methodologies used within this dissertation are consistent to Aboriginal epistemologies where narrative and visual content exudes traditional knowledge. Visual content refers to transgenerational cultural knowledges that consider sensory input and the deep relationships within all living things. Visual knowledge illustrates cultural and spiritual values through the exchange of the Maker and the viewer. The maker is the narrator, whilst the viewer observes, analyses and interprets information. Cultural knowledge as a psychological process incorporates holistically guided reflections that considers all aspects of life and is central to health and wellbeing.





**Fig: 2**

**Title:** Dharug Country

**Descriptive storyline:** A rich cultural system of visual knowledges imbedded within ancestral pathways, a thriving ecosystem where relationships are based on all living things.

## **Personal note**

This research grew out of my concern of the lack of understandings regarding the value of traditional Aboriginal creative making within healing. Unresolved historical transgenerational trauma continues to impact on Aboriginal health and wellbeing, with many culturally inappropriate programs acting as band aid effects with short term solutions.

I argue that healing associated with internal pain and suffering requires a comprehensive holistic approach that is inclusive of cultural and spiritual dynamics of individuals. Within this dissertation I highlight Dharug traditional practices as an example of culturally appropriate care as a way to address trauma.

By acknowledging past trauma associated with colonisation and present distress associated with situational circumstances, addressing internalised pain and suffering of Aboriginal Australian people's needs more attention. I argue that creativity within the realms of traditional healing is reactive and responsive process in dealing with unresolved internalised feelings and emotions that are often difficult to express. From a Dharug standpoint, I present how visual imagery has the capacity to communicate feeling where words may fail.

**Background note:**

Whilst working as a student nurse in the early 1980's, I could not comprehend the importance placed on what I term as aesthetical hospital care. I continually questioned the importance of patients being showered and dressed so early in the mornings to only sit in a room a deprivation of sensory isolation with nothing to do but wait. Waiting was a focused activity that dictated the lives of patients; dependant on health care professional timeframes and family visitation restrictions, yet was an interpretation of healing. But I witnessed numerous patients sitting in complete isolation disconnected from the internal and external worlds. Environmental monotony created a self-absorbed patient focusing entirely on their illness or pain that often led to a sense of disgruntlement.

I personally struggled with this type of care system as it greatly conflicted to Dharug traditional health practices. In elaborating further, simply focusing on the physical aspects of health conflicted with holistic understandings of Aboriginal philosophies to healing. Therefore I ethically struggled to justify my position as a health care professional.

Once completing my nursing, I undertook a Diploma in Diversional Therapy that offered a more social and emotional response to aspects of care. I later completed various Aboriginal specific courses in the Northern Territory including Tracey Waterman's Psychological Youth Assessment Tool. In 2008 I completed Post Graduate studies in Indigenous Social Health at Macquarie University and worked for many years as an Aboriginal Counsellor.

As an Aboriginal counsellor, I listened to many personal stories of social injustices, spiritual conflicts and cultural struggles that presented as internal disharmonies. Consulting sessions involved listening to interpretations of feelings often through metaphoric analogies in life experiences.

Many of these stories had similarities but there was no ethically sound pathway to retell personal storylines as a way of connecting to others. My strong desire was to share intimate storylines but place value and respect to original experiences. I began to paint personal narrative experiences as a way of placing importance on each story through a respectful process. Some of these paintings have been shared as they do not identify the individual, others have remained restricted.

As one of the few Aboriginal Counsellors in Australia, it is imperative to highlight the need for culturally validated understandings in working with Aboriginal peoples. Considering the vast contrasts in Aboriginal cultural and spiritual perceptions, this dissertation offers one understanding in comprehending and appreciating knowledge within healing.

This is where my journey begins.



Fig 3: Come, walk with me



## Chapter 1

### Creativity as an action based inquiry

Within this research framework it is imperative to clarify that creativity as making/doing (Bangawarra) and seeing (naa) are processes that related to knowledge. Making is a practical action, a form of Aboriginal pedagogy (Robinson and Nichol, 1998) that incorporates narrative and visual processes, whilst doing relates to practice. Practice is considered by Wenger (1998) as a form of 'doing in a social context, which concerns a structural meaning to ways of doing or making' (p 47). Ways of seeing relate to deep insight of knowledges.

Fig 7: **Ways of Knowing**



Ways of making



Ways of doing



Ways of seeing

## **Defining Dharug creative practices**

In defining creative practice, the use of cultural symbols within making is a sanctioned sense of sacredness where imagery exudes knowledge. Therefore visual arrangements function as evidence to support practice by building meaning in concrete and abstract thought (Bindarriy et al, 1991) through identifying and evaluating underlying theories of ritual lores.

From a traditional Dharug standpoint practice also concerns complex lores, ritual and social boundaries where image making is only performed by Knowledge Holders, those authorised to create making. Hence Bangawarra naa is a regulated practice based on restrictive theories within knowing.

## **Ways of knowing within a creative framework**

Aboriginal creative epistemologies are reflective of trans-generational experiences and practices that hold value to next generations. Creativity therefore is a form of sense making based on cosmological truths (Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo, 2001). Creative making, doing and seeing are considered forms of acquired wisdom in achieving holistic insight.

Holistic insight is considered a way of seeking realities through doing that incorporate feelings and connectivity with all living things. Insight is therefore a process considering all things through natural felt immersions of self within multiple worlds. This process involves both intuitive and imaginative interaction that goes beyond the boundaries of obvious realities.

Henri (1984) in exposing the void of contemporary western artists in seeing, highlights how making previously involved seeing 'beyond the usual' to gain wisdom. Henri further elaborates that seeing within and beyond is a natural occurrence that has been lost within contemporary society (Henri, 1984). There is much documented evidence on how creative activity is an important way of knowing (Clegg, 1972) and a powerful tool within pedagogies of cultural processes. Forms of visual creativity are not only an expression of the Maker, but hold relevance to what the viewer takes form it. This process illustrates a unique internal dialogue that facilitates self-awareness and is responsive within the conscious and unconscious realms (Jung, 1964).

Dharug cultural knowledges are uniquely different from a Western perspective as they are ever evolving and forever changing, in constant motion (Dei, 2008) as to remain prevalent to a growing society. From a Western standpoint, most knowledge is based on scientific scrutiny by examining a distinct linear pathway in investigations. Dharug investigations are trans-generational, based on experimental processes of nonlinear observations through action. Although both processes involve experimental reasoning, Western investigations typically lack flexible holistic considerations of in-depth embedded cultural meaning and honoured transgenerational experiences.

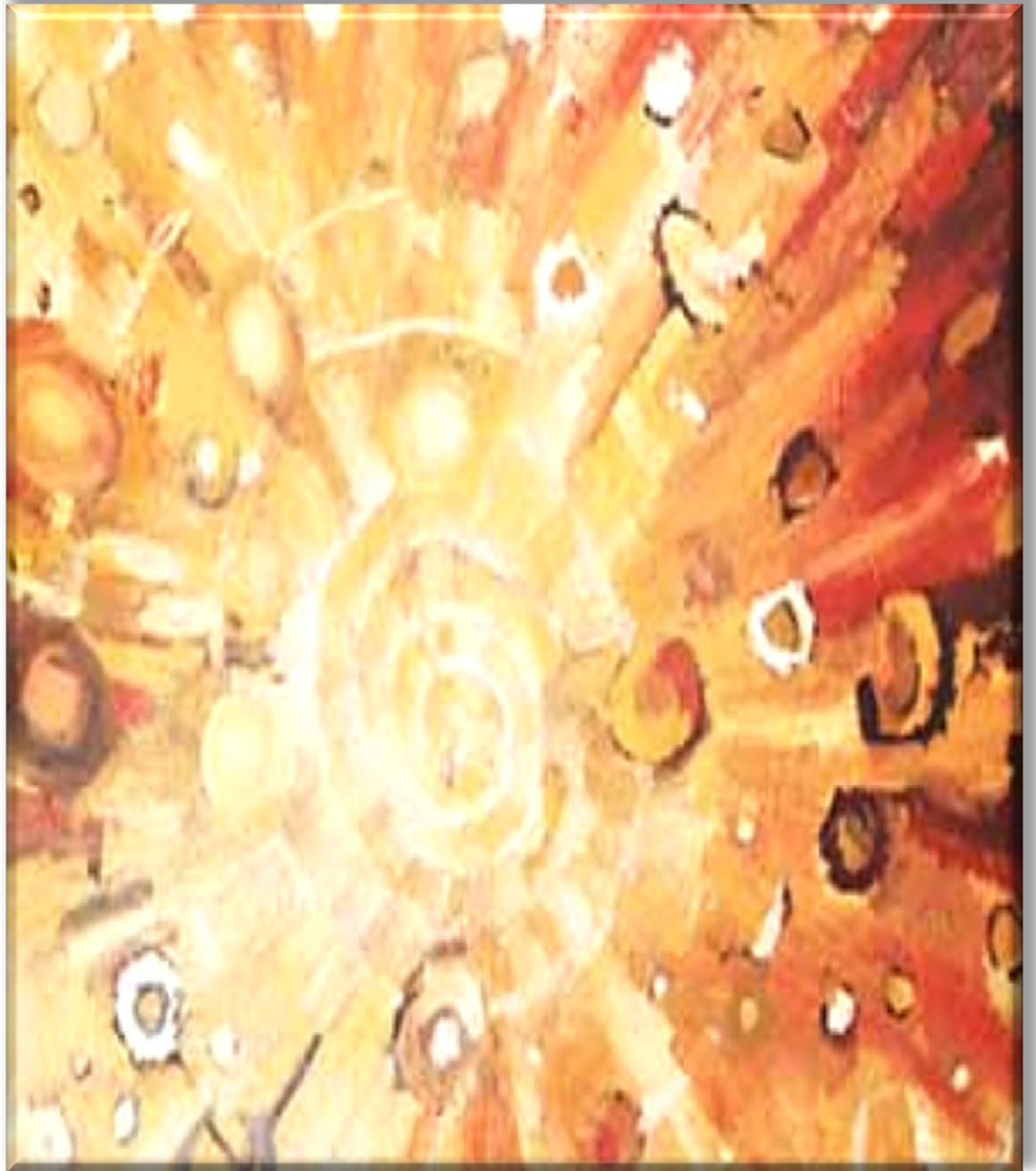


**Fig: 8**

**Title:** Seeing Beyond

**Descriptive storyline:** Imagination offers a way to seek beyond what is known and obvious to the eye, it is a way of capturing spiritual internalised emotions that is reflective to deep cultural interpretations. Seeing beyond as a cultural expression is a form of knowing. Seeing beyond is witnessed within this artwork as a way to inform. For example, this painting illustrates the natural seasonal activity of sea urchins along the Hawkesbury River that inform us of when other animals and plants will come to Country and offer knowledge of the natural movement of tidal changes within the salt waters.





**Fig: 9**

**Title:** Knowing, circular processes

**Descriptive storyline:** Seeking knowledge from a Dharug perspective is through a holistic lens where circular form represents considerations of all things.

## **Ignorance, dismissal or disinterest within Knowing**

Ways of knowing within traditional creative healing have been largely ignored by many Western healing practitioners (Bilawski, 1991) including responsiveness to spirituality and cultural bindings. Tisdell (2003) declares this is due to the lack of acceptance of logical rationale within Western scientific theories of logic. Disinterest is more likely associated with difficulties understanding holistic viewpoints of conscious and unconscious realities due to entrenched or prejudged life attitudes. The other barrier lies within Western scientific practice itself, where plausible evidence is acknowledge typically through measurable indicators. Aboriginal cultural values and spiritualism will continue to be placed on the outer parameters of western sciences until practice recognises that not all explorations fit into a defined space.

As Western sciences remain entrenched in quantitative practice, Aboriginal knowledge will remain on the margins as cultural philosophies are limitless as argued by Mohawk scholar, Brant-Castellano (2000), who states that traditional knowledge is 'derived from multiple sources, including traditional teachings,' (p. 23) that are 'understood to be spiritual in origin' (p. 24). Aboriginal scholar Moreton-Robinson (2004) states that Aboriginal knowledge incorporate dreams, visions and intuitive processes which are immeasurable due to the multifaceted nature of knowing.

Considering that many theorists see spiritual guidance as a perceived subject matter (Bastien, 2005) or intuitive experiences as being direct knowledge Braud and Anderson (1998) and creative expression, alternative states of consciousness and meditation as being directions from a spiritual dimension (Irving and Williams 2001), alternative viewpoints other than Western notions exist.

## **Theory as practice**

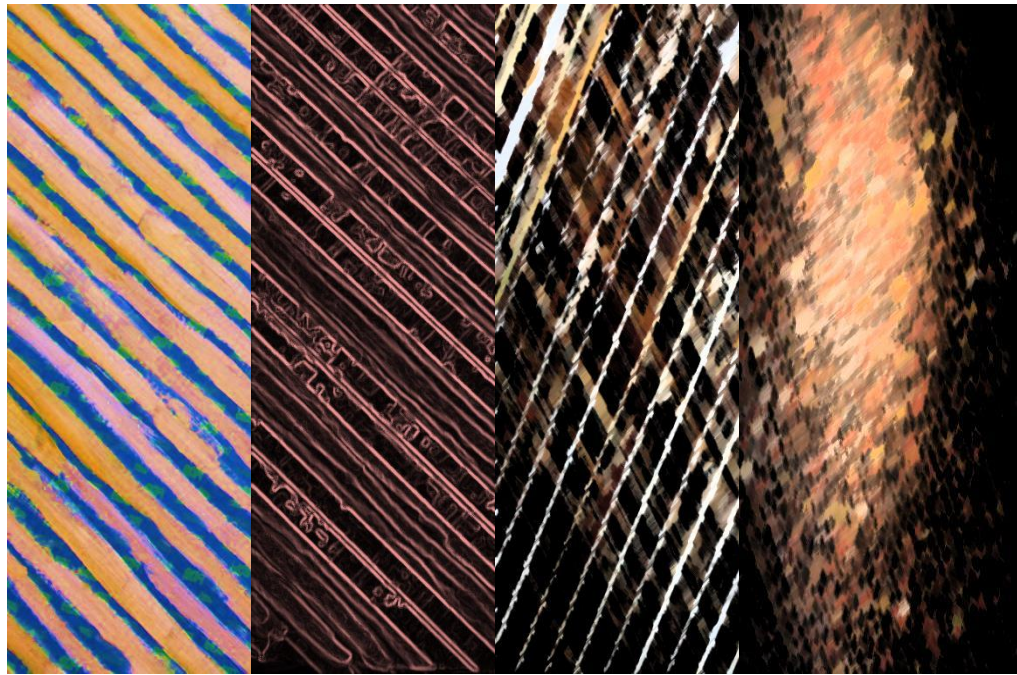
In acknowledging Dharug cultural theories of visual knowledge, this dissertation is structured as a culmination of life's work as a practicing artist within a psychological and cultural framework. To elaborate further, art making offers greater insight to cultural knowledges where written text is not necessary. Bangawarra, in making is argued to offer greater holistic perspectives within inquiring forms of knowledge. Therefore making is a form of culturally appropriate research that investigates, validates and honours past life experiences, interpreted through exchange and reflection (Scrivener 2000). Interpretation of multiple approaches to illustrate knowledge enhances observation and intuitive skills that encourages self-awareness of the connections between external logic thoughts and internal emotional feelings.

Creativity is an integral practice within Dharug expressions of language and offers a bridge between self and the collective (Hocoy, 2007). Within this dissertation, the core values and beliefs of Dharug healing practices of Dharug communal knowledges are incorporated through narrative verse and visual form as expressions of experimental practice and known knowledges. As image making and narrative storytelling are intricate parts of ritual healing (Pole, 2000) this dissertation uses both traditional concepts and evolving new knowledges within these investigations.

Dharug Theories of creative practice within healing is a spiritual transference from the Traditional Healer to the patient through the interplay of guidance and emotional reactions. Importance is placed on internal dialogues, guided through spiritual reasonings rather than external communications.

Interestingly, contemporary thought within Bangawarra Naa (making and seeing) remains acknowledged as an important processes. Similar theories are noted by Butler–Kisber, (2002) who states that the transference from the Maker to the Viewer serves to communicate (multiple emotional reactions of deep spiritual expressions that go ‘beyond words’ (p. 24). Rhyne, (1973) also acknowledges that internal dialogues capture nonverbal sensory experiences, with Baklien (2000) affirming making and seeing improves both physical and psychological well-being, acting as a catalyst for change (Matarasso, 1997).

In articulating the deep sensory interplay of spiritual transference within traditional Dharug creative healing practices there is a need to outline from the four theoretical concepts of making and seeing. These principles consist of internal dialogues based on the interplay of imagination (deep seeing), intuition (deep feeling), cultural knowledges (belief within lores and rituals) and spiritual guidance.



**Imagination**

**Interplay**

**Intuition**

**Connections**

**Cultural**

**Knowing**

**Spiritual**

**Guidance**

**Fig: 10**

**Title:** Gadang, four principles of connectivity within healing

**Descriptive storyline:** The process of imaginative interplay allows for the freedom to explore; intuitive feelings connect sensory humanism to the environment; cultural knowledges hold value and purpose to life; spiritual guidance is a way of listening to life journeys. When all four elements are considered a life is surrounded by fulfilment.





**Fig: 11**

**Title:** Gadang, the unity of the four concepts of practice

**Descriptive storyline:** Gadang (goodness, completeness) is where all concepts of understanding come together and the picture is formed. All things come together and form an image of completeness.

## **Research, an experimental process of knowing**

Aboriginal ways of making within a research framework employs a holistic gadang (see figs: 10 and 11) approach that holds value to traditional knowledge and seeks a greater understanding to self-discovery. Scrivener (2000) affirms that there is value in contributions of a creative making which reflects qualities of imagination as such knowledge provides insight as a form of 'embodied thinking' (Levine, 1997 p.41) based on reflective truths. Levine also articulates that imagination has the capacity to derive creative ways of seeing (Levine, 1997) that are consistent to Dharug practice as imagination yields deeper levels of cognitive thought though expressed mediums.

Dharug creative practices offer multiple nuances within imagination and intuitive relationships, where spiritual space is entwined within cultural place. Interestingly, Henri (1923) highlights the lack imagination and intuitive thought within contemporary artistic expression by stating that 'it is only a rare few who are able to continue in the experience and find expression for it' (p. 44-45). In presenting Dharug creativity, Henri exposes the cultural differences within making, by emphasising the lack of the four principles of gadang (imagination, intuition, cultural knowledge and spiritual guidance). In offering a Dharug perspective within making and seeing, imaginative processes offers embodied thought that provides deeper meaning (see Levine, 1997) that is reliant on intuitive guidance through experimental action. Imagination offers a pathway to alternative perspectives deep within self through cultural verifications. Slattery, (2001) acknowledges such theories by stating that imagination allows for new viewpoints, whilst Grey (1998) postulates that visionary thinking within creativity is a spiritual awakening.

Another cultural variance offered within this dissertation extends to processes within imaginary and intuitive emotional connections as a form of inquiry. As a practicing artist within a psychological framework, creativity presents a form of inquiry that is guided and influenced by ancestral connections associated within our creation period, Dreamings. Visual validations of knowing therefore include psychic connections of conscious and unconscious thoughts stimulated by sensory energies where place, space, ritual and practice are fundamental to life experiences. Such inquiries define creativity as beneficial to mind, body and spirit through the recognition of intuitive thought processes, (Farrington and Martin, 1987) based on past experiences.

### **Validations of expressed knowledge**

Whilst most Indigenous academe appreciate visual form of expression as ways of interpreting data there remains challenges within a Western perspective that creative processes lack refined statistical informations and conclusive results. Yet, in keeping this dissertation consistent with Aboriginal epistemologies, I argue that this research is intended to relay multiple truths and responses of cultural knowledges rather than a singular pathway of exploratory findings. In order to present Aboriginal visual knowledge, a system of processes offers a responsive and culturally sensitive approach in defining knowledge content. It is argued that visual explorations, along with research based examinations, illustrates and captures multiple investigations; go beyond the parameters of stereotypical inquiries in offering multiple understandings to a larger audience.



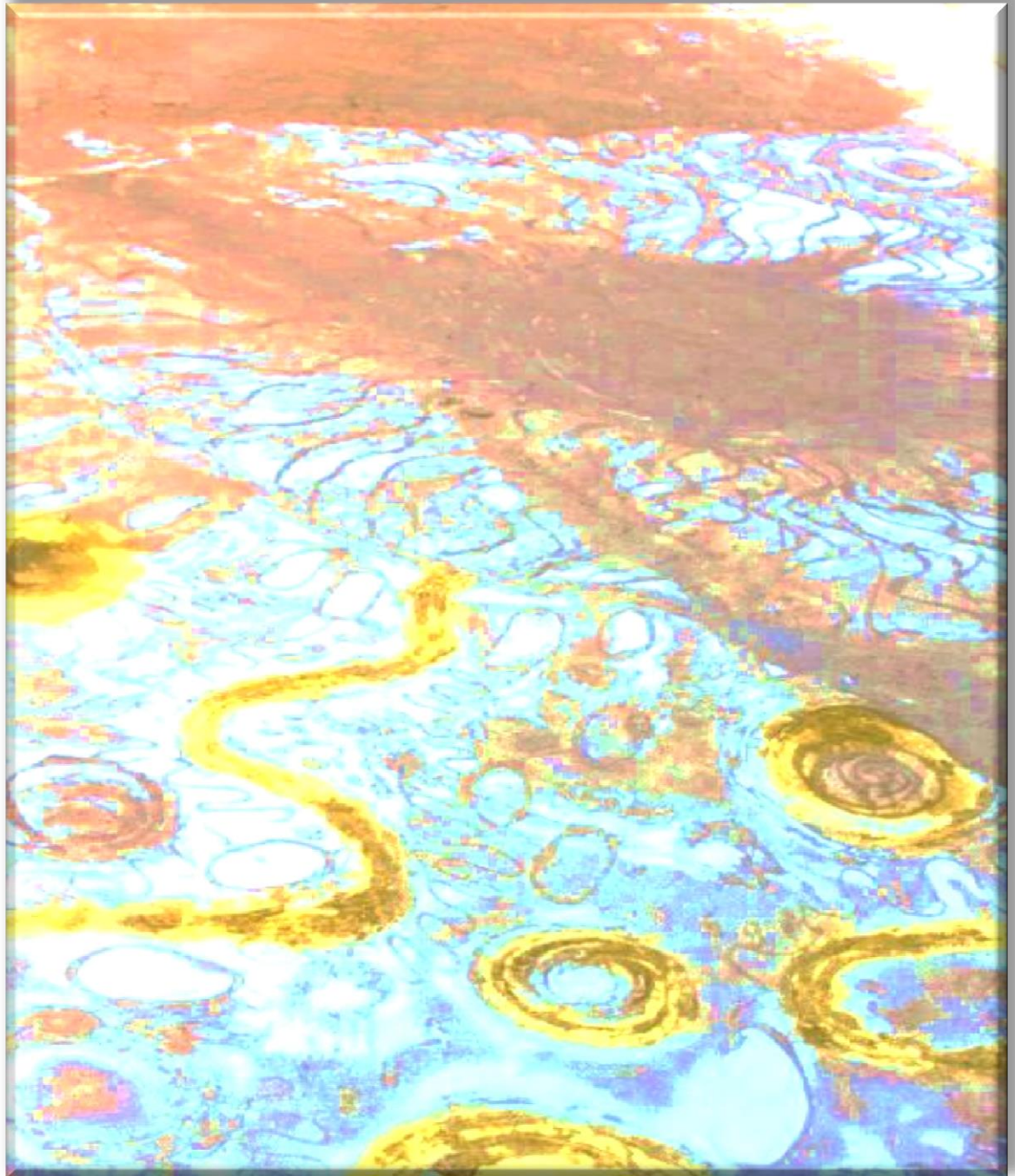
To further elaborate, creative form is a culturally explicit process of learning where the Maker (artist) explores and investigates through self-challenging inquiries, whilst the observer (seeing) examines, scrutinises and probes for answers. Visual informations therefore offer a culmination of greater insight and validate traditional processes within information exchange. From a cultural standpoint, visual exchanges are fundamental to learning processes as it is interactive, responsive and self-empowering in gaining cognitive and emotional insight. Henri (1984) also affirms the importance of visual exchange as being a psychological, social, and spiritual interaction as a means of concrete informations. Similar notions are also articulated by Hervey (2000) who states that ‘the purpose of an artistic inquiry is not to create the findings, but to create a form that is able to reveal and express the essential qualities of the findings’ (Hervey, p.71). Hence to illustrate cultural creativity within a psychological framework it is necessary to implement multiple continuations that go beyond the parameters of standard practice.

### **Visual informations of insight**

Creativity as an experimental, action based inquiry also offers holistic viewpoints of cultural experiences (Gill, 2001). As an action based research process supports research junctures as creative methodologies provide a means of exploring, expressing and illustrating knowledge. Depth to meaning within creative form is emphasised as nonlinear limitless space that bases knowledge in timelessness consistent to Dharug Dreaming.

Multi layered visual inquiries also provide deep spiritual insight into cultural knowledges and philosophical practice through sensory influences. From a Dharug perspective, the sensory system within creativity is considered a valuable source of enlightenment in seeking connections of feelings to self, others and the environment. Visual processes are also a way of projecting Aboriginal knowledges as a means to express, educate and ensure ongoing generational beliefs; a cognitive dialect of subjective reflection and participation.

Multi-layered imagery within Dharug healing has been used since time began and offers an insight as to who knowledge is acquired. Within creative making, imagery is an expression of known informations where visual details of form, function as comprehensive wisdoms. To illustrate this concept further, first layers of visual expressions often contain the deepest knowledges, the eruditions of cultural sophistication.



**Fig: 11**

**Title:** Expressing Knowing through creative multi layered form

**Descriptive storyline:** First surface application for multi layered creativity. Knowledge lies beneath.

The initial layer of sand or earth manipulations within Dharug healing processes, contain the fundamental rudiments of both knowledge and spiritual connections. Initial foundations within first layering is performed by the Traditional Healer, using the four principles of healing practice - imagination, intuition, cultural knowing and spiritual guidance.

### **Visual processes of space and place.**

Creativity evokes emotional reactions and responses in multiple ways. Engaging in visual form allows for an indirect interchange of multiple cross examinations in relatedness to space and place. Intellectual space is created through narrative storyline, multilayered approaches and abstract conjecture. Imaginative space is offered through illusionary processes that contain hidden messages, providing a higher order of observation. Yet observation alone does not fulfil *gadang* and thus there is a need to consider not only space but cultural place. It is this process that provides a more meaningful experience and deeper connection within the relationship to space and place.

From a Dharug perspective, evidence is expressed through analytical written data of space and supported by indirect visually emotionally guided practice within place. Spiritual space and cultural place is an overriding principal within enunciating knowledge within this dissertation where creativity is framed within narrative and observational experiences. Henri (1984) expresses space as the ability 'to see beyond the usual' and 'reach then into reality' and recognises place as an expression of 'greatest wisdom' (p. 44-45). Dharug theories relating to space and place are a holistic concept of nonlinear reasonings, where logical realism holds little value within making and seeing.

This is in direct contrast to Western philosophies that basis knowledge on linear scientific viewpoints (Tisdell, 2003), rather than spiritual interpretations related to space and place.

Interpretations concerning space and place are illustrated through visual form through multilayered approaches based on knowledges and messages within structural form. The initial surface layer within making utilises healing principles of imagination, as a way to self- connect with spiritual guidance. Loose forms of imagery in initials stages offer a way of internally connecting to self, whilst the freedom to explore offers a connection to unite with external energies.

Therefore the artist actually goes through a process of self-discovery and self-investigation prior to imagery being established as a recognised form. Markings, spaces and style are often performed in a rhythmical motion as a way of connecting to spiritual guidance. Once spiritual guidance is established, form and function of cultural intent become clear.

The following figures illustrate process within making illustrate this concept of establishing a connection to spiritual space and cultural context. Throughout the processes, imagination and intuition are constantly engaged I order to develop the storyline.





**Fig: 12**

**Title:** Process in Making - stage 1

**Descriptive storyline:** Process in Making – Seeing through observing.

Rhythmical lines and spaces allow for a means of connecting to the spiritual world, where messages of directions are sent to inform, enlighten and build a sense of place of narrative meaning.





**Fig: 13**

**Title:** Process in Making Stage 2

**Descriptive storyline:** Process in Making – Seeing, through feeling. Imaginative thoughts and intuitive feelings create a sense of intent in establishing narrative form and cultural context.





**Fig:** 15

**Title:** Process in Making Stage 3 Dilly Bags

**Descriptive storyline:** Utilising imagination and intuitive skills in metaphoric visual content offers deep insight into knowing.



**Title:** Dilly Bags

**Descriptive Storyline:** Seeing beyond, thinking beyond. This story involves the metaphoric use of object as a way of illustrating moral teachings. The dilly bag on the right hand side is structurally strong within its foundations, whilst the dilly bag on the left has feeble foundations. You will note that the left hand side dilly bag is purposely warped in perspective, emphasising a sense of weakness and instability. This is accentuated by the top of the bag not growing as tall as the other and being too top heavy.

The story line behind this image discusses culture, through the use of a recognised common Aboriginal concept (the dilly bag). Once studied there is more to the observer than what simply is portrayed through a quick inspection. The storyline then discusses how many Aboriginal nations build organisations often too quickly, with lack of strong visionary leaders who have the communities' interest at heart.

Many Aboriginal Nations experience fractural confrontations within the roots of organisations, with leaders often being of the same family group that results in community disharmonies. It is these organisations that often crumble as they are not built on holistic traditional frameworks that consider everyone as having the same importance.

## **Challenges within creative forms of research**

Creativity within research from a Dharug framework offers considerable challenges from a cultural perspective. For example, sacred imagery needs to be regarded and respected rather than exposed as public knowledge. Developing visual form therefore needs additional considerations within keeping issues of sacredness disclosed, yet offering knowledges that outline the importance of cultural understandings in seeking to renew traditional practices within a contemporary framework. Therefore rather than attempting an 'arts based' accepted western methodology, this research incorporates complex visual and narrative knowledges that reflect psychological reasonings to produce a range of cultural based theories. In justifying the need to amalgamate Aboriginal knowledges within western methods, the intent of this dissertation to unlock ignored cultural knowledges as a way to unify cultural practices.

It is within this dissertation that sacred generational obligations within sacred knowledges overrides personal perusals are therefore withheld. However the importance in offering Aboriginal ethicist cultural and spiritual understandings is argued as being of relevance in addressing the state of crisis experienced by many Aboriginal people and communities that result in certain informative knowledges being bared. It is my intent by disclosing some cultural and spiritual philosophies that, appreciations of understandings will increase, racial prejudices will decline and Dharug theories that address healing will be included as proved of knowledge.

Another challenge within this dissertation is seeking appropriate ways of researching cultural and social traditional trans-generational knowledges that are responsive to lived spiritual responsive experiences.

Such knowledges are often rebuked within a western discourse as spirituality is immeasurable. Yet spirituality is a fundamental part of Aboriginal social life and requires great consideration to effectively illustrate traditional Dharug healing practices. Lived experiences are argued by Rigney, (2006) as action based research that gives credence to cultural reflections of making and seeing. Reason (1994; 328) also places value on 'lived experiences', by stating the importance of knowledge within verbal and visual form, imperative to expressing cultural validations.

### **Methodological approaches**

The methodology used within this research is based on many direct and indirect influences consistent with Aboriginal relate knowledges and practices. Such processes involve multi-layered inquiries that illustrate traditional intellectual philosophies of cultural meaning. Approaches used within this dissertation are informed and guided through associated trans-generational ancestral spiritual meanings that Bastien (2005) refers to as a way of gaining knowledge endorsed by alternative guidance.

According to Rigney (2006) an Aboriginal scholar, Indigenous research centres around cultural interpretations based on direct and indirect relationships. This is consistent to my own appreciations where the relationship between the Maker (doing) and the Observer (seeing) is of critical importance to Dharug perceptions of inquiries, as creativity is a way of perceiving social environments (Olsen, Lodwick, and Dunlap, 1992). For example, Dewey, 2005 states that "art communicates because ... communication is the process of creating participation, of making .... meaning (which) gives body and definiteness to the experience' (p. 253).

Within this research I argue that Aboriginal Dharug forms of creativity is not 'art' but a system of knowledges and processes related to sacredness of space and cultural place that have the ability to engage others in reconciliation approaches that are consistent with cultural validations in seeking restorative approaches to wellbeing. Considering the cultural sensitivities within Aboriginal philosophies within traditional healing practices, security is paramount.

### **Incorporating making as a process of greater understanding**

Whilst many Australians reflect an understanding of Aboriginal approaches to cultural inclusive practice, there is minimal understanding of how visual illustrations are a form of learning. For example, many visual forms contain metaphoric interpretations that interact through indirect cognitive processes within learning. The following illustration depicts such notions and illustrates how a greater form of knowledge within seeing (observation) requires a higher order of cognitive thought.



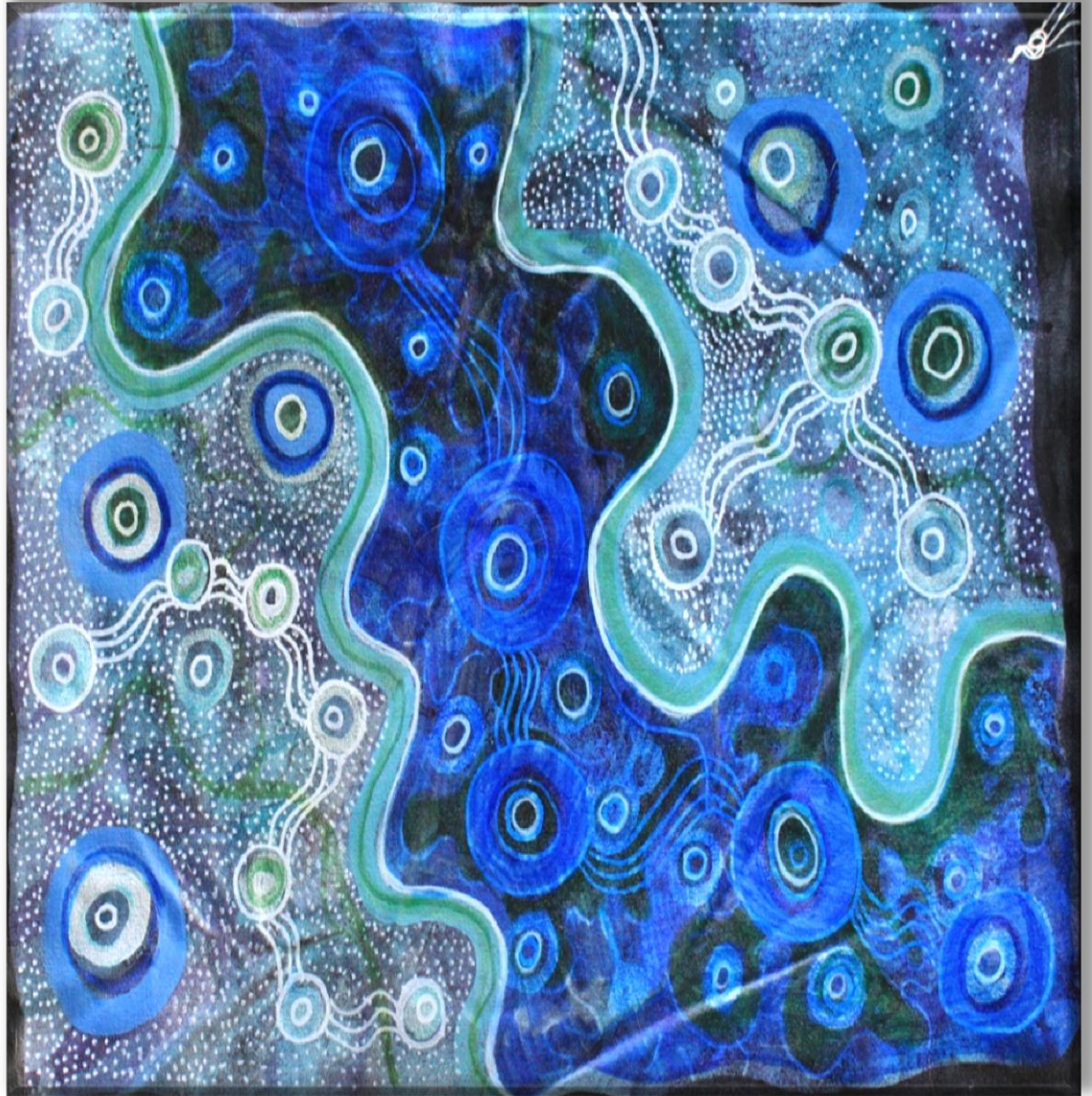
**Fig: 15**

**Title:** Ngar Ngar

**Descriptive storyline:** Ngar Ngar means mother, protection and safety. The use of metaphoric imagery extends cognitive thought and seeks to interact with the observer in multiple ways. It is through imagination, initiative feelings, cultural knowledges and spiritual connections that individual answers are formed.



Whilst metaphoric content provides deeper cognitive thought, multilayering offers additional meaning through illustrating knowledges of learnt experiences. Multilayering not only offers depth to visual qualities, it also highlights depth within understanding.



**Fig: 16**

**Title:** Multi-layering, Depth of Salt Water

In Chapter 2 traditional creative Aboriginal epistemologies are explored in conjunction with multilayered processes. Multilayered processes in traditional creative practices are experimental investigations of action based inquiries where knowledge is reflective to trans- generational experiences. Chapter 2 also deconstructs purpose to this dissertation with intent highlighted as a sense of openness within a public forum to raise awareness of the need to revitalise practice as a way of dealing with unresolved historical trauma, grief and loss that still remain imbedded within many individuals and communities today.





## Chapter 2

### Traditional Australian Aboriginal creative epistemologies

#### **Creative Aboriginal Epistemologies**

Aboriginal epistemologies involve transgenerational traditional processes (Kovach, 2005) that consider interconnectedness and a deep awareness between logical understandings and intuitive thoughts.

Creative knowledge is explored through spiritual guidance and is the main driving force of influencing visual interpretations. Bastien (2005) correctly acknowledges that some Indigenous researchers place recognitions to spiritual guidance as an acceptable process within validating traditional knowledges. Spiritual guidance involves felt experiences that include dreams, intuitive thought and imagination (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2000) which infiltrates and shapes this research framework in order to express cultural values and beliefs.

Creative multilayered process developed in this dissertation outlines traditional processes and inquires through experimental investigations. Research is based on action, reflection and generational knowledges within Aboriginal epistemologies as a means of exploring, capturing, supporting and validating evidence.



Methodologies in this dissertation reflect ways of making and seeing as a body of practice grounded within Dharug cultural philosophies. It is through ways of making (Bangawarrara) and seeing (Naa) that offer a complex exploration of deep insight into cultural knowledges. Ways of making are action based processes of socially experimental inquiries which Baumeister (1986) describes as a way to 'experience things in the 'true' relation to oneself' (p. 93).

Aboriginal creative epistemologies consist of trans-generational experiences, practices, processes and procedures that engage a realm of inquiries within traditional knowledges (Smith, 1999). Epistemological or ways of knowing based within creative visual frameworks are determined through communal life viewpoints. Posdinger (2004) refers to such methodologies as forms of sense making that recognises inter-generational knowledge as a harmonious co-existence.



**Fig: 17**

**Title:** Multilayered Knowledge

**Descriptive storyline:** Multilayering is a way of expressing knowledge that is viewed in stages, dependent on the level of knowledge held.





**Fig: 18**

**Title:** Multilayered perceptions – ways of seeing and interpreting

**Descriptive storyline:** Whilst Multilayering is the process of achieving knowledge, interpretations may vary. For instance strong imaginative connectivity's provides multiple readings, dependent on life experiences.



**Fig: 19**

**Title:** Seeing and interpreting different ways

**Descriptive storyline:** Interpretations may also vary through strong intuitive connectivity's, dependent on life experiences.

## **Ways of knowing within a creative framework**

The research topic 'Bangarrawa Naa' focuses on holistic approaches which include the relationships between the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual worlds as a process of achieving wellbeing. I argue that traditional Aboriginal forms of creativity within healing are entwined within spiritual and cultural knowledges which view well-being as a process. Ways of making hold core generational theories of creative approaches within healing whilst ways of seeing are entwined within extended observational connectivity.

Aboriginal creativity within healing includes human responses that involve intuitive and imaginative knowings embodied within practice. According to Reason and Marshal (2001) imagination is reliant upon reflective engagements of different archetypal patterns, whilst Scrivener (2000) states that creative making 'is inventive and imaginative' (p.18). Creativity within traditional Dharug healing practices places value on intuitive and imaginative inquiries as deeper forms of thinking through the use of metaphorical manipulations which adds perception and perspective (Jeffries, Hornsey, Sutton, Douglas, and Bain, 2012) to image making and seeing. Hence creativity expresses what verbal language may not be able to express.

Creative visual epistemological knowledge systems consist of 'cosmological truths' (Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo, 2001, p. 57), in seeking and analysing complex universal theories. Aboriginal visual knowledge as an inquiry reveals deep spiritual insight in ways that expand relationships to reveal unique understandings.

Cosmological knowledges include conscious processes driven by internalised unconscious psychic and sensory energies. This theory is central to healing practices where ritualised cyclic processes are adaptive to change.



## **Establishing the process of multilayered discourse**

Dharug creative epistemologies describe form and function associated within knowledge (Wilson, 2001) that holds value to philosophical practices. Making offers a culturally multi layered discourse within practicum and academic tradition. Multilayered discourse within creative epistemologies is knowledge associated through learnt processes based on practical experiences within an educational discipline (Barrett, 2004). Dharug knowledge is learnt from generational experiences that originate from ancestral wisdoms.

Within Dharug making, communal participation is a part of process rather than a sole artist working independently. It is believed that one maker does not provide multiple forms of knowledges and hence limits the capacity to view healing practices through a holistic framework. Healing practices therefore work within a community framework as each Knowledge Holder possesses the expertise and cultural skill. Hence whilst this dissertation primarily focuses on traditional creative healing it is void of the corpus of shared collective knowledge of equal harmony.

As Dharug Aboriginal knowledge is based on social relationships with all living things, research needs to consider 'structural meaning to ways of doing or making' (Wenger, 1998 p. 47) that employs collective significance.

It is the dynamics between visual and narrative pedagogies, based on responsiveness and cultural interpretations that implies shared consciousness.

Dharug creativity is the driving desire to express narrative viewpoints through visual observations as a process of articulating knowledge. It is within these realms that a sense of relatedness involves 'physical, spiritual, political, geographical, intellectual, emotional, social, historical, sensory, instinctual, intuitive' (Martin, 2003 p. 7) thought as a means of enunciating knowledge.

Therefore knowledge is built within a consciously extended network of known relationships expressed through an unconscious need to fulfil a sense of cultural identity.

### **Cultural interpretations of process making**

Dharug visual forms of expressions illustrated on rock walls are often misinterpreted as minimal considerations are placed on process within making. Traditional practice within making involves extensive processes where knowledge is sort to justify meaning. In reconstructing such theories within a contemporary realm, knowledge seeking remains paramount.





**Fig: 20**

**Title:** Dganu – ways of seeing through cultural interpretation

**Descriptive storyline:** Cultural validations within making are expressions of an ethos of values, ideas, attitudes and belief systems. It is making and viewing creativity that offers a unique insight into exploring, defining and analysing knowledge content. Within this painting culture is defined by place, articulated by bushlands represented within the top space of imagery. Rock formations are illustrated by the rich application of red ochre hues prevalent in Dharug Country. The central circle represents an acknowledgment of inter-relationships that is associated to space and place. Dganu is illustrated as a process of seeing and living in cultural knowledge that offers a sense of strength and identity.

Dharug epistemologies are based on exploratory observations of defined intentional sequenced understandings that reflect a sense of openness as a consideration to multiple viewpoints. Whilst openness within process appears to have no directive the intent lies within individualised problem solving in reaching answers.

Nondirective approaches in problem solving within creative form are not always obvious and require deeper cognitive skills based on self-discovery and self-analysis. For example, Dharug symbols may appear simplified in form but are actually complex in nature. Without underlying knowledge symbols and markings on rock walls appear childlike doodles with no apparent meaning.

The energies surrounding the stomach area (Oolгна) maintain wellness and hence direct health. Within symbol making, rod like shapes indicate the internal energies that supply a sense of wellbeing whilst the squiggly lines represent deep connectivity required to achieve wholeness. It is the use of symbols that provides knowledge to wellness and still has a place within cultural care today.

In illustrating cultural knowledges, basic symbols of form, function as complex realities that act as prompts within memory to inform the deep internalised connections in maintaining wellbeing.



**Fig: 21**

**Title:** Symbols hold knowledge

**Descriptive storyline:** Symbols engraved on rock and earth surfaces may appear unsophisticated and archaic, yet culturally relevant to others. Squiggles, lines and shapes hold complex knowledges and are represented in simplified form for easy memory recall. For example this illustration concerns the energies within the stomach area (Oolgna) that maintain wellness. The rod like shapes indicate the internal energies that supply a sense of wellbeing whilst the squiggly lines represent deep connectivity required to achieve wholeness.

Dharug philosophies, in ways of seeing awaken observers to new way of thinking, exploring and articulating fresh forms of knowledge (Eisner, 1995). New knowledge is suggested by Barrett (2004) as an emerging approach to qualitative research of cultural inclusion (King, 2008). For example, a culturally based exegesis offers a complex process of inquiry that challenges relativeness to traditional and contemporary knowledge.

I argued that challenges lie in seeking new knowledges while maintaining traditional cultural content. Challenges include the preservation of sacredness of traditional lore whilst highlighting contemporary comparative theories within creative healing. It is possible to maintain customary traditional perspectives and formulate new ways of seeing within a conventional society. This process is acknowledged within Dharug theories which base knowledge as an evolving process that is responsive to new thoughts, approaches and ideas.

## Purpose of dissertation

The rationale behind this dissertation is to expose complexities within traditional healing, which has never previously been documented before. The intent is to highlight traditional healing practices within a public forum to raise awareness of the need for revitalisation. Informing therefore is a way of preservation or as Bishop (*et al.*, 2006) correctly claims, a way to ensure continuity. My aim is to revitalise traditional Aboriginal healing practices to address the inequities of unresolved historical trauma, grief and loss that still remain imbedded within many individuals and communities today.

My research is also significant in acknowledging 'other ways' of healing practices that has deep cultural psychological beliefs within making and seeing. Considering the multiple documented evidence experienced since colonisation, Aboriginal people have continued to suffer through unaddressed culturally appropriate healing mechanisms that places self within a collective form to generate a sense of identity and belonging. Suffering includes not only the effects of injustices of Australia being claimed as a non-inhibited place but the lack of recognition to Aboriginal philosophies that placed consideration to cultural place and spiritual space of this Country. This dissertation incorporates the significance of place and space as cultural and spiritual fulfilment to wellbeing.

Within chapter 3 making and seeing within Dharug visualised content refers to repetitious rhythmical ritualised form generated by multilayered modes of inquiries, embedded within knowledge. Multilayering is an expression of knowledges presented through visual dialogue that encompass experimental practicums within creativity.





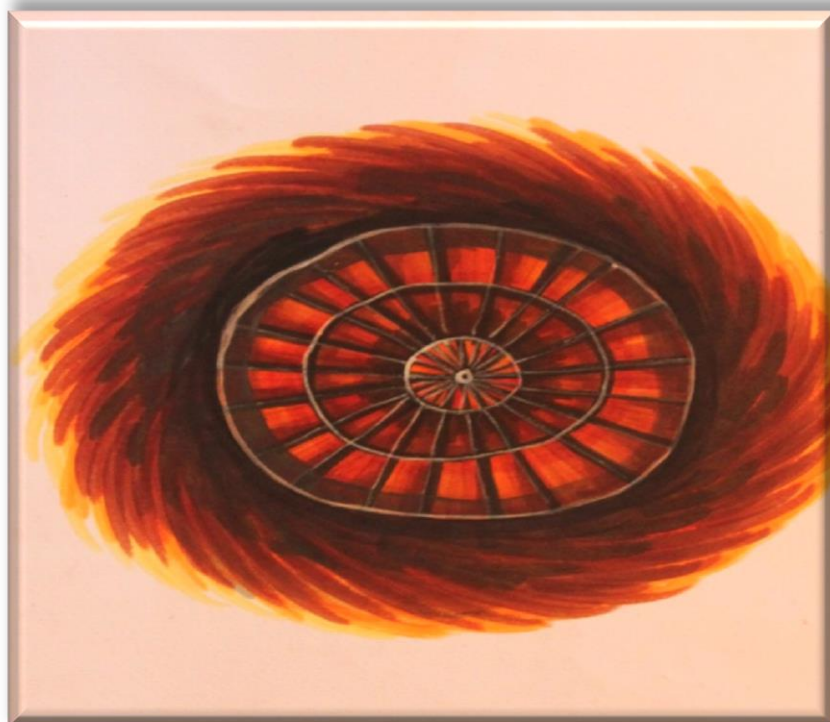
## **Chapter 3**

### **Ways of Making and Seeing**

Making and seeing within a Dharug visualised content refers to repetitious rhythmical ritualised form that generates expressive types of voice.

The term symbol is used extensively within this dissertation rather than under other categorisations. For example, the word 'motif' devalues Dharug markings as it relates to decorative image making from an aesthetical western design framework. Decorative designs do not indicate forms of creative knowledge of spiritual reflection bound within customary lore.

Traditional symbols contain distinctive patterning obtained through ritual processes of ancestral instructions to produce meaning. Meaning also relates to the complexities within interpreting symbols that are often represented metaphoric processes. This makes meaning of interpretations more challenging to solve.

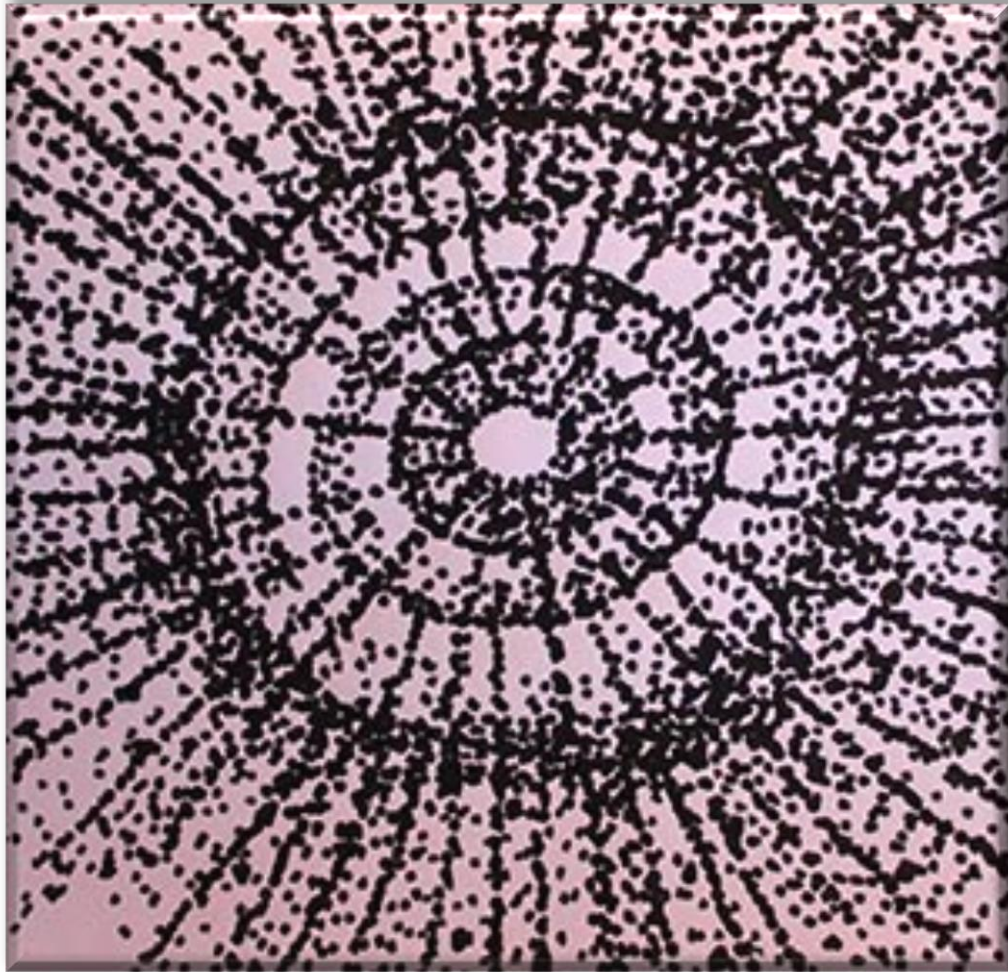


**Fig: 22**

**Title:** Symbol interpretations

**Descriptive Storyline:** Symbols bring individual meaning where interpretations are based on knowledges and experiences known. Therefore seeing is individualised and influenced by life experiences.





**Fig: 23**

**Title:** Symbol interpretation of ritualised knowledge.

**Descriptive Storyline:** Making and seeing within a Dharug visualised content refers to repetitious rhythmical ritualised form that generates expressive voice. It is through repetitious ritualism of cyclic representation that illustrates deep cultural connections.

The circle in the centre represents place, the second circle represents space and the outer circle all living things.

Radiating lines illustrate how these relationships are linked and entwined through totemism lores.



Cultural lores often influence visual making, ritualised symbols that links the internal spiritualism within the external environments. Within ritual practice spiritual guidance is a process to achieve the connection between the internal and external worlds.

Divergence across practices and processes used by traditional healers is well recognised. For instance Smith (1997) states that 'most of what takes place in shamanic ritual is effective without much of it being consciously understood' (p. 30). Whilst Smith makes analogies within ritual practice, Dharug philosophies of traditional healing practices are considered organised and regulated through conscious reasonings.

From a creative standpoint sense making is acquired through the conscious deliberate use of multi layered approaches where knowledge is embedded in staged sequences. Multilayering visual knowledges offers inimitability to traditional practices as ritualised making is a system of processes that demonstrate cultural spiritualism.

### **Creativity healing ground images**

Traditional non-permanent creative manipulations are often termed 'sand paintings' that are used within ceremonial practice. From a Dharug standpoint, earth making would be a more appropriate description as it serves to honour the spiritual and relationship connections of the land. These creative preparations contain many symbols, each having their own meaning and purpose. In other words, these symbols function as messages of cultural content.

Within a Dharug content symbols are also psychological processes to enhance wellbeing and void of individualised freedom.

Such processes are complex. Manipulations of ground creativities are applied through the fingers and other various natural objects to achieve form and content. Sandner (1979) also believes the purpose of creative ceremonies is to connect participants with known identified symbolic imagery to create a more positive state of health and wholeness.

Symbols act to draw out unhealthy ailments both of a physical and internal nature. Once absorbed, then the imagery is wiped away to protect the knowledge that has been conveyed and to eliminate badness. The purposeful destruction of such intricate designs holds no further purpose or value and are often discarded or removed to a remote sacred place (Underbill, 1920).

The reasoning behind this practice is the belief that absorbed symbols will not affect others. Safeguarding creative practices are of high importance as knowledge is sacred. Non-Indigenous peoples may be excluded due to misunderstandings and misrepresentations.



**Fig: 24**

**Title:** Dharug cultural Symbols

**Descriptive Storyline:** The Dharug healing symbol (larger concentric circle with men's and women's places.



**Fig: 25**

**Title:** Symbol of knowing

**Descriptive Storyline:** This illustration is an interpretation the Dharug symbol that represents community belonging. The hues are reflective of place within Country. The main lines are indicative of the river system where ceremony takes place. Large arc shapes are visual knowledges of people sitting that relates to community belonging, whilst small circles are suggestive of men and women's space.



Traditional Dharug healing practices focus on internalised disharmonies prior to physical address. Traditional healing is relationship based and considers all aspect of the environment illustrated by rhythmical circular visual form. Multilayering as a process involves experimental inquiries within creative knowledges.



**Fig: 26**

**Title:** Symbol of the sun

**Descriptive Storyline:** The sun is often illustrated in symbolic form within Dharug creativity. In this illustration the sun is associated to the earth and the above (stars). It is the relationship of all three spaces that places an importance of holistic knowing.



The next chapter outlines traditional processes and inquires through experimental creativity reflective of Aboriginal epistemologies. Discussions also surround historical viewpoints which are necessary in understanding the consequences of colonisation that remain embedded within the psyche of many Aboriginal peoples. These theories hold the essence of how many Aboriginal people view life, health and wellbeing. In this sense, they offer a key insight as to why many western health based programs have relatively little impact on connectivity to individuals and communities.

Chapter 4 also outlines the importance of relationships within healing as traditional practice considers shared conscious exchanges witnessed through external narrative reflections of internalised occurrences. It is through these forms of creativity that provide a link between the physical and spiritual worlds.





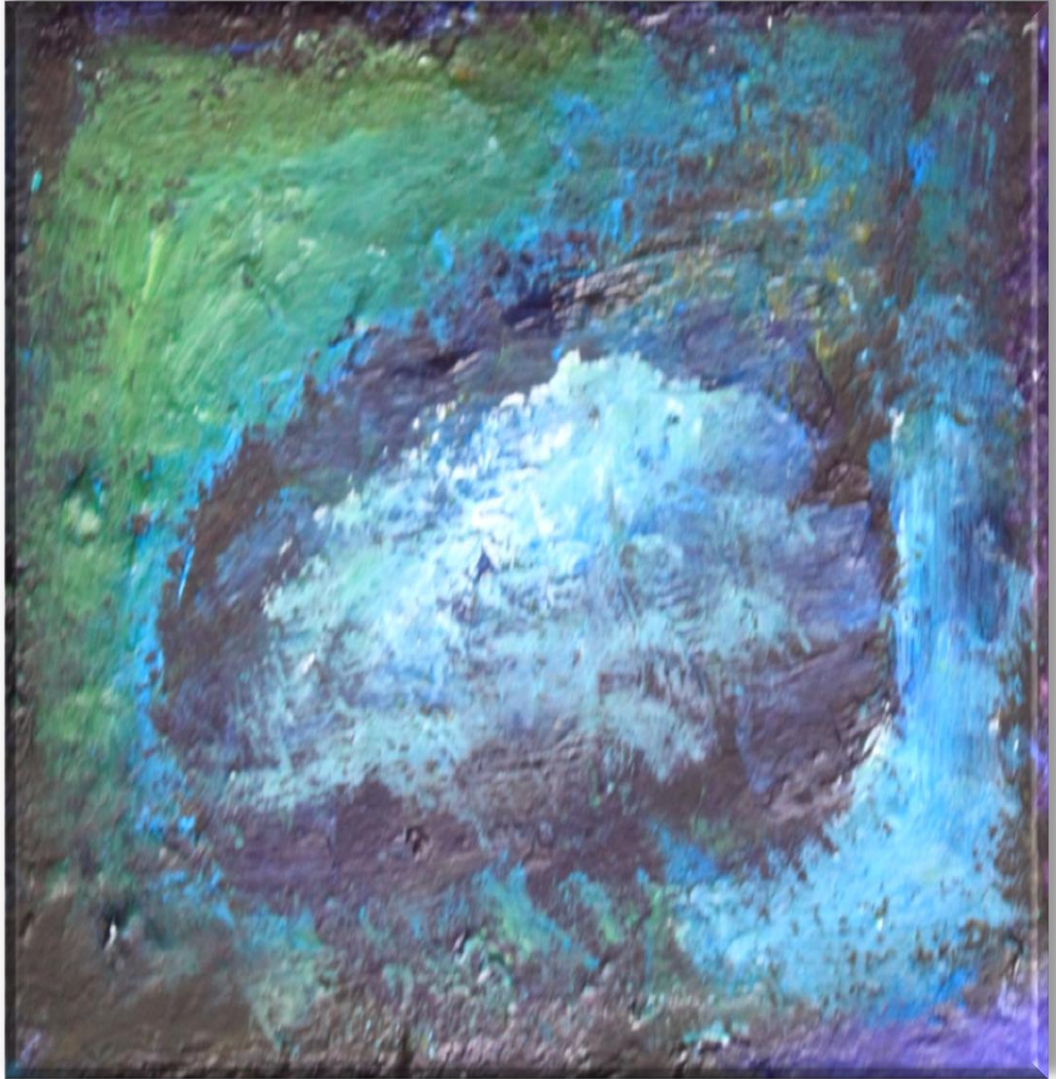
## Chapter 4

### Traditional Dharug creativity in healing

#### **Acknowledging Dharug traditional healing practices**

This chapter outlines the multiple processes involved within traditional Dharug healing practices and illustrates how this research places importance on contemporary practice. As holism is central to processes within healing, it is necessary to filter each holistic element to explore, investigate and demonstrate how creativity is a fundamental component within healing.

Dharug traditional healing practices focus on internalised disharmonies prior to physical consideration. Healing practice centres on relationships to all things that bases rhythmical energies to life processes. Relationship healing is based on shared conscious exchanges witnessed through external narrative reflections of internalised occurrences (see Young, 1976). In considering narrative exchanges, creativity offers a link between the physical and spiritual worlds. Aboriginal creativity acknowledges deep sensitivities, entrenched within cultural understandings to place and space. Hence sacredness and cultural sensitivities are central to Dharug healing. A similar understanding is illustrated by Csordas (2000) who states that healing and sacredness are also central elements of Navajo medicine.



**Fig: 27**

**Title:** The circle, a symbol of relationships

**Descriptive storyline:** The symbol of the circle is representational to the core of relationships that includes all living things. It is this concept that is often misunderstood but still remains of great value and strength in maintaining sound health and wellbeing.

## **Challenges within traditional healing practices**

Within this dissertation traditional Aboriginal healing practices have been argued to be discredited by western imperialistic science (Grieves, 2009). Western theories within health and healing are justified by physical considerations with little regard for internalised relationships or environmental influences. Western scepticism bases evidence through a scientific lens of acquirements through new discovers whilst Aboriginal knowledge is based on experimental trans-generational history, as knowledge originates from ancestral truths.

## **Reflecting on historical loss**

Scepticism and racial assumptions have a long history within Australia these stem in large parts from colonisation, influenced by Darwinism theories concerning evolution processes. The impact of such notions were witnessed by government and missionary colonists banishing traditional practices that resulted in generational loss of spiritual and cultural attachment. Aboriginal nations were prevented from seeking culturally healing mechanisms to address the deep loss and grief experienced from acts of genocide, loss of land and loss of ritualised grieving processes. For example acts of genocide created internalised trauma, leaving gaping trans-generational emotional wounds that remain today.

It has been argued that traditional healing practices have a 'placebo effect' as suggested by Nichter (1980), rather than being seen as forms of cultural sense making (Jadhav, 1993). In considering the placebo effect or a type of 'mind over matter', Dharug healing principles focus on self-guided and self-directed healing, hence the placebo theory is not validated as there are little controlled influences.

Placebo effects are based on the belief that the mind creates fallacies through belief systems, where Dharug knowledge is built on tried theories. In regards to cultural sense making this is consistent with collective inherited knowledges (see Comaroff, 1982).

Early western colonists and missionaries associated Aboriginal healing practices as shamanistic forms of primitivism, labelling complex processes as 'extremely crude' (Wilber, p. 75). Such misconceptions were based on flawed assumptions of cultural ignorance that remains prevalent today. For example, the term 'traditional' is only associated within the more remote northern parts of Australia with urban Aboriginal peoples remaining overlooked.

This fallacy continues to deny the place of many urban and regional Aboriginal people who are struggling with their own identities and cultural connections. Such notions are simply based on physical characteristics stemming from colonisation, where to admit the existence of lighter skin or physical appearances resembling European characteristics would have raised concerns on Terra Nullius claims. The parody lies within European social acceptance of physical and cultural differences within their own countries that has a much smaller geographical land mass than Australia. There is a direct acceptance within European nations of multiple cultural differences, yet there remains an assumption of stereotypical identification in labelling all Aboriginal people as having similar characteristics and behaviours.

With over 350 different Aboriginal nations having their own Dreamings, belief systems and customary lores, there is a direct need to recognise separate identities rather than classifying Aboriginal peoples under the one identity.



Aboriginal Nations are seen today as being categorised as having the same characteristics, belief systems and social structures. For example, Feeney (2009) outlines that Aboriginal healing practices are often viewed through a sense of 'stereotypical romanticism' based on the belief that Aboriginal people have the 'same values and needs' (p. 19). The sense of romanticism has infiltrated all aspects of Aboriginal life and continues to devalue thousands of years of practice of cultural knowledge. Mendes, Major, McCoy and Blaschovich, (2008) also argues that stereotypical assumptions ignore the importance of cultural reasonings.

### **The impact on loss of cultural identity**

Loss associated within cultural denials further highlights the need to renew traditional creative culturally sensitive activities in order to reclaim Aboriginal ethnicity. It can be argued that traditional healing still has a place in contemporary society as one means of restoring cultural identity.

Creativity in making and seeing has always played a role within Aboriginal nations as a part of daily life. Thus creativity is an entwined conventional expectation to daily living.

Powhatan, Art Therapist, Phoebe Dufrene (1990) states from a First Nation American viewpoint, 'healing does not separate art from religion' (p.127). Dufrene argues that creativity is interwoven in connectivity to everyday place and space.



**Fig: 28**

**Title:** Making and seeing

**Descriptive storyline:** Making and seeing does not separate space from place as all is entwined and connected.

Considering the similarities of trauma associated with historic colonisation, Dufrene makes a valid point by suggesting that there is value in art based activities as a healing process.

From an Australian Aboriginal perspective Atkinson (2002) also highlights the importance of traditional healing practices by emphasising the importance of community participation as to build strength, identity and purpose. It can therefore be argued that collective creativity offers solutions to healing past wounds.

Cultural knowledges and practices have been weakened through colonisation practices that continue to ignore and undermine Aboriginal concepts of health and wellbeing (Mendes, Major, McCoy and Blaschovich, (2008). Halloran (2004) also postulates that traditional practices have been 'weakened to the extent that they fail in their capacity to imbue individual existence with meaning and value' (p.4).

Whilst Halloran acknowledges traditional practices, he fails to comprehend that many healing customs still exist and have gone underground as a way of survival under scrutinising westernised dominance. By implying traditional practices fail in worth, value and meaning Halloran neglects to elucidate factual underlying causes concerning weakness of treatment processes that Aboriginal healing practices were never given an opportunity to be embedded within mainstream health systems.



**Fig: 29**

**Title:** Cultural Loss

**Descriptive storyline:** The forcible removal of Aboriginal children had a devastating impact on parents, communities and cultural knowledge transfer.



## **Dharug creative making as a form of diagnosing**

Traditional healing is defined by the Institute of Advanced Studies Traditional Knowledge Initiative (United Nations University, 2008) as knowledges and practices that incorporate transgenerational experiences based on individual and collective life understandings. Whilst this research is based on creativity as a component in traditional Dharug healing practices, other elements include medicinal plants, herbal treatments, massage and healing ceremonies. Within creativity visual manipulations are ways to seek restorations in health and wellbeing.

Aboriginal healing practices place importance on bodily senses in diagnosing illness. Western comprehensions of the human senses comprise of touching, smelling, tasting, hearing and seeing. However Dharug senses also include internalised intuitive feelings and imagination of expression. Within traditional practice all seven senses are utilised and play a role within identifying illnesses and worries. For example the use of smell is used to diagnose illness, disease and infection through secreta and excreta odours.

Interestingly some contemporary western medical schools have reinstated smell senses within practices as a diagnostic tool by introducing medical students to odours associated with disease by the 'scratch and sniff' card system (Whitefield and Stoddart, 1984). Other similar processes within natural forms of diagnosis include the sweet odour of acetone associated with diabetes and the aroma of freshly plucked chicken associated with the measles (Winter, 1976). Smell as a diagnostic tool has always been an important aspect within Dharug healing in both analysing and treating processes.



## **Traditional healing elements in creative practices**

The Northern Territory Department of Health's policies proclaim culturally appropriate health involves traditional medicine (Devanesen, 2000) such as plants and water based remedies (Clarke 2003). Salt water as a natural substance is known as a form of cleansing, applied for the treatment for emotional and social restorations. Salt water processes are considered to be vital for restoring energies to address physical complaints such as respiratory illnesses or improve skin conditions.

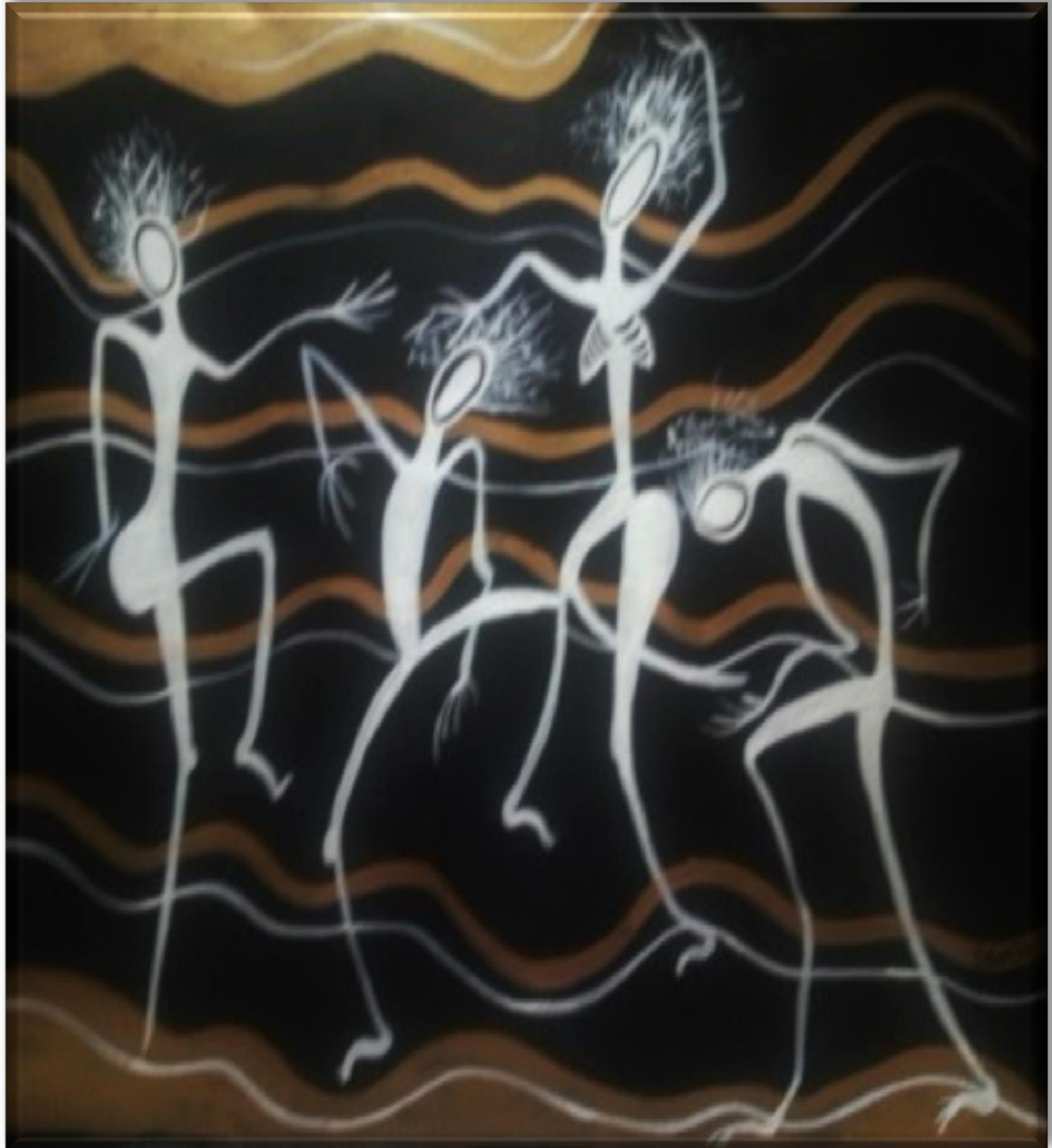
Many Aboriginal peoples hold value to organic salts as a form of ritualised cleansing, including some Maori Nations who place importance on water as a cleansing treatment after being in a sacred area (Parsons, 1985). Other natural elements such as smoke, stones or crystals are often used as tools in traditional Dharug healing practices (Cohen, 1998) as natural resources are considered a part of knowing (Kalweit, 1992) that direct treatment processes (Kleinman, 1980). Smoking for example is a part of ceremony and is used as a cleansing agent to redirect bad spirits, whilst certain crystals and ochres hold healing energies that are fundamental to health.

## **Spiritualism within cultural healing**

Spiritualism is an essential component within traditional Dharug creative healing practices. Sometimes perceived as superstitious mysticism by western societies, spiritual belonging offers a practical and realistic approach to deep individualised care. Whilst current literature offers an array of eagerness and enthusiasm within shamanism rituals of altered states, little has been recorded through an Indigenised standpoint.

Intuition and imagination are active components within traditional healing practices as valid forms of processes that connect the internal and external worlds.

Intuition has been used since time began as an internal alert system of unconscious reasoning but when activated, becomes a conscious signal within our nervous system. Imagination is the healing agent of all forms of self-expression (McNiff 1992) and creates a sense of inner inquiry through self-experimentation. Western viewpoints usually consider intuition with scepticism as they have lost touch or ignored such feelings believing gut reactions to be illogical with no scientific evidence. Imagination from a western viewpoint is seen as a form of dramatisation rather than an awakening of the unconscious mind. It is through the creation of ancestral symbols and repetitious imagery where psychological states of mind are achieved. Visual symbols therefore represent a transformative psychological effect that generates positive energies as a way to seek restorations in health and wellbeing. To clarify further, a study by Stuthers (1999) on Objwee female traditional healers, clarified that culturally inherited knowledges are central to healing with creativity in making processes having psychological, social and spiritual powers of transformation (Koss, 1980).



**Fig: 30**

**Title:** Celebrating Culture

**Descriptive storyline:** Creativity offers a way to celebrate and acknowledge culture. It is through the participation in visual making, dance performance and musical voice that builds a sense of belonging, Creative form is also a unique way of conveying cultural content.

Dharug 'alternative states' are a conscious acquirement of mind adjustment, enhanced by either natural plant usage or creative manipulations. This conscious desire involves the deep connections of bodily senses as a way to unite within internal energies with external forces. Seeking mind states is a felt expression that provides heightened awareness of sensory intuitive and imaginative processes. Whilst the use of high levelled nicotine based plants assist with personal spiritual journals it is creative form that creates the sense of illusion states.

### **Spiritualism in visual form**

Symbol making within a Dharug context refers to visual form that is representative to knowledge based on traditional ritualised customary lores (Edwards, 1998). Dharug symbols are permanently located within our environment on open rock surfaces, caves and makings on trees. Whilst some symbols are manmade others are believed to be made by ancestral beings. Most symbols are representative of story lines containing informations or knowings to sacredness.

Whitley (1998) correctly implies that imagery engraved or painted on Australian rock surfaces are forms of conscious narratives that Murray (1997) emphasises are a sense of insight. The use of symbols within Dharug healing processes act as guides for transformative processes where illness is transferred from the patient to the symbol as a way to restore health.

This process involves repetitive rhythmical visual form that acts as a sensation to the mind and body in connecting individuals to self and the environment.

The method also is more effective when the individual feels they are in control of their choices and decisions and have a sense of control over their own healing.

Symbols of cultural content connect to external and internal worlds through unconscious mind (Dow, 1986) and intuitive states. Symbols are therefore unique visual literacies that Dow terms 'semiotic' manipulations, which require a higher level of intellectual and imaginative effort. Lawlor (1991) reaffirms such notions as 'the image is the vehicle, for the body and presence, of the fertilising power of the Ancestors on earth' (p. 291) that contains deep sacred meanings (Effland, 2002).

As illustrated in fig: 32: empathy allows one to feel compassion for others and thus is a positive trait for wellbeing. It is the belief of empathy in spiritualism plays a role in physical health. For example, Noll (2004) states that internal spiritual sacredness is bound within the physical body, whilst Koss-Chioino (2006) emphasis empathetic relationships are built on a sense of empathy that is the core component to healing. Empathy is interpreted as a sense of community strength that builds fulfilment and insight to self, others and all living things.





**Fig: 31**

**Title:** Ways of seeing others

**Descriptive storyline:** Dharug spirituality concerns an empathy to others and all living things; a system of shared responses that build a sense of belonging.

The use of symbols within healing offers therapeutic benefit in restoring spiritual growth through visual communication (Creek, 2002). The use of symbols within Dharug healing is of deep ritualised cultural enactments based on creational Dreaming times, which is called Gunyalungalung.



**Fig: 32**

**Title:** [Gunyalungalung](#)

**Descriptive storyline:** Dharug Dreamings hold deep ritualised concepts that bases interpretations on repetitive rhythmical visual form as an enactment of sensory connections within the environment.

## **Ways of creativity within a physiological perspective**

Dharug psychological healing processes provide a bridge to self-insight and self-discovery through the creative interplay of ceremonial processes. Traditional ceremonial practices also reinforce a sense of emotional satisfaction associated with belonging (Dissanayake 2000) and such belonging gives strength, value and purpose to life. Ceremonial creativity is a psychotherapeutic process (Wadeson, 1980) that utilises cultural symbols in making that presents a social response (Laughlin et al, 1992).

Symbols provide a psychophysiological reaction (Laughlin et al., 1992) that creates transformative changes (Turner, 1968) that plays a vital role within healing. Jung (1961) through self-experimentation and patient interaction believed symbols are a natural language of unconscious reasonings that has the ability to convey emotional reaction often too complex for verbal responses. Jung's theories of creativity as a form of emotional voice, is not a new concept because traditional Dharug as a critical voice of analogical thinking practices have always considered creative making of symbols as an expression.





**Fig: 33**

**Title:** Spiral Dreaming

**Descriptive storyline:** Spirals moving in an anti-clockwise direction are representational of the rotating energy forces of the waters and universe. Interestingly this theory relates to contemporary understandings known as the Coriolis Effect. Clockwise spirals illustrate Mother Earth's womb

## **Creativity in addressing health**

Aboriginal health perceptions and practices differ amongst each community (Leininger and McFarland, 2002) but generally encompass a holistic framework surrounding balance of wellbeing through restorative processes (Avery, 1991). Balance includes harmony and wholeness within spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical relationships of all living things (Cohen, 1998). Optimal health involves self-wholeness within identity and a sense of control over life (Angus, 2002). From a Dharug standpoint, optimal health means internal balance of Oolгна, the central nerve centre of wellbeing.

Health also relates to ways of seeing, where symbols inform practical life processes to make wise choices. For example, decision making in situational circumstances contribute to wellbeing. Therefore making sound choices plays a key role in seeking healthy solutions. It is through adopting a balance between logical and emotional thoughts and actions that healthy decisions can be explored.

Creativity allows for knowledge within decision making to transform thoughts and ideas based on ancestral lores that offer reasonings to life. It is within making that symbols can relate informations that represent past, present and future knowledges and have the ability to deal with contemporary experiences.

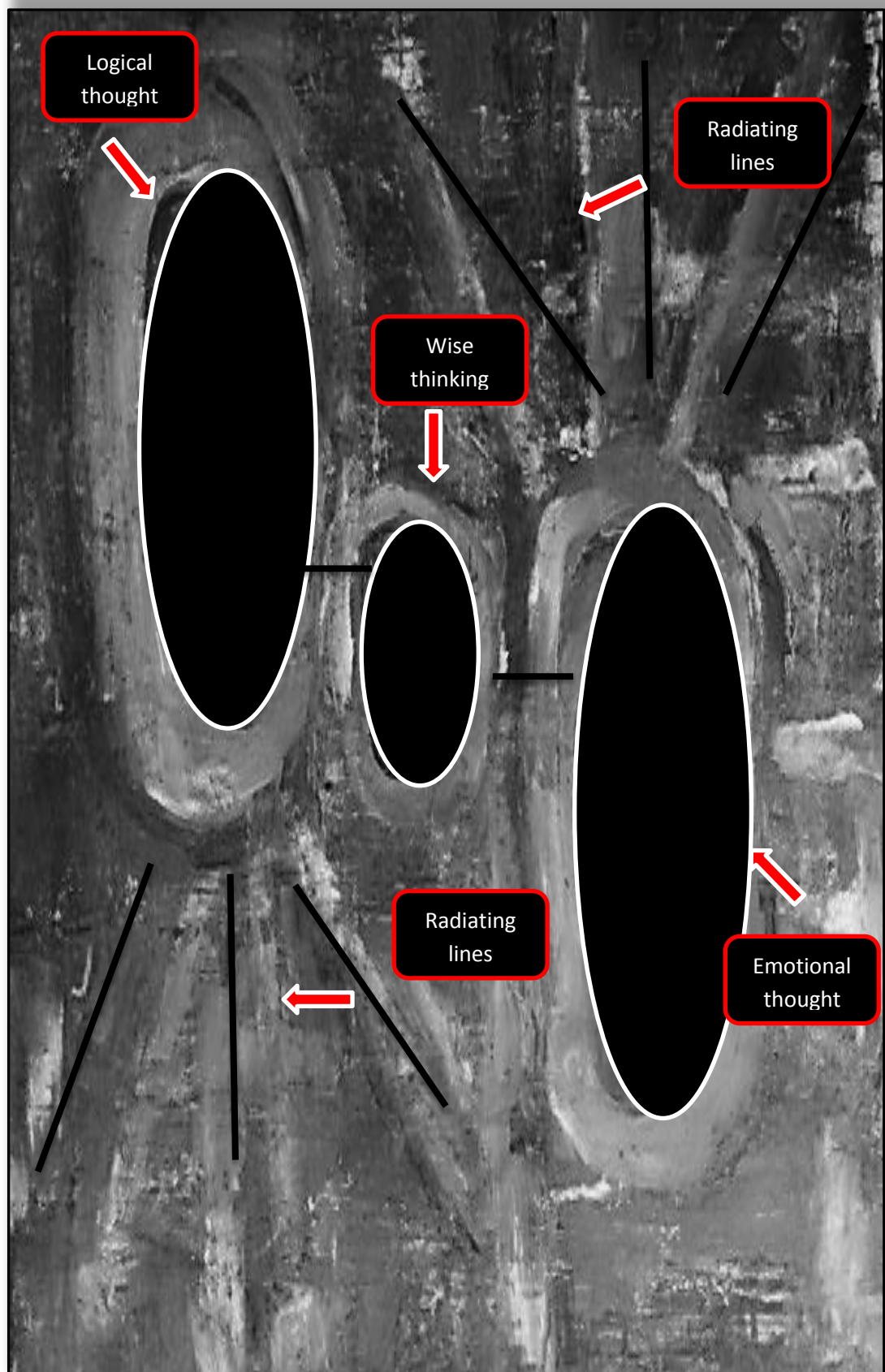




**Fig: 34**

**Title:** Learning symbols

**Descriptive storyline:** Learning to make healthy choices is paramount to wellbeing. Seeking a balance between logical and emotional reactions is important addressing situational circumstances.



**Fig: 35**

**Title:** Learning symbols

**Descriptive storyline:** These symbols discuss how we need a balanced process in decision making that consists of both logical and emotional thoughts. If we rely just on one thought pathway we do not see things in a wise manner. The radiating lines illustrate how when we use just one thought processes we drift in only one direction. However if we consider both forms of thoughts (emotional and logical), we make sound judgements and thus develop stronger and wiser decisions in life.

The concept of relationships also differs from western health practices. This is especially evident between the healer and patient (Hewson, 1998) as traditional healers do not distinguish between treatments of curing to caring. Traditional healers focus on relationships within a social and psychological context where illness is understood as equilibrium of relationships rather than as just isolated events (Deliman and Smolowe, 1982).

Illness is defined as an imbalance within self, others and the environment (Baines, 1993), can also be described as a sense of loss. The term loss is interpreted as an internal emptiness that Memmott (1982) describes as a cultural illness within spirit. Loss as an internal feeling within Oolгна has a negative impact that engulfs harmony from within. Research by Kirmayer, Simpson and Cargo (2003) provides evidence that links poor mental health to historical oppression within many Aboriginal Nations, which Westerman (2004) argues is increasing at alarmingly rates within communities. Conflicting health interpretations and misunderstandings with cultural health and wellbeing has only added to dysfunctional and inappropriate care. Liverpool (2004) for

example argues that structured contemporary healthcare in time allocations, limits the practitioner's ability to address spiritual aspects and cultural needs of their patients. Time limits also impact on the capacity to seek trusting relationships between practitioner and patient. Two way approaches are working within Aboriginal communities to addressing forms of health and healing. Two way medicine is a term used by Aboriginal health care workers to describe the bicultural approaches that considers both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal health concepts (Werner 1977). For example in East Arnhem Land on the Northern top of Australia, value is placed on the employment of traditional Healers who work with western health care professionals to address the health needs of community.

Traditional Healers are specifically employed to focus primarily on cultural and spiritual perspectives within health. Whilst traditional Healers within the Northern Territory are acknowledged as specialist within the health care industry (Wearne and Muller, 2009) other Australian states continue to have little regard or acknowledgment to two way practices. Within the state of New South Wales, which has one of the largest Aboriginal populations, cultural and spiritual care continues to leave a void in addressing internal healings.

### **The need to revitalise traditional Aboriginal healing practices**

Smith (2003) argues that the answer to improving the health and wellbeing of indigenous peoples includes the revitalisation of cultural practices. Cultural practices include the relationships between self, others, the land and the spirit world (Morphy, 1998) that focus on natural energies (Warber, Cornelio, Straughn and Kile, 2004) in restoring wellbeing.

Considering known past and present circumstances of many Aboriginal individuals and communities today who are still experiencing grief, loss and disconnection, augmenting restorations in traditional healing practices are valid.

Restoring traditional healing practices is a way to empower communities (see Mitchell and Maracle, 2005) in addressing internalised dysfunctions in a culturally safe environment. Reflecting on the high failure rates of government and non-government programs within Aboriginal Nations the lack of culturally appropriate meaning is central as is the absence of community consultation and employment of Aboriginal peoples within services.

There are few culturally sensitive creative therapeutic initiatives available for Aboriginal people to access. One possible reason may be the cultural differences relating to values placed on creative making and seeing. Western interpretations of making are interpreted as aesthetical pleasures that overshadow Aboriginal concepts of creativity as knowledge. Notably highly successful Art Centres in rural and remote areas of Australia have conveyed the importance of social interactions within making and seeing.

Indigenous art centres offer a community gathering space where social issues such as isolation are addressed through the provision of opportunities for interaction and a sense of belonging can be fulfilled. Baklien (2000) also confers that either participating or engaging in creative activity improves health and strengthens social bonds (Ball and Keating, 2002). Therefore creativity as a form of engagement holds value within health and wellbeing.



Considering the many fractional social problems within many Aboriginal clan groups, restoring relationships is an essential part to healing. Healthy relationships as a process of wellbeing is defined by Grieves (2009) as being consistent to 'all aspects of one's social and material environment' (p. 42). Rebuilding relationships through interactive social activities such as participation in Art centres, allows for the development of harmonious and respectful interactions. It is through interaction where cultural, spiritual and deep meaning within relationships also provides 'a sense of personal value' (Halloran 2004:3) that rebuilds self-esteem. Social and emotional fulfilment is therefore achieved through engaging activities that are consistent with and respectful of culture.

It is through making and seeing that social wellbeing is built which, in turn has positive impacts on health. The next chapter outlines how creativity within traditional Dharug healing has the capacity to address social, emotional, physical and spiritual imbalances as a means to restore cultural identity. Ways of making and seeing within creativity offer holistic psychological processes which facilitate personal growth and change through multiple processes of holism. Holistic interpretations are central to processes to explore, investigate and demonstrate creativity as a fundamental component within healing.



## **Chapter 5**

### **Holism as an expressive interpretation of Dharug philosophies**

The word 'holism' has been defined in various ways. From a Dharug standpoint, holistic analogies are suggested by Narayanasamy (1999) as inseparable, whilst Young and Koopsen (2005) refer to interconnection.

Hart (2002) argues that within holistic philosophies there is a reliance on relationships within personal and social context whilst Aboriginal scholar Noonuccal (1993) expressing holism as ways of knowing, being and doing rather than a sense of categorisation or segmentation. Holism also acknowledges the environment (Burkhardt and Nagai-Jacobson, 2002) as a philosophical notion relating to harmonious co-existence between nature, culture and society (Dei, 2000).



**Fig:** 36

**Title:** Holism

**Descriptive storyline:** Dharug holistic philosophies rely on personal and social relationships. A sense of balance relates to environmental factors that have been illustrated through the flora of idealism.

## **Holism within creativity**

Holism within creativity is conveyed through seeing and interpreting visual therapeutic process where sensory stimulation seeks to observe all things of both realism and imaginary landscapes. Holism is represented by the circle in Dharug practice to emphasis the spiritual, mental, emotional and physical healing.

Holism is based on cyclic interpretations that emphasise growth through experienced based knowledges. Holism inculcates all living things including the spiritual world as a way of seeing and defining belonging. Holism is based on cyclic interpretations that emphasise growth through experienced based knowledges. Dharug forms of holistic approaches inculcate all living things including the spiritual world as a way of seeing and defining belonging.

This process lies central to ways of knowing that is based on generational learning's. Holism through a creative process involves the use of the circle as an illustration of seeking and considering all things. Rather than seeing life experiences as a timeline of knowledge in lateral form, circular notions are influenced through universal concepts that place considerations of all aspects of wellbeing. It is this concept that sees health and wellbeing as a dynamic process in which considerations are placed on situational circumstances, individual relationships and internal feelings of reactive influences.





**Fig: 37**

**Title:** Holism as a way of knowing

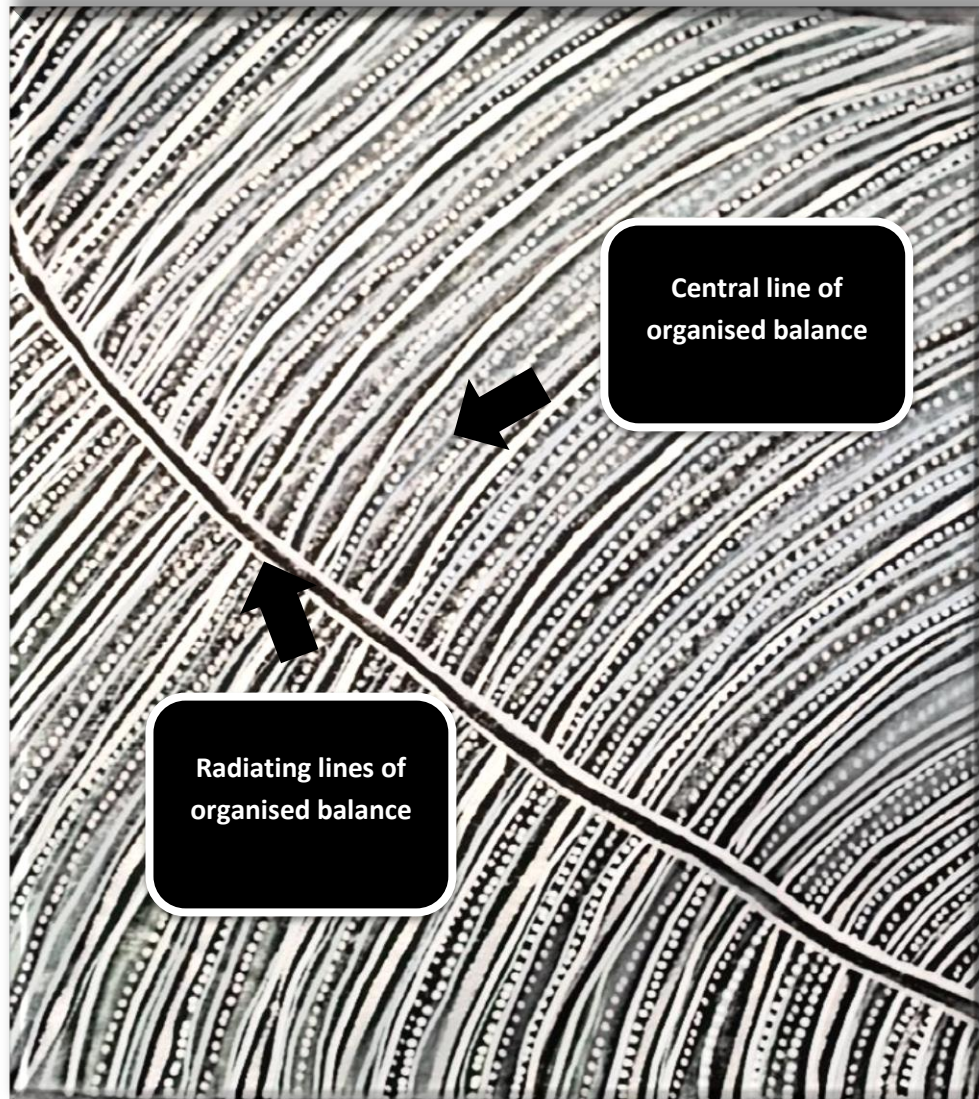
**Descriptive storyline:** Dharug holistic philosophies see holistic ways as interpretations of considering all things –entwined within the circle as a means of representing natural processes of knowing.



## **Holism within health and wellbeing perspectives**

Holistic health care has been practiced by Aboriginal peoples worldwide (Germov, 2005) and incorporates flexible comprehensive approaches in responding to human needs. Holistic health sees the whole individual from a multidimensional approach, in order to address the physical, spiritual and emotional aspects of being. Holistic approaches to health are essential to achieving positive life outcomes (Social Health Reference Group, 2004) through the combination of diverse treatment processes to effectively address healing needs. Such approaches often challenge Western health practitioners who separate physical and mental health and do not deal with the spiritual dimension.

Multi-complex forms of knowledge within healing are 'transferences of information from the outside world of nature to collective thought in terms of how holistic visual interpretations facilitate psychological content. I argued that through symbol making there can be an expression of deep spiritual connection to ancestral pasts as well as an illustration of cultural meaning. The transformative properties of symbols act as forms of realities within the subconscious where creativity and psychology are identified as connecting processes between cognitive states and emotional needs.



**Fig: 38**

**Title:** Balance and harmony

**Descriptive storyline:** Transformative properties of symbols act as forms of realities within the subconscious. It is this process that provides the ying and yang to knowing.

Chapter 6 outlines symbol making and seeing as being significant to achieve mediate states of harmonies through an intuitive insight. Sacredness in symbol making relates to the ontologies of physiological interpretations of spiritual meanings.

Dharug healing has its foundations within a psychological framework, inclusive to social, emotional and cultural elements of spiritual dimensions relating to deep affiliations within Creational times. Creative psychologies are instigated through holistic symbolic trans-generational knowledges that define healing as a restoration to balance and harmony from within.



## Chapter 6

### Traditional symbols of Knowledge

There are multi-simplicities involved within Dharug traditional healing practices that utilise both internal and external natural environments. Natural environments refer to all things living within the spiritual and existing worlds. In presenting multi-complexities of Dharug healing practices within symbol use.

I argue that forms of knowledge are transversal to space and place. Interestingly Yazzie (1999) refers also to knowledge as ‘transferences of information from the outside world of nature to the individual self’ (p.84). Whilst Yazzie provides an insight of healing knowledges, self within a Dharug concept is not a consideration as communal participation remains a priority. In elaborating further, self is considered only a piece of knowledge, requiring other Knowledge Holders, the collective to reach ultimate insight. Unlike Western psychological concepts of self-input and self-realisation, Dharug knowing consists of the group relationships playing a role within healing.

Within this chapter the focus is on creative processes within traditional Dharug healing practices through investigating collective thoughts as to how and why holistic visual interpretations of psychological content facilitate personal growth. I argue that creativity as a form of healing is a cognitive interaction, emotional connection and narrative exchange rather than a categorisation within Western concepts of art. In validating such truths, making within healing traditionally is spiritual symbolic knowledge.



Traditional creative practices still hold value in a contemporary Aboriginal society as they have the ability to address multiple issues within physical, emotional and social health. Vaughan (1995) describes health and wellbeing aspects as spiritual characteristic of psychological development that is reflective to Dharug psychosomatics of seeing beyond the connections between self and community.



**Fig: 39**

**Title:** Making and symbols

**Descriptive storyline:** Ways of making and seeing offer a complex exploration of deep insight into cultural knowledges. Within understanding the value of spiritual insight preconceived personal beliefs and assumptions of closed thought may impact or obstruct a willingness to see alternative viewpoints.

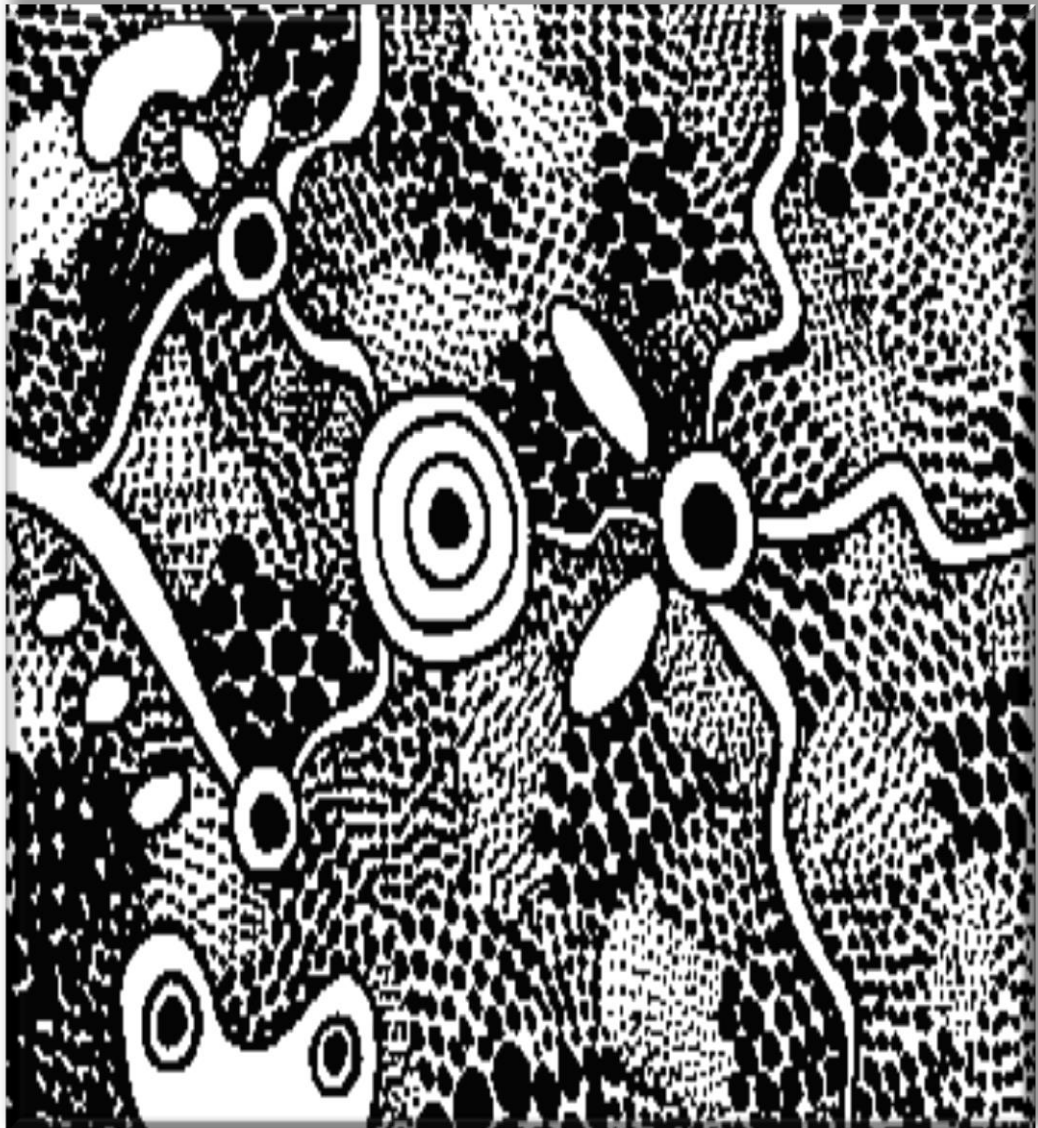


The term 'traditional' refers to creativities prior to European colonisation in Australia. It should be noted that traditional forms of creativity are still practised throughout Australia as a way of maintaining past knowledges. Creative expressions are unique to each Aboriginal Nation along with individualised healing practices (Collins and Cooper, 1997), illustrated through customary designs, symbols, techniques and mediums. Therefore symbolic markings, lines and patterns remain the intellectual property of that Nation.

Symbol making and viewing holds significance as forms of mediate states that interpret life experiences and intuitive insight (see MacDonald, Cove, Laughlin, and McManus, 1989) whilst sacred symbols relate to ontologies of physiological interpretations. Psychological explanations refer to visual spiritual messages representative to place and wholeness (Smalldon, 2008) that Lawler (1991) further argues have spiritual meanings to the environment. Lawler states that observing includes viewing 'beyond the surface form of things in order to understand the outside world from within' (p. 136).

### **Dharug symbols as expressive content**

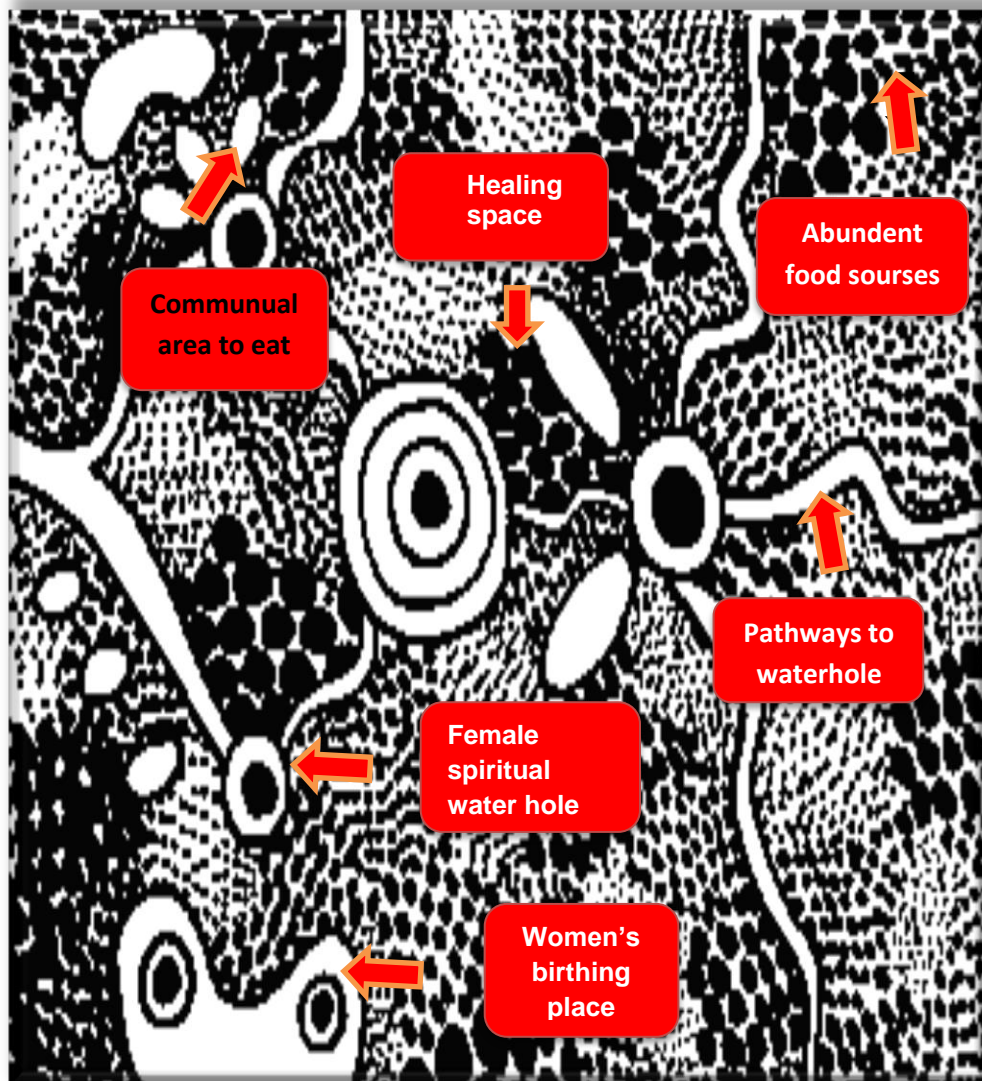
Traditional Dharug forms of creativity within healing are internalised dimensions of form and function, generated through relationships to all living things. Geertz (1973) argues that symbols hold significance 'of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life' (p. 89). Dharug creativity represents realities within the internal and external worlds acting as 'protectors and reminders of the living universe' (Dufrene, 1990).



**Fig:** 40

**Title:** Individualised makings

**Descriptive storyline:** Creative visual expressions of uniqueness are intellectual properties belonging to that group. Similarities with some symbols exists, however meaning often differs. For example this painting illustrates pathways entering to a healing site within Dharug Country. Location not disclosed.



**Fig: 41**

**Title:** Descriptive breakdown

**Descriptive storyline:** an illustration of how symbols contain meaning and acts as informations that hold useful purpose.

## **Cultural Place and Spiritual Space**

Sense of place relates to harmonies within the earth (Stokols and Shumaker, 1981), a psychosocial space reflective of cultural relationships (Lee, 1973) and ways of comprehending place. It is through creativity that healing epistemologies have 'the capacity to tap the creative life forces of the inner space ..... to exercise inwardness' (Ermine, 1995, p. 104). Sense of place within a Dharug concept relates to feelings associated to identity that emphasises community belonging. It is place that is central to Dharug philosophical life purpose as the concept of land is not connected to self-ownership; rather it is a state of internal wealth. Land as a cultural sense of place, offers a deep connection to spiritual space where customary obligations in caring for Country is fulfilled and maintained. It is these understandings that provide a sense of purpose to living.

## **Internalised explorations as a process of knowing**

Dharug creativity as a way of making and seeing, link significance to universal knowledges through journeys related to ancestral pasts. Inward exploration is considered a subjectively transgenerational experience that is transmitted through 'visual symbolism, mental communication, and practice of spirituality that do not separate the sacred and the secular in daily life' (Kelly, 2008:36).

Symbolism within a Dharug content is the transition of semantic perspectives that justify generational psychological possesses in healing. Bakhtin (1986) describes symbolic interpretations as the transition from an image to a symbol, which 'makes it semantically deep and gives a semantic perspective' (pp. 381-382). Such statements align with Dharug creativity within healing as making generates psychological space in order restore health and wellbeing.



**Fig: 42**

**Title:** Multi forms of Dharug healing symbols

**Descriptive storyline:** Circular symbols are the bases of healing practice where manipulations of action firstly consider the constructed of the centre. Radiating lines extend outwards and indicates how the process grows.

Earth and sand healing manipulations of artistic expression also incorporate the use of specific plants and animal substances mixed with various coloured ochres. Within Aboriginal creative ground work as noted by Wynman (1970) from observations of sand paintings from First American communities various coloured sand, ochres and charcoals and plant materials, symbols are also used. This practice offers consistencies within Dharug Aboriginal interpretations as coloured ochres, natural plant materials and symbolic form also place importance within healing practices.



## **The interrelationship between humanism and the natural environment within making.**

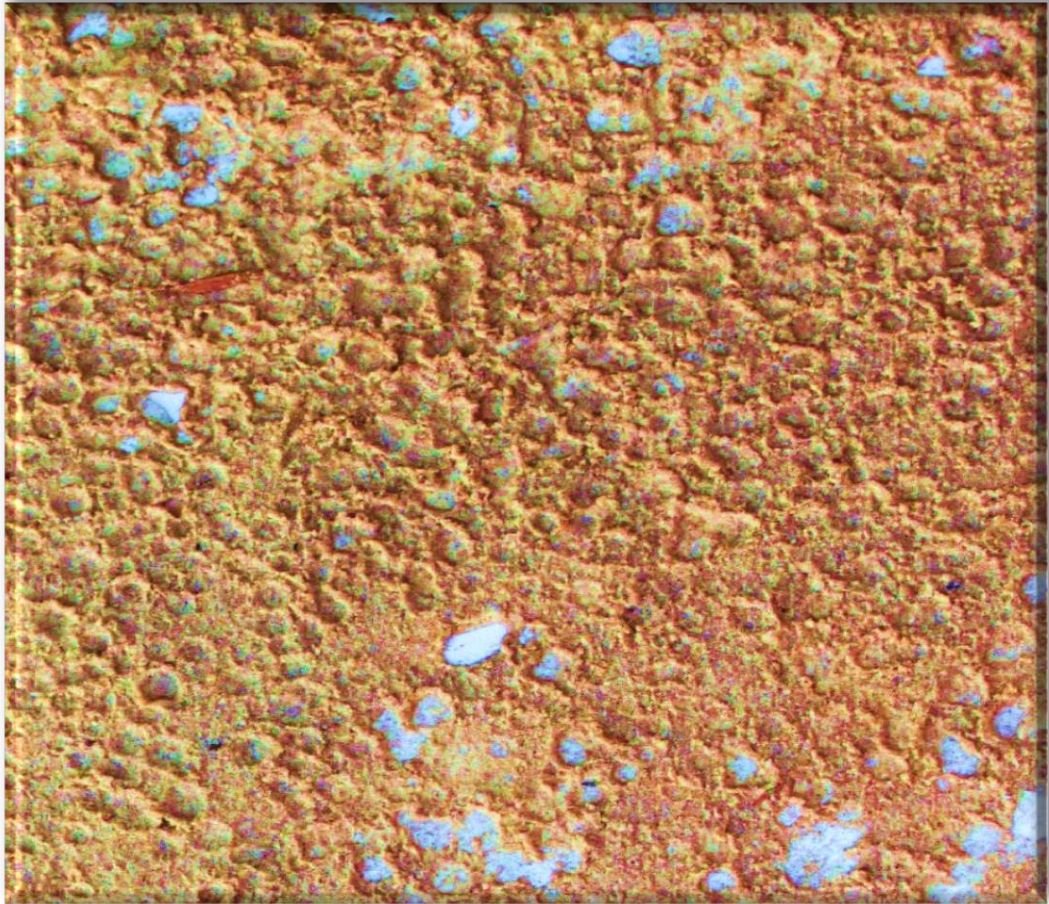
Whilst there has been a great deal of research and curatorial studies published surrounding contemporary Aboriginal dot work there is little attention paid to the origins of such processes. Historically, Aboriginal contemporary art movement of the early 70's in Central Australia has been categorised as a movement which discredits traditional practices within making.

Art Teacher, Geoffrey Bardon observations in witnessing ceremonial ground designs performed by lore men during ceremonial encounters was one of the first noted Western comprehensive studies performed on foundational creative making within ceremonial practice. Bardon presented the idea of reproducing these non-permanent designs into a public arena onto wall surfaces.

Such public exposure of pure sacredness created offence within many Aboriginal Nations. This is because publically expressed traditional reproductions of visual spiritual images are believed to cause anger or harm to those not initiated.

In response attempts were made to cover sacredness by manipulating creative form. Crocker (1987) for example argues that the use of dotting was implemented as a safe alternative to cover up forms of sacredness. From a Dharug standpoint multilayering techniques are an intentional act of concealing knowledge where only the initiated are able to comprehend sacred information.

Dotting techniques have always been used within ceremonial healing practices and has similarities to other Aboriginal Nations. Crocker's suggestion that dotting originated as new process for safeguarding and protecting sacredness is not totally correct. To explain further, ground makings used in traditional healing are sculpted by the hands with fingers used to make indentations within the earth surface. It is argued that fingerprints within the earth's surface are the original process of dot making. Whilst Croker argues that dotting was developed out of a desire to cover secrecy, I argue that this process already existed within ceremonial healing making as a form of multi layering widely used within many Aboriginal Nations. Hence it is more the approach of multilayering that specifies protection of scared knowledges.



**Fig:** 43

**Title:** Dharug ground making

**Descriptive storyline:** Ground makings such as 'dotting' are actually fingerprint and other indentations used with natural materials placed within the earth surface. It is argued that contemporary dotting is actually a representation of fingerprint markings; however the spiritual connection does not hold as much strength in a painting as within the earth as it maybe void of physic connections. The process of applying fingerprints within the earth's surface within ceremonial healing offers a multi layered approach to cultural knowledge.

## **Healing symbols of psychological socio-centricities**

Dharug healing has its foundations within a psychological framework that is inclusive to social, emotional and cultural elements of spiritual dimensions relating to deep affiliations with Creational periods. Creative psychologies are instigated through holistic symbolic trans-generational knowledges that define healing as a restoration to balance and harmony from within. Psychological approaches within traditional healing prioritise connections of relationships in seeking a sense of 'sameness' in what is perceived and received (Blair and Hume, 2002). Teasdale (2001) for example, describes creativity within healing as a 'deeply incarnational spirituality' that guides artistic expressions (p.94).

Dharug symbols are more unique in that symbols contains ancestral spiritual energies, hence has an innate power of cultural belief. Other manipulations drawn in the sands are individualised and explorative as they are created purposely to manifest ailments, acting as a treatment process. Within creative healing, cultural symbols play a role in reconnecting self to extended relationships as it is the belief that ancestors originally created symbolic knowledge to assist in maintaining our social connections.

Symbol making therefore expresses a deep spiritual connection to ancestral pasts and illustrates cultural content as transferred relationships of deep meaning (Geertz 1973:89) that shapes our social behaviours. Kant (2000) identifies creativity as representations of cognitive reasonings of social communications.

From a Dharug perspective creativity within healing is representational to cognitive reasonings and emotional reactions. The seeking of fulfilment is gained by abstract influences of meditative states. It is through these states that identify imbalances within relationships and the environment.

Hence, imbalances of health are considered to be associated to disturbances of relationships.

This still remains an important cultural understanding today, where mental and social health considers a holistic viewpoint, of environmental situations and social interactions as causes of illness. Imbalances within a Dharug terminology are described well by Blair and Hume (2002) as external and internal conceptualised disturbances. In other words, there is an acknowledgment to the external and internal worlds which places relationship considerations as being influences on health and wellbeing.

### **Symbols of transformation**

Transformative properties of the symbol act as forms of realities within our subconscious. In a study by Solso (1996), on the relationship between art and psychology, findings concluded that there is a connection between cognitive psychological processes and art making. Solso claimed that humans perceive, process, and store information through interpreting visual form as a cognitive reflection.

As already noted, Dharug creativity within healing involves both cognitive reasoning and emotional reaction. Solso (1996) also touches on the maker acting as an experimental psychologist by claiming that making involves investigating and responding to social and emotional experiences through visual form. With the creative maker (Healer) being the original producer of psychological interpretations then the observer is considered the original interpreter. Gilliland (1982) is consistent with these views by stating that creativity through making and seeing has the power to engage and validate deep psychological issues through insights of personal truths.



Within Dharug creative healing psychological engagement is also cultivated by imagination and intuitive interplays. This is where variances occur within Dharug standpoints as internalised understandings are important components of psychological meaning and growth.

Imagination and intuition as psychological validations within healing are often discredited as notions of nonsense, immeasurable and illogical from a western viewpoint. It is argued that within a contemporary society these deep feelings have been lost, overshadowed by heightened overloads of technological sensory stimuli. Whilst Dharug philosophies are considered evolving to meet new contemporary growth, deep bodily instincts that propel connections to self and the environment are considered irreplaceable.



**Fig: 44**

**Title:** Dharug transformative psychological makings

**Descriptive storyline:** Transformative properties within the symbol act as subconscious realities that base a relationship between creative making and psychology. Circular imagery within traditional healing practices identifies relationships through radiating lines where both maker and viewer are able to explore imbalances and consider ways of restoring wellbeing.

## **Dharug healing within Country**

Traditional Dharug healing ceremonies often are performed within the surfaces of the earth's floor through the belief that land is central to Creation times and bears the soul of our ancestors. Hence working within ground fulfils deep spiritual connections of cultural realities. Ground or sand imagery is often illustrated by circular rhythmical expressions representational to life and fulfilment, a universal connection to all living things. Worldwide Indigenous traditional healing share multiple similarities in both practice and process, with healing being understood through a holistic lens. Many Indigenous nations for example see healing as a form of restoring internal balance and harmony to the soul along with the deep belief and importance of symbol making.

### **Circular form**

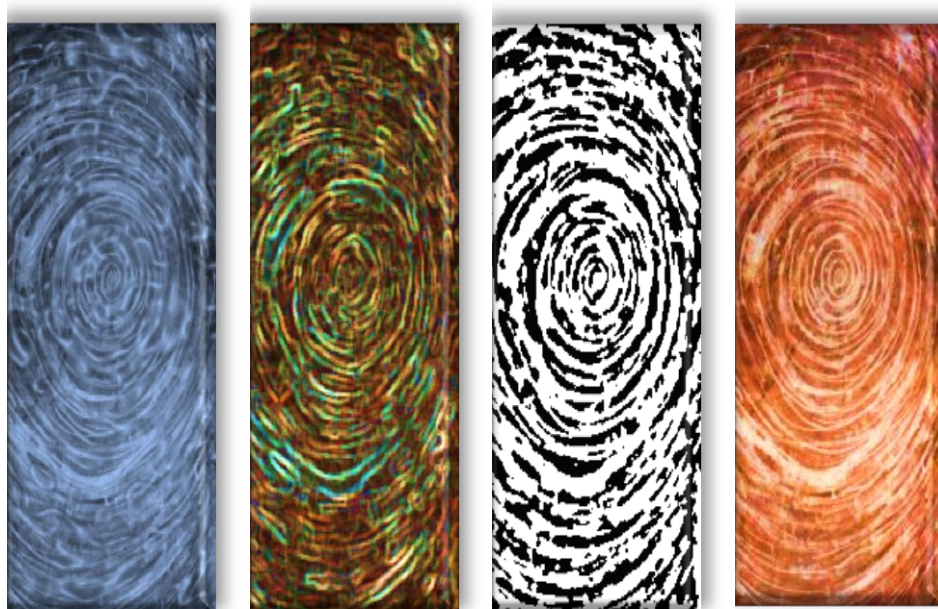
One of the most common symbols used is the circle, which is representational to cosmological aspects such as the sun or moon, testimonies to astronomical connections. Such evidence is witnessed within the many images engraved on rock surfaces within Dharug Country that surrounds the Sydney-Hawkesbury area. Circular imagery includes arc markings, star like shapes and concentric circular form which acknowledges the harmonies within the cosmological world. Circular impressions left on rock surfaces also indicate forms of sacredness, and time immemorial (Bopp et al, 1984) as expressions of our connection to mind, body, emotions and spirit (Mussell, 2002).

Western misinterpretations of circular engravings within Dharug Country according to Sim (1996) are thought to be depictions of the moon, or solar images. Such speculations are incorrect, as these symbols represent sacred healing sites of ancestral power.



From a deep central engraved hole, three emitting circles build out from the central core with approximately twenty radiating lines. The first circle represents individual internal roots such as intuition with the ancestral world, with the second larger circle representation relationships to place and space. The third outer circle relates to the close primary cultural connections such as totems, spiritual affiliations and the extended world.

The circle as a Dharug symbol is representational to all self, relationships and all the cosmos. Within making the inner circle is often depicted as a relationship image that epitomises innerness. The belief that everything is controlled by our internal intuitive voice is illustrated by the inner circle. Krober (1998) portrays similarities referring to the circle as central to the universe but overlooks the link between relationship of self, community and the cosmos. The circle from a Dharug perspective relates to wholeness from within (Oolgna) with parallels to the medicine wheel that functions to provide direction and guidance in achieving well-being (Nabigon and Mawhiney, 1996).



**Fig: 45**

**Title:** Dharug processes of circular making in healing practice.

**Descriptive storyline:** Circular making is representational to all things including relationships with others, animals, plants, the earth and the cosmos. Within making the inner circle is a relationship depiction that epitomises innerness and sacredness. From a Dharug perspective the circle relates to wholeness from within (Oolгна) which has similarities to the medicine wheel of First nation peoples of America and the mandala making in India; all functioning as a way of seeking guidance and direction to restoring well-being and interconnectedness.

It is the circle that emphasises interconnectedness within relationships to place and space. Interestingly, the North-American Objwee Nation also expresses the circle as a metaphoric interpretation to time and place, whilst spherical form expresses spacial relationships (Graveline ,1998). Other similarities include the belief that the circle is sacred, having no beginning and no end, revolving around human generational and seasonal activities within nature depicting natural change (Mehl-Madrona, 1997).

### **Symbols of repetition**

Visual imagery is stored within our memories and is therefore a known process used within healing to facilitate change. Hence simplistic forms of symbols are purposely constructed to assist in easier memory recall by illustrating repetitious patterning, generating rhythmical energies.



The circle for example, when used in a repetitive manner illustrates cyclical and harmonious space that ensures both conscious and unconscious responses are locked into the memory. The use of repetition in patterning, witnessed within contemporary Aboriginal creative works still illustrates this process.

Interestingly, contemporary theories suggest that the eye focuses on images prior to textual information's (Dragga and Gong, 1989) which outlines the importance of creativity and psychological healing. Considering the past and present traumas suffered by many Aboriginal Nations since colonisation, stored suppressed memories have little opportunity to resolve, particularly when there is a lack of cultural processes.



**Fig:** 45

**Title:** Dharug processes of spiral making in healing practice.

**Descriptive storyline:** Circular image making is central to Dharug healing practice as repetitious spherical movement replicates action.

In illustrating this further, it is well documented that visual suppressed memories are embedded within our subconsciousness, surfacing as flashbacks or visual nightmares (van der Kolk, van der Hart and Marmar, 1996). If there is no outlet, such memories will continue to ravage the mind. Considering the many repercussions associated with unaddressed trauma, there is a need to seek internalised restorative processes that will awaken our unconscious reasoning's into conscious realities.



**Fig: 47**

**Title:** Repetitious making, a psychological effect

**Descriptive storyline:** An illustration of other forms in repetitious motion. It is well documented that visual creations containing alternative perspective and repetitious shapes, have the ability to act within both sensory bodily place and cognitive space.

## **The spiral of inner consciousness**

Jung (1969) also found great significance of circular symbolic form within the Tibetan mandala which represents the four basic human sensitivities: intuition, sensation, thinking, and feeling. Interestingly the philosophy behind the mandala has considerable resemblances to Dharug relativeness of deep internalised feelings. Jung studied the mandala to pursue the psychological meaning of symbolic form, later realising its purpose in seeking order from inner confusion and chaos (Jung, 1973) After introducing his patients to mandala making he concluded that ‘to paint what we see before us is a different art from painting what we see within’ (Jung, 1954, p. 253). Alike to Dharug making, the mandala is created through spiralling movements often laden with colour to increase internalised illusions of movement and freedom. Spiral making within Dharug healing uses ochre pigments, coloured shells and other various natural materials.

The spiral is a common world symbol and is often noted within traditional healing practices (Oster 1970) as ‘spiral movements may be regarded as figures intended to induce a state of ecstasy and to enable man to escape from the material world and to enter the beyond, through the ‘hole’ symbolized by the mystic center’ (Cirlot, 1983: 306). Hence, it is common to see spiralling appearing in upward directions particular from traditional healers as indicative of entering into encounters of cosmological journeys (Clottes and Lewis-Williams, 2001). Although there is no written evidence, traditional Aboriginal healers of the Northern areas of Australia form spiral in the opposite direction to that of Eastern areas, which is thought to be related to the proximity of the equator and moon differences.





**Fig: 48**

**Title:** Repetitious making of concentric circles

**Descriptive storyline:** The spiral symbol of cosmological knowledge. Dharug symbols such as the circle and spiral relates to our cosmic relationships and act as guides to transcend our psyche through trance like states (Oster 1970). Such symbols of creativity act as allusions of form depicting our Dreaming times. Cotted and Lewis- Williams argue that the spiral symbol illustrated in a downward action re-enacts the entering to the underworld, whilst spiralling upwards in a way of entering the cosmos. (Clottes and Lewis-Williams, 2001).





**Fig: 49**

**Title:** Healing philosophies of concentric circles

**Descriptive storyline:** The inner deep central circle relates to intuitive feelings, the next outer circle relates to sensory emotions of place and space, whilst the third circle considers cognitive reasoning. Radiating lines act in a different way with inner lines representing the central spiritual core relationships of the inner world, ancestral ties and relationship to Country. Mid lines are extended cultural relationships that include self and community, whilst outer lines place considerations to outer world relationships and viewpoints.

## **Cultural Symbols of ritualism**

Aboriginal Nations engage in ritualised creative healings (Cohen, 2001) with the Healer being central to practice, participating as both an artist and practitioner. Dharug healers (male and female) however never work alone as community involvement is central to the healing processes. Schieffelin (1985. p 707) highlights the value of community involvement as a shared ritualised practice where 'meanings are formulated in a social rather than a cognitive space'. It is socialisation through strong relationships that build recovery, rather than individualised one to one consultation.

Ritual activities within healing create societal unity (Turner, 1986) and shared harmony. Harmony is sustained through the participation of psychological actions that develop relationships through the engagement of cultural ceremony. Therefore ceremonial processes are relationship based, which provoke cognitive and sensory stimulus to enable self-exploration of emotional reactions (Dehaene and Changeux 2004).

Turner and Stets (2005) correctly summarises this theory by stating that 'emotions are what make social structures and systems of cultural symbols viable' (p. 1). To extend this further, within Dharug symbols, each member has a deep individual connection to a symbolic totem, along with each community and nation. Therefore symbols hold deep value within communities as representations of themselves. Hence symbols form a process significant to identity.



**Fig: 50**

**Title:** Place based ritualism

**Descriptive storyline:** An illustration of based on rock imagery lying within Dharug Country. The cave is representational to ritual processes of relationships relating to place that holds deep value within identity.

In understanding cultural differences there is a need to understand visual expressions such as symbols to comprehend the wisdom and knowledge built over generations. This may appear difficult for non-Indigenous peoples who see imagery from an external viewpoint, rather than considering the deep metaphoric elements that lie beneath the obvious.

Perhaps there is also a sense of prejudgement with many non-Indigenous people observing symbols as simple forms of communication based on notions of primitiveness. Therefore difficulties may arise in perceptions as traditional symbols reflect a sense of ingenuity requiring considerable intellectual effort (Solso, 1996). Intellectual form is noted as knowledge acquired through trans-generational processes.

Interpretation of many symbols by non-Indigenous scholars has been marked by incorrect judgements due to an absence of learnt generational knowledges. Presumptions are often made of an observation which does not fit within a Dharug world. The process of Dharug ritualism contains visual rhetoric images of cultural meaning that generate sensory spiritual interchange as opposed to western aesthetic reasonings (Kress, Gunther, and van Leeuwen, 1996). Metaphoric practice in image making compliments narrative voice to encourage deepness of cognitive thought.

### **Symbols of Narrative psychological interaction**

Psychological interchange within Dharug healing practices plays an important role in restorative processes. The use of symbols and narratives are traditionally used to seek all areas of understanding. Symbols for example, heighten visual connections whilst story intensifying auditory responses that assist in retaining memory recall.



The use of visual and narrative interplay communicates externally through listening to storylines as well as internally through observation and deep connections. Furth (2002) for example states that 'pictures are direct communication(s) from the unconscious' (p. 4); therefore visual imagery plays an important role in internalised instinctive feelings. Dharug storytelling is often illustrated with visual content to ensure messages are imprinted to the next generation (Corrie and Maloney, 1998) as stories offer a way of recalling and understanding knowledge (Atkinson, 1995).





**Fig: 51**

**Title:** Imprinted messages

**Descriptive storyline:** A sense of community is illustrated by circular concentric circles, connected by three lines. The lines represent connectivity and interrelationships. The first line represents links in the inner spiritual world, the second a link to the physical world and the third a connection to the cosmic universal world. The inner circle represents place with the dotted area related to space, outer lines signify connection to the outside exterior beyond (other Countries and communities).

### **Cultural Safety**

Dharug storytelling is guided by symbols and utilised within traditional healing to ensure protective passageways (Bawden, 1996) as rational conscious fear of unhealthy spiritual energies is valid in most Aboriginal communities. The need to ensure safe surroundings builds trust through the exchange of mutual experiences, feelings, thoughts and ideas in a non-judgemental environment.

Cultural safety involves protected processes within making. Relationship connections involve everything imbued within spirit including the universe and earth, as being manifestations of energy. The earth is circular whilst the universe stretches around the horizons. Stars for example, are representational of campfires where traditional Healers have the ability to connect and feel nature and its circular energies. It is this connection to landscapes and formations where a sense of sacredness within relationships is embodied.



**Fig: 52**

**Title:** Symbols of guided Storylines

**Descriptive storyline:** Dharug narrative symbols ensure protective passageways that build trust through the exchange of mutual experiences, feelings, thoughts and ideas in a non-judgemental environment. The main image contains lines that reflect community knowledge that are balanced by ancestral lore (top circular patterning) and community circumstances (3 circular forms on lower bottom). It is these considerations that guide practice.

The belief of harmful spiritual energies can exhibit traumatic reactions, intensifying fear and anxiety. Spiritual visitations are common encounters and need to be acknowledged rather than dismissed. Dharug Healers acknowledge encounters with badness (Dngai) of spirits and will facilitate processes within healing to eliminate internal toxicity. The importance of recognising toxic unhealthy feelings is paramount to healing as the human desire to connect with each other in confidence builds compassion and resilience.



**Fig: 53**

**Title:** Darda Dngai

**Descriptive storyline:** Fear of spiritual visitations is prominent within many Aboriginal nations. From a Dharug perspective the Dngai can create plausible fear and anxiety, as it is the spirit of badness that can enter the human soul to cause harm or death. The Dngai is the empty soul who comes in the winds. Traditional Healers place considerations of internalised illness as being related to spiritual encounters.

## **Healing within a contemporary society**

Indigenous nations 'use symbols to express their worldview's (Ortner 1983:129) that affect decision making (Bishop, Higgins, Casella, and Contos, 2002) to allow for deeper critical thinking through a cognitive lens (Olsen, Lodwick, and Dunlap, 1992). It is through symbols that life experiences interpret feelings and imagination which increases our understandings of worldviews (Goleman, 1996). Dharug visual creative interpretations do not consider individualised aesthetic approaches, but are forms of comprehensive dialect and intellectual space. Individualism being a western notion, does not consider the collective nature of spiritual symbolic meaning (Berndt and Berndt, 1998).

The purpose of Dharug visual earth imagery associated with healing ceremonies is to address health issues through holistic processes that consider mind, body, emotions and spirit encompassed within spiritualism. Creative imagery has been used in the treatment and prevention of disease for thousands of years as a process of cultural enrichment to spiritual life through internalised psychological mechanisms. Psychological processes seek to restore balance and harmony through reconnecting the psyche in order to understanding our inner selves. It is creativity that has the power to heal deeper aspects of the psyche through reawakening self awareness. It is the belief that re-owning one's life experiences is developed through reflective explorations.

Considering the many social and emotional issues faced by Aboriginal people today, traditional symbolic healing may be the answer to restoring balance and harmony. The interplay of creativity engages shapes emotional growth through self-reflection and relationship building.

Healing historical trauma for example through cultural practices offers non literate sensitive way of recovery where often complex verbal expressions are too difficult to comprehend.

In the next chapter, explores the incorporation of Dharug understandings of the seven human senses that have the ability to facilitate healing through a holistic lens. Dharug theories of holistic approaches to wellbeing consider the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual being as a way of transcending intellectual reasoning. It is through visual epistemologies of nonlinear interconnectedness that approaches to healing offer alternative thinking.







## Chapter 7

### **Incorporating the human senses within creative healing practices**

The writer begins with a vision that ends with words.

(Eisner, 2003)

The use of narrative visual imagery along with ritualised form within healing practices concentrates on a holistic approach (Furnham and Forey, 1994) to render wellbeing. Holistic approaches to wellbeing consider the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual being (Kovach, 2005). Dharug visual epistemologies acknowledge nonlinear holistic interconnectedness that involves multiple senses of nonlinear, nonverbal processes based on experimental reasoning of spiritual fluidity.

Dharug creative healing practices utilise multiple nonverbal visual narratives to heighten emotional reactions as a way of gaining intellectual wisdom. Interestingly, current research identifies visual narrative content as a unique insight in heightening relationships between self and society (Lightfoot, 2004) as creativity is a form of original intellect. Heightening of sensory reactions is inspired by imagination and intuitive thinking that seeks to capture all aspects of seeing. Therefore creativity within healing is a form sensory expressiveness (Erikson, Erikson and Kivnick, 1986) in thinking beyond ordinary controlled domains.

In understanding the reasonings behind Dharug creative sensory healing as a knowledge based practice, it is essential to identify recent research studies to authenticate the capacity of expertise. Surprisingly there is considerable evidence supporting how visual forms of knowing trigger responses within our bodies that react to our emotions. For example, Lang, Greenwald, Bradley and Hamm (1993) in measuring reactivity to visual stimuli, concluded that emotional responses are associated with pleasure and arousal by viewing images, whilst Damasio (1994) claims that emotions stimulates brain activity as emotions are a form of reasoning.

From a Dharug standpoint, unconscious sensory stimuli are activated through emotional responses. Through the deliberate use of imagery, emotional responses are heightened by repetitious rhythmical patterning as a direct link of human behaviour. The use of repetitious visual form is an intentional transference between inner emotional and sensory stimulus to generate thought and response. From a psychological standpoint, repetitious rhythmical symbols create a reflective ricochet within the emotional psyche of nonverbal therapeutic interpretation (Gendlin, 1981). In this sense repetitious patterning is one representation of the pulse of life.

Dharug cultural symbols are forms of emotional dialect, a form of language that entails cultural appropriate ways of transferences of information exchange. Verbal language can inhibit creative expressions, as indicated by Hogarth (1995), who argues that verbal expressions restrict tacit ways of knowing.

Hence, creative dialogue is a containment of emotional experiences that allows non- verbal processes to ignite insight that goes beyond words. Therefore, ways of doing and seeing within healing processes offer therapeutic value.

### **Integrating the senses within Dharug healing**

Dharug seven senses within traditional healing act as external and internal guides, informants of the physical, social, spiritual environments. The seven senses consist of seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting as well as intuition and imagination.

Dharug creative healing techniques primarily focus on seeing, intuition and imagination. Intuition and imagination are often overlooked or discredited within a western scientific framework (Inglis, 1987), yet are a valued source of nonverbal interplay to culturally appropriate ways of healing. Utilising these senses within healing stimulates actions, reflections (Schön, 1983) and perceptions (Grayling, 2003) extended with visions and dreams.



**Fig: 54**

**Title:** The seven senses

**Descriptive storyline:** Circular form represents healing within life. Directional lines inform us of community trusted ties. Often link to the sun, healing within a Dharug content refers to the sands and salt water areas, where healing takes place. The sand provides the canvas to manipulate imagery on Mother Earth's surface, salt water provides the food for health and healing.

## **Ways of Seeing**

Observations are ways of seeing (nga) that play a role within creative healing through deep observations and passive engagement. Seeing through observing is a social experience of perception that includes both conscious and unconscious deciphering. Ways of seeing within creative healing builds on attaining a deeper insight into issues that are intrinsically linked within cultural perceptions and values. Ways of seeing entail a deeper meaning, which facilitates creative visual expressions that examine the messages within.

## **Ways of exploring**

Imagination (Nganga) in creative healing practices explores visions of possibilities that go beyond personal experiences, interpreted through sensory stimuli that facilitate new ideas. Imagination enters into the world of the unpredictable, the unforeseen and the unanticipated. Greene (1995) also confers that 'the role of imagination is . . . to awaken, to disclose the ordinarily unseen, unheard, and unexpected' (pg. 28).

## **Ways of sensing**

Intuition (Oolgna) is considered an internalised enduring that involves sensory nerve process located behind our umbilical cord. Intuition is the unconscious bodily alarm system that awakens within environmental situational change.

Intuition is a form of spiritual guidance that encodes unconscious information (Epstein, 1994) into conscious abstract emotional experiences to enhance judgment and decision-making.



Intuitive knowledge is also often expressed through visual form as a way of connecting with hidden knowledges (Stuckey, 2009); an important process of visualisation that considers the interchange of emotional knowledges from various conscious and unconscious sources.

### **Ways of seeing (observation)**

‘interpret nature and submit it to the spirit of the picture’

Matisse, H. (1945).

Ways of seeing are multilayered forms of knowledge, often interpreted visually through symbols and metaphorical cultural narratives. Hence within a Dharug framework visual expressions disclose not only what is viewed by the eye, but what is hidden within cultural messages.

In highlighting this further intentional multi layering within creative form is a narrative expression with some images recognised and detected, whilst others hidden, obscured or merged within other images. The process of hidden imagery is way of concealing the exposure of sacredness. Seeing within is a learnt process that requires a loss of preconceived ideas of conceptualised material form. Therefore visualisation magnifies imagination as a way of seeing beyond.



**Fig: 55**

**Title:** Seeing, exploring and sensing

**Descriptive storyline:** Using all bodily senses to see and know what making interprets. Oolгна.



**Fig:** 56

**Title:** Struggle - Seeing beyond

**Descriptive storyline:** Without narrative content, ways of seeing first seek out the known and familiar.



## Seeing beyond

Without narrative content, ways of seeing are first met with known and familiar emotional realism. This is witnessed through the recognition of circular rhythmical movement. The movement is then noted as heading in a clockwise direction, where cultural variants may influence ways of seeing. From a Dharug standpoint there will be a connection made (unconsciously or consciously) where spiral direction is indicative to internal notions of physiological connection within a sensory space.



**Fig: 57**

**Title:** Struggle reflection within cyclic form

**Descriptive storyline:** Initial observations at a distance are often of the rhythmical spiral movement within this painting.

## **Continued deconstruction of illustration**

The feeling for many is an initial feeling of calmness; hence the colours are specifically chosen to complement emotional feelings associated with serenity. As feelings are ignited within bodily senses, images start to form. Observing form through recognition leads to identifying shapes as being fish, all swimming in the same direction. At this stage there may be a connection again to salt water that leads to an association to healing, or simple emotional satisfaction. Perhaps there is an association of life experiences of the sea.

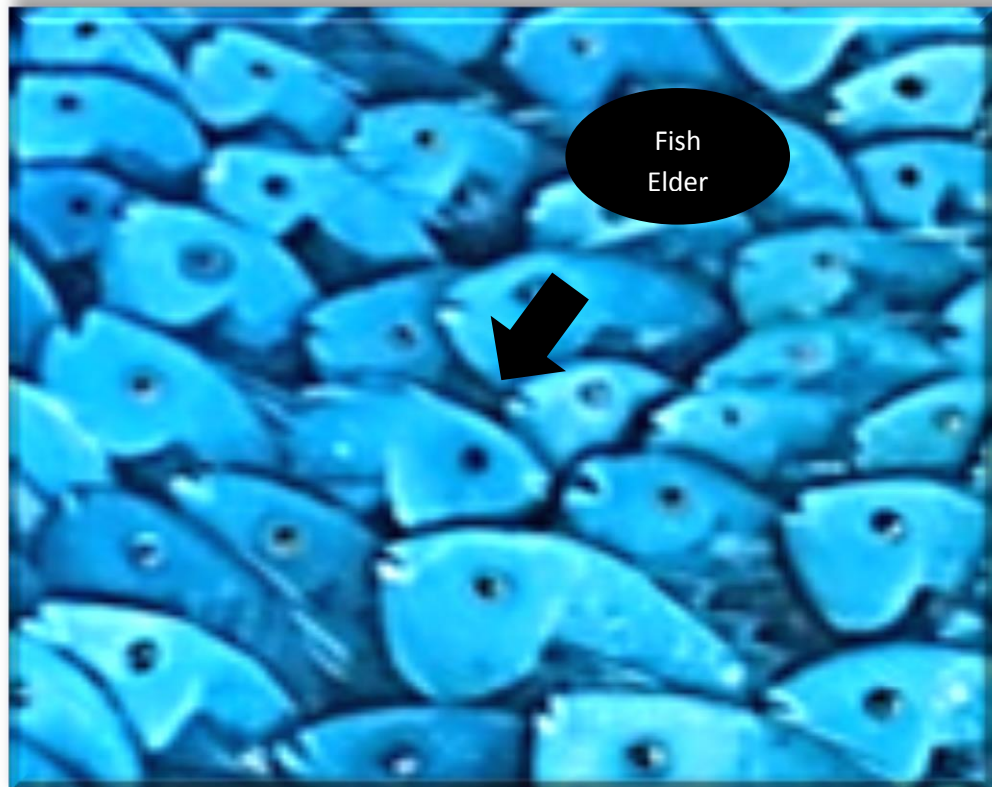
The more we observe, the further the bodily senses develop. It is at this point that intuitive and imaginative thought processes start to ignite to seek further reasonings and understandings from initial observations. As visual observations grow there is a desire to seek and interpret narrative content. This is where the interplay of intuitive and imaginative sense making enters as a way to gain further insight.

Visual content is considered primary knowledge with narrative content following. It is the belief that if the story was told first, intuition and imagination would be stifled and greatly influenced by the teller. The reasoning behind this is that if there is little personal cognitive struggle in interpreting knowledge then knowings would be easily forgotten. For example this work is a story about an Elder who struggles with community obligations and government confrontations in continually battling to seek justice.

The Elders story is captured within metaphoric content as the only fish going in a different way.



If this written information was presented first, our senses of intuition and imagination would be heavily influenced, void of individualised freedom and energies in seeking out truth. The use of metaphoric imagery clarifies our way of learning as a process of problem solving as a puzzle seeks greater intellect in solving. In seeking answers within visual metaphoric conundrums multiple solutions can be made. The acceptance of individual responses are acceptable within Dharug practices, as different viewpoints and perceptions on life experiences lie within rather having one fundamental answer. The process of solving of solutions is stated by Sternberg and Davidson (1982) is a representation of scientific insight.



**Fig: 58**

**Title:** Struggle identifying meaning

**Descriptive storyline:** Illustrating what lies within, as it is not always obvious to the eye. on initial observations.

### **Imagination and creativity**

Imaginative processes within creative healing are influenced through an accumulation of internalised behaviours to broaden experiences with seeking wellbeing. Creative imagination consists of internalised images influenced by our moods and reactions within our environments.

Therefore imagination evokes feelings (Ribot, 1901) that drive human creativity to pursue alternative ways of knowing. Westernised categorisation in art acknowledges ascetical appreciations within new movements that places order in contemporary change within attitudes and political values. There is however acknowledgement of imagination within aesthetical appreciations as noted by Rose (1980) who argues that art making reshapes realities through imagination as 'the structure for aesthetic form basically serves a function rooted in our biological nature' (p. 204).

Rose goes on to explain that aesthetic creative making has no intent within a traditional content as value does not consider seeking pleasure with form, rather a seeking of knowledge building. Dewey (1934/1958) also expresses visual imagination as a stimulus for abstract thinking by stating that 'creative imagination is the only free action of that idealizing activity which is involved in all knowledge' (p. 36).

However both Rose and Dewey do not elaborate on how creativity seeks to justify experienced transgenerational knowledges that fulfil both a need and contextual framework to a specific group. Egan (1992) on the other hand states that imagination is the basis for creativity which enables subjective experiences to generate 'ideas that cannot be expressed or represented in any other form' (p.21).

Imagination as a form of insight creates vision where dreams become realities. Dreams and visions are not only considered a role of the traditional healers, but also Castellano (2006) affirms some artists also dream in vivid images. As an artist myself, I connect with such theories, as it is through dream work that the majority of my images emerge. For example when facing a challenge within a painting, I will wait till the images surface within dream like states as a process in seeking solutions.

Dream like states are defined as a meditative state where set judgments and thoughts are banished allowing for the freedom of new discoveries. Dream states are also believed to be initiated from ancestral guidance where knowledge is reflected and directions are opened.

In understanding imagination as a form of process, considerations need to reflect on conscious arousal as spontaneity within awareness. Stephen (1989) states that dreams and visions can deliberately raise conscious awareness. Dreams and visions within creativity are a way of seeking solutions to problem solving, as imagination as a process is intrinsically linked with intuition (Dewey, 1934/1958). Imaginations within dreams and visions or altered states are considered ways of seeking new ideas and solutions by connecting with the inner world.

### **Intuitive ways of knowing**

‘The intuitive mind is a sacred gift  
and the rational mind is a faithful servant.  
We have created a society that honours the servant  
and has forgotten the gift’ Albert Einstein

Intuitive ways of knowing serves to inform, to guide and to alert us within our internal and external environments. Intuition thought relates to instinct, natural instinctive feelings of internalised unconscious. Intuitive processes are based upon a pervasive sense of experience gained through deep observations acquired through dreams and visions of spiritual origin (Dewey, 1958). Research suggests that intuition involves an expertise of judgment through feelings to gain implicit learning within creativity (Davis and Davis, 2003).

According to Hodgkinson (2008), intuition lies beyond conscious awareness as it requires experiential ways of knowing that is accumulated through tactile realities such as creative form. Therefore intuitive creativity relates to demonstrated knowledge.

According to Smith (2007), intuition creates a deep understanding of holistic viewpoints based on internal ways of knowing and behaving. Intuitive thought brings alternative ways to ascertain meaning, justified as an internalised decision maker. In comparison, western viewpoints of intuition are expressed as simply a claimed often ignored feeling, rather than a form of rational reasoning (Parahoo, 2006). For example, the use of intuition within creativity begins with no defined outcome due to the belief that our internalised forces will guide and direct us to achieve a completed result.

This I refer to as a 'guided process', as intuitive energies define making rather than creating what we just see. This is why Dharug forms of creativity are often associated as being visual knowledges rather than art, as they contain deep spiritual and intuitive guidance that come from within our cultural being.





**Fig: 59**

**Title:** Oolгна and the seven senses

**Descriptive storyline:** Internalism is based on relationships within the seven senses. When in harmony and balance, individuals function well and have a unique insight.

The intuitive centre (Oolгна) is considered the core of knowing and is thus central to wellbeing. Intuitive knowledges have been inadequately studied within social psychological frameworks, possibly due to westernise scientific logical validations (Weissman, 1987). Responses within western theories to intuitive connections are often discounted as unexplained irrational notions. Simpson (2001) validates that intuitive knowledge is often denounced by stating 'we scoff at it in scientific discourse and this scoffing, the sarcasm, the jokes in such matters, betray our uneasiness before what we cannot explain' (p. 136). Claxton, (2000) also confers by stating intuition 'fall(s) outside the pale of what professional cultures are willing to accept' (p. 34). Betsch, Plessner, Schwierer and Gütig (2001) state that the discounting of intuitive feelings is the result of forgotten abilities to connect with self, whilst Torff and Sternberg (2001), believe intuitive hunches are overlooked knowledges due to the lack of connection to personal connectedness. Modernism too plays a role in disconnection technology has become a more reliable source of information. Intuitive responses or gut feelings struggle to survive in a modern world where too much stimulus is often encountered.

Intuitive thoughts and feelings can provide accurate informations about past, present and future based on emotional intent (Braud, 2003). Evidence exists within health disciplines as noted by Pyles and Stern (1983) that identified how nurses detected cardiogenic shock in patients with myocardial infarction through gut feelings. There is minimal evidence to support the link between Dharug understandings of the strong link between intuitive feelings, emotional states and ancestral guidance.

However, Houghton (2002) does offer some validation within intuitive hunches as a close relationship of gut feelings and emotions. A study conducted by Rew (1988) also highlights heightened physical reaction within intuition described as chills down the spine, headaches, muscle rigidity, and stomach tightness (Rew, 1988).

Dijksterhuis, Smith, van Baaren and Wigboldus (2005) also supports that intuition is validated as being an alternative non conscious process in decision making, yet does not offer an explanation as to where this guidance originates.

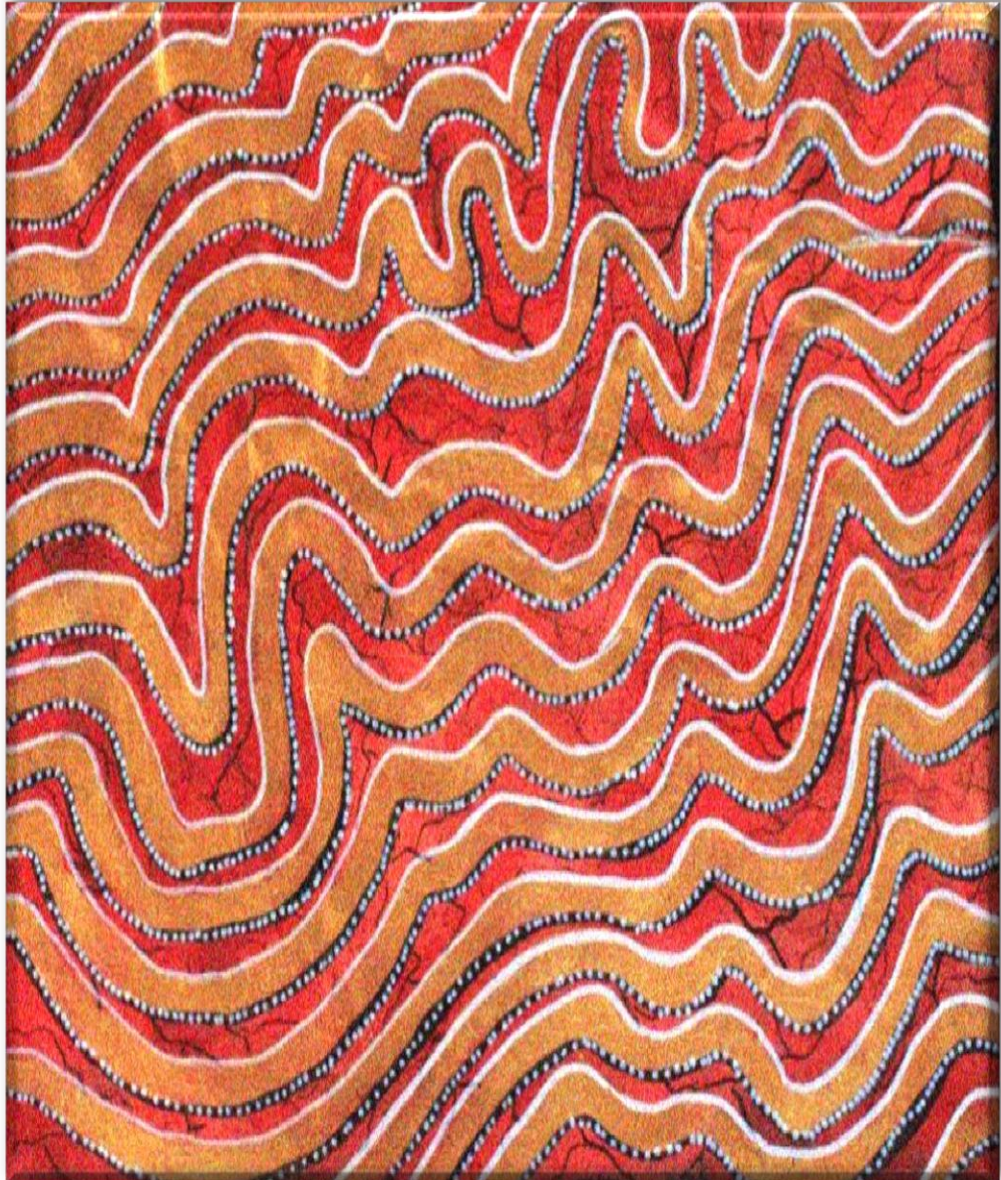
Traditionally, Dharug people were reliant on intuition (ways of knowing and sensing) as a trusted means for survival. Felt internal vibrations alerted them to change or danger (see Castellano, 2000) or changes within the environment. It is the belief that intuition is not simply a gut feeling but a spiritual guiding mechanism that holds emotional alertness and stored memory. Torff and Sternberg (2001) also confer that intuitive hunches can be attributed to forgotten knowledge and subconscious cues.

Within Dharug understandings the importance of Oolгна is multifaceted. It is the belief for example that emotional fulfilment is located within the stomach area which alerts the mind to situational change by creating emphasised feelings. When Oolгна is healthy motivational levels increase along with creativity. When Oolгна is imbalanced negativity occurs, creating internal stress and external illness. Internal stress can be witnessed by behavioural changes such as anger, impulsiveness and depression.

Oolгна disorders are also associated with gut problems and a poor immune system, thus considerations are placed on diet. Oolгна is classified as the central nerve system and illustrated as a spiral image with rod like shapes extending. The spiral indicates growth and connections to fulfilment where rods like shapes are representational of positive energies beneficial to wellbeing.

Oolгна is located around the stomach area, directly behind the umbilical cord where multiple emotional energies act as receptors to enable reactions to come forth. Mayer (2000) describes this area as having an emotional function (Mayer et al, 2000) whilst Hanifle and Langbein (2005) use the term 'Bauchhirn' or belly brain. Gershon (1999) a leading neurologist states that that there are billions of neurons in stomach which signals the body to stress and illness with emotions influenced by chemicals and nerves within the stomach area. Hadhazy (2010) recently uncovered that the Oolгна area contains 95% of our serotonin levels, an active neurotransmitters that contributors towards feelings of wellbeing.

Other studies conclude that serotonin is a fast acting neurotransmitter that brings about pleasure, memory, learning and motivation. It is therefore argued that traditional Dharug healing practices have used recognised scientifically proven knowledges that up until now have only recently been accepted with western scientism.



**Fig:** 60

**Title:** Oolгна rhythmic energies

**Descriptive storyline:** When Oolгна is good, then energy lines run in a harmonious rhythm where strong links (dotting) builds sound connections of self to both the internal and external worlds.



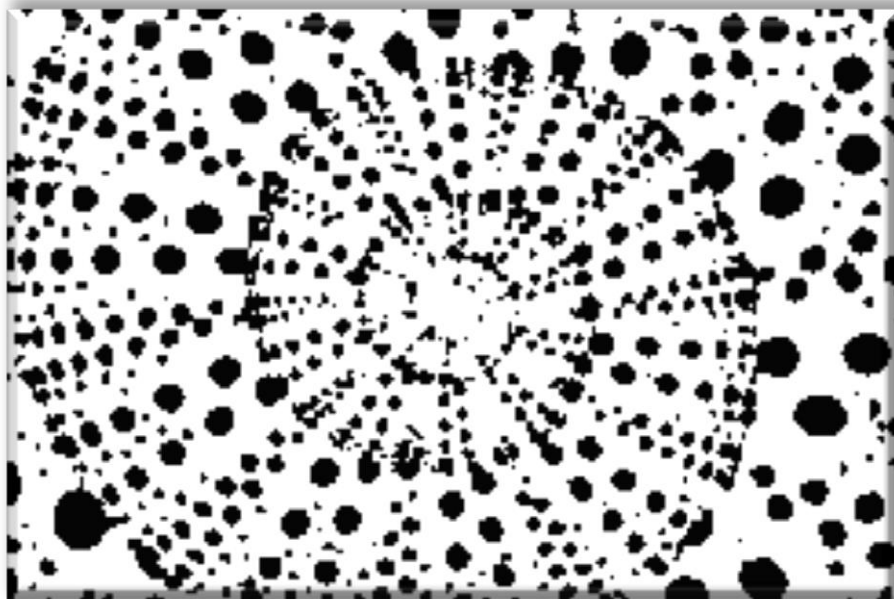
The next chapter considers comparative studies of contemporary Art Therapy practices. Contemporary Art Therapy practice is defined as a blending of art and therapy which focuses on the inherent healing influences within creative processes (Malchiodi, 2005) that relate to natural intrinsic guidance that contains strong similarities to Dharug therapeutical processes within making.



## Chapter 8

### Visual Knowledges of metaphoric symbolic content

‘At the heart of any healing practice are metaphorical transformations of the quality of experience (from feeling ill to wellness) and the identity of the person (from afflicted to healed)’. (Kirmayer , 1993)

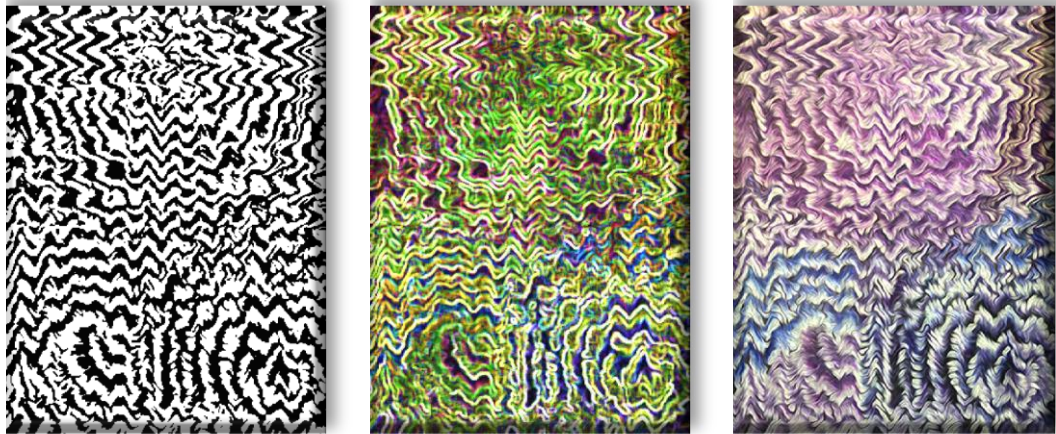


**Fig:** 61

**Title:** Natural metaphors

**Descriptive storyline:** The spiral form of the shell represents evolving life cycles.

Within traditional Dharug healing metaphoric thought involves the transformation from sickness to wellness enacted through culturally significant actions based on sensory responses. The use of metaphoric imagery stimulates our internalised sensory stimuli evoking curiosity and emotional reactions. It is the stimulation of internalised reactions that play a role within healing.



**Fig: 62**

**Title: Seeing inside**

**Descriptive storyline:** Internal reactions of emotional sensory activity. What lies on the surface is not what lies within. Visual expressions contain deep complex messages that are not literally communicated. Multi layering metaphoric techniques are ways of capturing knowledges that ignite internal interpretations. The use of visual metaphoric content provides greater cognitive and emotional connectivity in challenging analytical interpretation as the processes involves not only what is obvious to the eye, but the complex messages that lie within. It is through imaginative and intuitive processes that meanings surface.

## **The interplay between visual metaphors and bodily senses**

Visual metaphors are used within Dharug healing practices as recognised shapes, lines, and patterns that stimulate both unconscious and conscious exchanges. Shapes and objects may appear insignificant to some, but meaningful to others as dependence is validated from memory recall and spiritual connectivity. It is through this passageway of memory recall that interactions within cultural symbols play a role in sense making.

Visual metaphoric thinking and making is a creative activity (Rothenberg, 1984) that requires cognitive action, imaginative thought (Egan, 2005) and intuitive reasonings in seeking out answers within observations. Creativity connects within emotions, as engagement heightens sensitivities that send signals to the brain. LeDoux, (1992) confers that from the brain, visual information recognised by the cortex of the temporal lobe is relayed to the amygdala, nucleus accumbens and other parts of the limbic system.

It is through this process that the whole body reacts to visual content by integrating cognitive problem solving skills. Therefore the amalgamation of both cognitive reasoning and emotional reactions creates ways of knowing. For example, research by Goldstein (1980) found that exposure to viewing aesthetically pleasing stimuli generates a physiologic reaction of emotional arousal that increases endorphins, validating the relationships between mind and body.

Within Dharug healing, creativity serves as a stimulus of conscious mind through unconscious guidance.

For example, the process of imagination clears the mind of structured realisms that allows for deep emotional input. Beswick (2004) argued that to be, interested or intrigued in making sense of something, is an elevating experiences.

Dharug healing uses emotional metaphoric transformation that involves a sense of internalised arousal. It is viewing imagery that engages abstract thought through the interplay of imagination that activates sensory stimuli and increases our endorphin levels. Abstract thought is therefore a process of creative thinking, in other words, its' thinking through images (Potebnya, 1990; 163). Cognitive visualisation through the use of Aboriginal symbols in healing are facilitated through metaphoric content (see Guedon, 1984).

Visual metaphors connect with memory and acts as transference of meaning from an object to a thought, allowing our perceptions to interact and communication through abstract reasonings. Egan (2005) states that visual metaphors stimulate cognitive activity through analysing complex cultural information whilst Roukes (1988) informs us that interpreting metaphoric symbolic form is a descriptive way of learning and a means of expressing cultural knowledges.

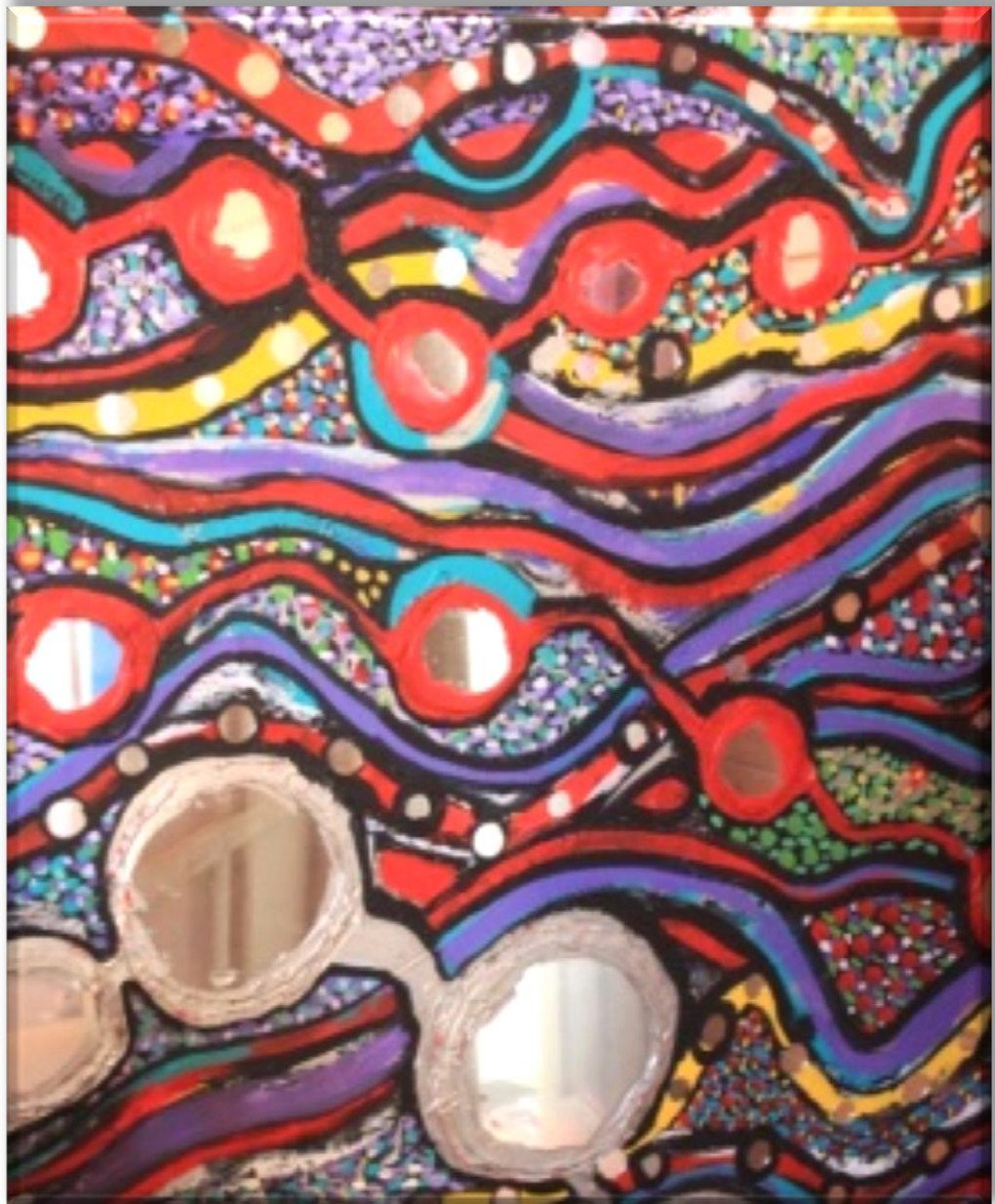
### **Dharug Visual metaphoric knowledges**

Visual metaphoric symbolism creates an effective tool for communicating in the healing processes (Effland, 2002) as being a system of shared messages based on multiple viewpoints and multiple responses (Sternberg and Williams, 1996). These shared experiences are based on observations within visual form as the main task within understanding metaphoric interaction of both the rational and perceptual (Arnheim, 1969).



Petrenko and Korotchenko (2008) highlight this further by stating visual form plays a part of its own genre of diversity within personalised space.

Through observing creative form there is an unconscious need to seek a sense of connectedness that consists of colour, patterning, shapes and symbols that hold some form of recognition. The next process involves the organisation of related form into structural content by grouping and analysing the relationships of shape and style.



**Fig: 63**

**Title:** Seeing outside

**Descriptive storyline:** This painting links the internal feelings with physical externalism. The mirrors represent the concept of ways of seeing and being able to look further than the obvious.

## **Dharug metaphoric symbolism in traditional sand healing**

What lies on the surface is not always lies within. Aboriginal visual knowledges contain deep complex messages that are not literally communicated. The deliberate application of multi layering techniques offers one way to capture acquired knowledges; however it is through the use of visual metaphors that present a true source of knowing in interpreting what lies beneath. It is not only what is simply observed but the complex messages that lie within.

Ways of seeing include not only simple observation but imaginative and intuitive processes that seek meaning to answers that not always as obvious as they appear. Sparshott (1990) suggests that through applying imagination we 'envisage things otherwise than as they are merely observed to be' (p. 2). The use of metaphors within Dharug healing is explored within our earth and sand manipulations, where symbols, lines and patterns are representational of cultural knowledges. This process is stimulated through sensory experiences, with particular emphasis on imagination and intuition.



**Fig: 63**

**Title:** Traditional Dharug visual knowledge

**Descriptive storyline:** Aboriginal visual knowledges contain Simplified visual processes of traditional sand creativities echoes the relationship between cultural form and space that transmit messages that engage both the maker and observer.

### **Metaphoric Dharug healing**

Making within healing involves the use of visual metaphors to seek transformational change as creativity echoes the relationship between form and space in broadening cultural messages that engage both the maker and observer. Metaphors through making are the experiences of one's inner world.

Dharug metaphorical visual transformations address internal sufferings attributed to emotional and social disharmonies within relationships, rather than physical issues. Contemporary Art therapy practices use similar processes (see Robbins, 2000) of personalised metaphors based on individual experiences (Gardner, 1973).

However within Dharug healing metaphoric visual images are directed through action and ritualism (Dow, 1986) where ritualism is considered a therapeutic re-enactment of deep psychological interplay. Ritualised processes are an acquired state of mind as described by Kirmayer (2007) as an immersion of inner thinking. Ritualism is a process that integrates thoughts, actions, and behaviours to promote self-growth, value, meaning and purpose.

Ritualism through the use of metaphoric imagery is a way of engaging within the internal world as creativity transcends to the depths of the psyche.

The conscious interaction of metaphoric signs and symbols are rudiments of our cultural knowledges which utilises imagination to maximise a deeper fulfilment of spiritual connections and life experiences. The interplay of imagination through visualisation is a way of expressing concepts that cannot be achieved through logical realistic seeing (Starko, 2005) as there is not intend to copy reality from a physical viewpoint.

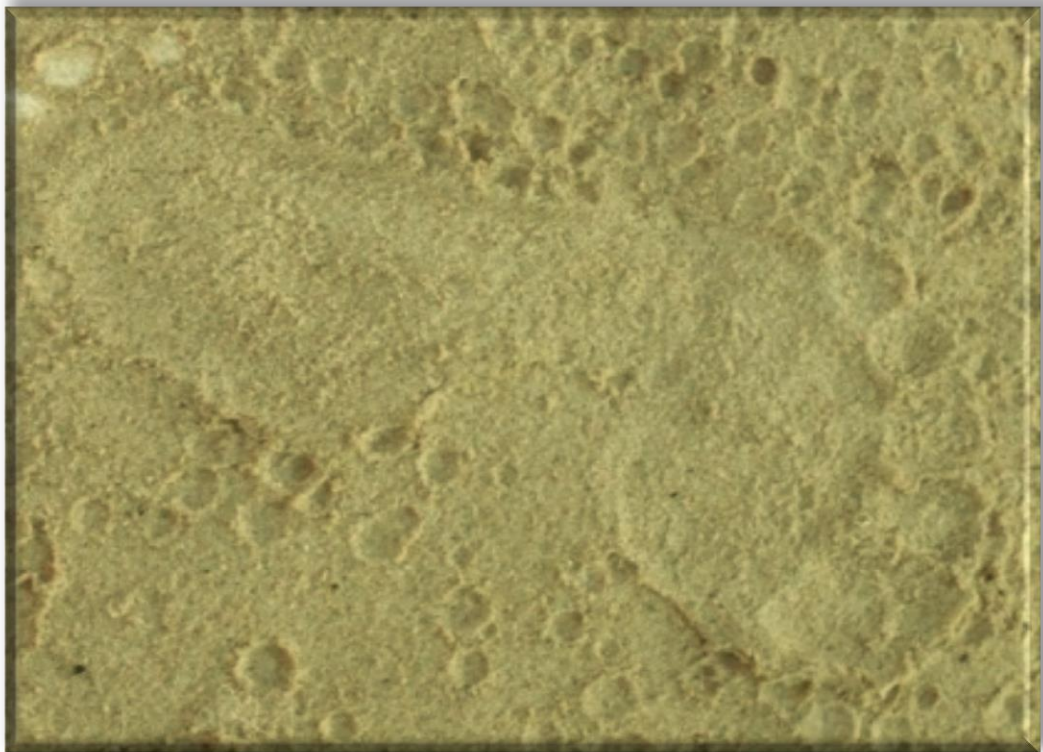
Visual metaphoric healing processes concerns both making and seeing through narrative progressive inquiries based on self-experience and awareness. Through the use of metaphoric visual imagery performed on the earth's surface, cultural and spiritual interconnectedness is achieved through internal energies to restore balance and harmony. Dufrene (1990) expresses a similar idea within First American peoples by stating that sand paintings are used to return the patient symbolically to the source of tribal energy (p. 123).

Interpreting visual metaphors requires a sense of objectivity in analysing meaning that involves a higher complexity of learning (Efland, 2002). It is these complex thought process that considers multiple viewpoints, and multiple responses (Sternberg and Williams, 1996) in interpreting messages that lie within. Such interpretations are personalised, reflective of past experiences where multi-layered messages are due to the likelihood that more than one answer can be sort. Therefore, metaphoric images and symbols have more than one meaning. Turner (1967) terms this theory as multivocal; having strong emotional quality. This should not be confused with cultural symbols where full interpretation in analysing meaning is only understood through initiated censorship.



## Dharug visual metaphorical strategies

The use of visual metaphoric content within Dharug healing practice engages multi approaches in seeking restorations of balance and harmony. These strategies are both personal and collective, as it is not only the individual who needs healing but also the community involved. Within many Aboriginal communities, the suffering of one person affects many others.



**Fig: 64**

**Title:** Simplified form

**Descriptive storyline:** Ways of Making and Seeing transcends to the depths of psychic awareness as metaphoric reasonings provide a human connection to space and place.

## **Curiosity within traditional healing**

One of the reasons Dharug creative healing uses metaphoric content is to encourage curiosity, a form of sense making that sparks engagement from within. It is within the creative interplay of metaphoric content, curiosity is enhanced and therefore a strategic processes in raising arousal. Curiosity enhances wellbeing as it creates a human motivational drive through explorations in self-awareness. Binson (2009) suggests curiosity is both a complex feeling and cognition process that seeks the desire to source out new knowledges, which is consistent within Dharug knowledges.

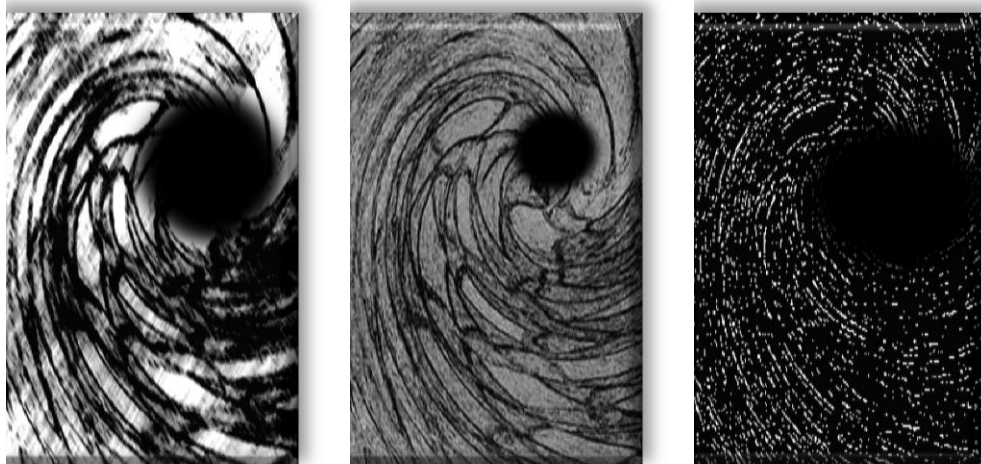
It is the motivation behind curiosity that develops insight into new ways of thinking and seeing. Kashdan (2009) also suggests that curiosity creates a sense of openness in exploring new and unfamiliar experiences to make meaning and connections that strengthens insight. Research conducted by Kashdan and Steger (2007) on examining curiosity as a mechanism for achieving and maintaining a high level of well-being found that, inquisitive interest provided life satisfaction. Curiosity also enhances memory (Loewenstein, 1994) that is a powerful motivational force in facilitating self-control, behavioural change and emotional healing. Diagnosing emotional states through creativity is reliant on information through stimuli in ways that match their feelings (Singer and Salovey, 1988).

## **Psychological interplay of metaphoric content within dreams**

The psychological effect of metaphoric content is also prevalent in dreams and is another strategy employed within Dharug healing. Recent neurophysiologic research confirms the importance of dreams as a consolidation for memory where emotions and sensations (Ferro, 2002) creates a response.

Metaphoric narrative content within dreams resonates through sensory, emotional responses and experiences as illustrated by Ferro's statement that 'Dreams are 'the narrative capacity of the mind' (Ferro, 2002, p. 605) and have the ability to link sensory and conceptual experiences through the sharing of stories.

Emotionally traumatic experiences can have a significant negative impact on life that inadvertently triggers flashbacks and nightmares. Visual metaphoric nightmares associated with past trauma for example, are often associated with imagery that Laub and Podell (1995, p. 1002) describe as 'the black hole' or the 'empty circle', 'a magnetic core of nothingness'. Such metaphors are considered important within Dharug healing as images of unconscious experiences act as guides to deep inner emotions.



**Fig:** 65

**Title:** The black hole

**Descriptive storyline:** Stages of development in experiencing emptiness

### **Metaphoric interplay within emotional Healing**

Emotion is a response to a state of arousal based on individualised interpretation. Emotions involve feelings, thoughts and expressive reactions based on life experiences and events. Emotions affect behaviours and offer valuable information in verifying illness or internal disturbances. Emotional interplay with visual metaphors is an important tool within healing as they seek out internalised responses as well as externalised experiences.

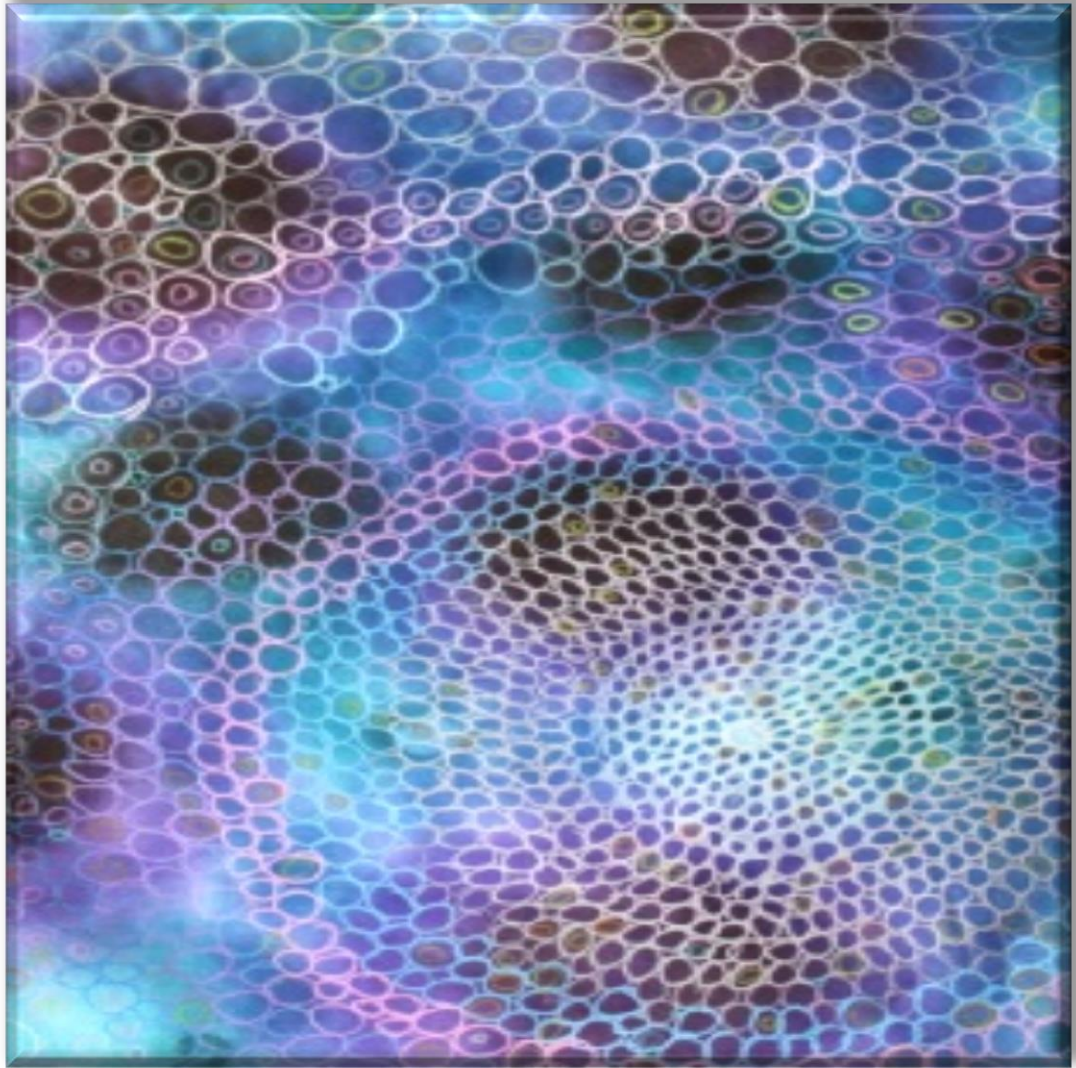
Emotional reactions are stimulated through interpreting visual metaphors initiated through imagination that enhances curiosity. Visual metaphors are known concepts in assisting with memory recall, having the ability to transform an image into internalised emotions that stimulate both conscious and unconscious perceptions. Our thoughts and intuitive knowledges are responsible for our emotions, sensations and behavioural impulses (Rothschild 2000), hence metaphoric creativity involves sensory input in seeking emotional transformation.

The stimulation and responses developed through interpreting visual metaphors are the foundations for accessing emotional disturbances and physical illness. It is well documented that individuals perceive and interpret creativeness that match their emotional states or feelings (Ulrich, 1999). Therefore making and viewing creativity serves to regulate mood. As outlined by Kövecses (1998) metaphorical interpretations can be used to convey emotions that language cannot explain.

Emotions drive our health and wellbeing. Greenberg (2001) states that healing emotions are vital in being able to access an inner source of guidance, whilst Myss (1996) states that by 'investigating one's attitudes, memories, and beliefs with the desire to release all negative patterns that prevent one's full emotional and spiritual recovery' (p. 48). It is through both spontaneous and directed creativity from unconscious impulses, memories and feelings (see Furth 2002) lead to positive changes in wellbeing.

It is well documented that positive emotional states can enhance memory recall (Isen, 1987), influence decision making (Damasio, 2000), motivate (Cabanac, 2002) and maintain wellbeing. It is within these concepts and considerations that Dharug healing utilises emotional content.





**Fig: 66**

**Title:** Traditional Dharug visual knowledge

**Descriptive storyline:** Metaphoric visual content within dreams link sensory feelings and experiences that can be restimulated through observing creativity which triggers an emotional response.

When we are deeply connected to the internal senses, emotional experiences to situations are balanced, organised and considerate to life's consequences. However, when there is disconnection of inner senses, emotions become disorganised, where thoughts are muddled and actions unreviewed.

Emotional pain can also emerge as physical ailments. In addressing emotional disconnection as a form of internal stress, there is a need to separate cognitive thoughts and emotional states of being (Wadeson 2000). Emotional healing therefore occurs when disconnected emotional sensory impulses start to reconnect and improvement where thinking becomes clearer (Pearson and Wilson 2007).

From a Dharug perspective, emotions precede cognitive thought as agreed by Cozolino (2002). Greenwood and Nunn (1994) states that in a response to emotional imbalances the body responds to 'desperate messages to the intellect in the form of symptoms, which are attempts on the part of feeling to communicate' (p. 23).

Within Dharug knowledge, internalised emotional and sensory imbalances are confirmed by physical observations. Therefore sound health is indicative to internal balance. It is through denied feelings and emotional turmoil that physical symptoms may appear and create tensions within the body (Greenwood and Nunn, 1994).

The philosophy surrounding Oolгна, the Dharug natural emotional alert system is a responsive mechanism that transmits intellect through sensory reactions.

When the natural alert system within the body is ignored or denied, a feeling of numbness grows within. Numbness refers to the disconnection or avoidance of feelings as such sensations become painful or too difficult to control. Disconnection from our natural sensory networks, are reflective of states within crisis or 'shutdown'.

Shutdown refers to the overwhelming overload of social obligations, traumatic experiences and situational circumstances where there is little avenue for self-control. Trauma is further discussed within this dissertation as it is reflective on internalised disconnection.



**Fig: 67**

**Title:** Shutdown

**Descriptive storyline:** Denied feelings create emotional turmoil that builds physical tension. Internalised numbing follows where disconnections or social avoidance become too overwhelming to control, leading to a state of crisis or 'shutdown'.

## **Dharug Healing practices in dealing with physical pain**

It is within Dharug metaphorical healing that conceptual thought as a form of ritualism transforms illness experiences (Kirmayer, 1993). As pain sensations are difficult to put into words, we tend to describe them in terms of metaphoric analogies of abstract reasonings. Communicating affirmations of physical interpretations are often performed through visual signals as a way of personal contemplation or an extension of thought process. Images drawn in the earth surfaces, or more from a contemporary perspective a pen and paper, are common practices in gathering thoughts and extending thinking. One may confuse this with the term doodling, but when closely observing the use of visual communications, there is actually deep thought and logic involved. Hence visual manipulations through observations are an important consideration in therapy as metaphoric content is often used within visual illustrations as ways of defining issues at hand.

When we consider that pain, in various forms, is a common aspect of being unwell, there is a need to seek out not only the physical location of pain but also consider pain messages from an internalised aspect. Coping mechanisms have been identified as being important to health and disease (Olff, Brosschot, and Godaert 1993). For example; pain messages from an internalised perspective can be due to social relationship breakdown, caused through the stress of worrying and if not addresses can lead to physical pain. Usually when we are in a state of stress our bodies react through natural substances, such as endorphins, the body's own painkiller. Noradrenalin underlies the flight-or-flight response by increasing oxygen levels (Allman, 2000). Noradrenalin and serotonin also assist in heightening the arousal to effectively deal with stress (Selye, 1993).



Endorphins for example create a sense of wellbeing and act analgesics to fight pain (Hartwig, 1991) which act on specialised sites called opioid receptors. These receptors are located throughout the central nervous system and once activated result in a potent analgesia (Yaksh, 1999). From a Dharug viewpoint, pain is a basic and essential human experience and response. In addressing pain, treatments include four main principles; heat, oil, country (land) and creativity. Heat is expressed through the use of warmth through heated stones, fire and sun light.

It is well known within contemporary medicine that the exposure to strong light increases our serotonin levels that are located within our stomach region (Oolгна) and brain. The use of tea tree, emu and eucalyptus oils as both a form of aromatherapy and ointment assists with breathing difficulties, as well as when rubbed onto the skin, provides relief from aches and pains. Eucalyptus leaves are traditionally used to also heal wounds and fungal infections. Emu oil is used to facilitate wound healing, pain alleviation and treatment of inflamed joints (Abimosleh, Tran, and Howarth, 2012), gastrointestinal healing and ulcerations.

Country, relates to walking and being exposed to spiritual issues within our lands; which can be interpreted as a form of exercise. Today we are aware that exercise raises the levels of serotonin with Lambert (2006) acknowledging that there has been rising rates of depression since times when we were hunters and gatherers. Within creativity viewing images in suffering and pain is also utilised within Buddhism as a meditational transference from pain to image (Kabat, Zinn, Lipworth and Burney, 1985).

Metaphoric use within creativity explores the micro dynamics of pain and suffering (Kirmayer, 2003) allowing disengagement or diversional activity from pain through simply observing.

Research supports that symbolic processes influence bodily experiences of pain through emotional reactions (Kirmayer, 2003). Dharug psychological theories are still consistent to contemporary practice with pain being viewed as having emotionally charged meaning (Kirmayer, 2003). Within Dharug healing, metaphoric creative form made within the earth's surface have the ability to release pain within emotional disturbances of internalised blocked energies through the absorption of images. This transference is a deep spiritual encounter based on cultural psychological processes that seek to release emotional negative energies in physical illness.

It is through creative making that strong emotions are released. For example, recounting painful memories involves both conscious and unconscious comprehensions. Visual metaphors not only allow for pathways of dialogue concerning difficult emotional experiences but encourage communal input and a sense of empathy. Empathy within Dharug understandings is an intuitive skill that provides a healthy vicarious experience.

This is why community involvement is vital within healing as feelings aroused within an empathic group engage not only expressed communal concern, but also intensifies other community members to express themselves. It is through creative forms of collective expressions that helps enhance recovery. Considering the enormous impact on historical trans-generational trauma since colonisation, collective group work is of importance in initiating healing.



**Fig: 68**

**Title:** Eliminating pain

**Descriptive storyline:** Through traditional Dharug healing creative practices and therapeutic physical manipulations assist in pain management. Symbolic form expresses the transference of pain from the body to the symbol.

## **Emotional trauma through metaphoric content**

Emotional trauma contains both physical and psychological reactions that have profound effects on memory (Van der Kolk, 2003). If left unaddressed shutdown of sensory disconnections occurs, in which Herman (1997) describes as a loss of control, and connection. The effects of emotional trauma for example include not only deprivations or shut down of our sensory immunities but also loss and confusion within physiological arousal, cognition and memory. Deprivation of sensory stimuli is noted with the many isolated Aboriginal communities living in unappealing, monotonous and repetitively dull lifestyles that is detrimental to health and wellbeing.

In seeking solutions to addressing sensory deprivation, holistic approaches to healing needs to ensure communities have not only the basic services but also have a stimulating environment to rebuild psychological wellbeing. This is well illustrated by Clark (2010) in early studies on sensory deprivation that found that human minds crave distraction. However it is not just our minds that crave distraction, but also our internalised emotions.

Emotional deprivation leaves a residue of unprocessed or muted feelings that often rise as chronic aches and pains, muscular tension and relationship breakdown. Time and again we witness this amongst Aboriginal Australians. For example, external and internal disconnections associated with trauma require a recovery process that focuses on relationships rather than healing through isolation (see Herman, 1992). Deprivation also actively inhibits thoughts and feelings and over time can gradually undermine the body's defences (Pennebaker, 1997).

Considering creativity inspires curiosity and is a way of emotionally expressing feelings, art based community centres offer multiple solutions to wellbeing. Considering the many recent Art based cultural centres located particularly in rural and remote areas within Australia, there is a need for funding bodies to recognise the value of social wellness within relationships rather than only noting success as an economic viewpoint. Community art based centres have the ability to provide an avenue that can foster self-expression, relieve isolation and encourage relationship exchanges through making and seeing. Creative spaces also offer an avenue in addressing past traumas of grief and loss. Laub and Auerhahn (1995) suggest that the experience of trauma within an innate culture is often difficult to express in words.

Creativity is one way to address traumatic experience through making, seeing and relating to others. From a traditional standpoint, trauma is addressed within creativity through metaphoric content where the observer seeks a connection using both emotional and cognitive representational process. Borden (1992) suggests that healing which incorporates metaphoric visual knowledges allows grieving to symbolise traumatic experiences, providing a portal to draw strength from stressful conditions.

### **Cultural Dharug healing symbols**

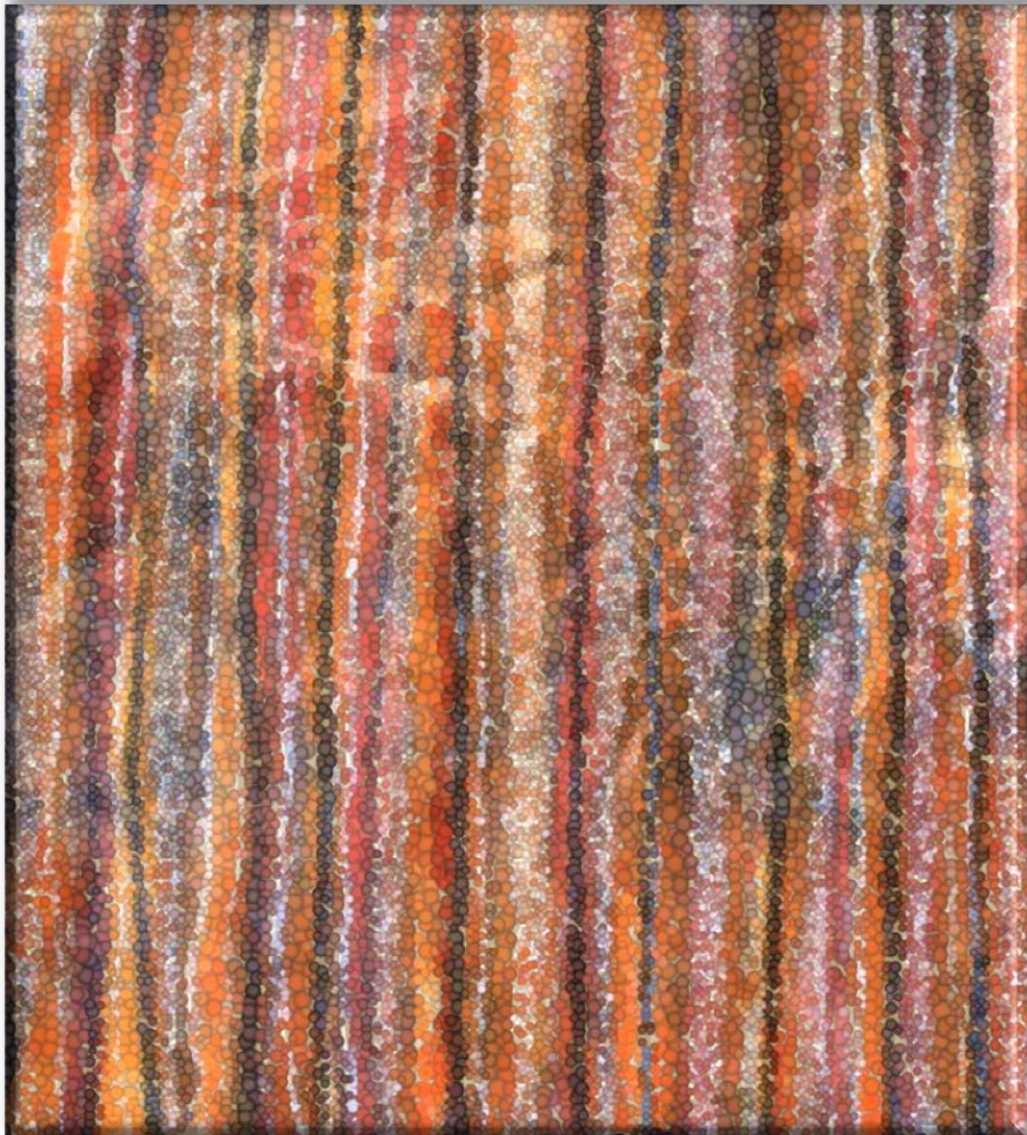
Cultural component within Dharug healing practices consider internalised sensory responses such as dreams to address health and wellbeing.

It is through these understandings that situations of experiences such as traumatic events are defined as circumstantial affects rather than forms of mental health issues.



This may be one reason why many Aboriginal Australians do not seek mental health practitioners for medications, as depressive states are associated with situational occurrences rather than a chemical imbalance. Visual cultural metaphoric symbols play a prominent role within Dharug healing. Within the next chapter visual metaphors expressed as symbolic images will be further investigated as way of expressing knowledges of cultural content. Unlike images, symbol transmits deep spiritual messages of social and cultural values that represent connections to land and deep spiritual ancestral connections.

Dharug symbols are visual expressions of knowledges of both conscious and unconscious reasonings that have the capacity to transfer the onlooker beyond the superficial boundaries of externalised form to pursue internalised clarity and meaning (see Lawler, 1991). Henceforth, visual cultural symbols act as transmuted processes to inform, connect and capture knowledge through the interplay of imagination, intuition and curiosity.



**Fig: 69**

**Title:** Visual expressions of knowledge

**Descriptive storyline:** Dharug symbols are visual expressions of knowledges that connect the conscious with the unconscious. It is the interplay of imagination and intuition that bring forth interpretations. This painting illustrates the connection lines between imagination and intuition.

Chapter 9 further goes on to explore symbols of both communication and healing properties that are collective reminders of cultural intent. Creative form offers a valuable form of exposing emotional truths and social disharmonies through a strength based approach. Hence visual illustrations not contain narrative informations but also have the ability to facilitate deep emotional healing psychotherapeutic process.





## Chapter 9

### Defining creativity within a psychological framework

Within this chapter, traditional Dharug healing processes are only disclosed from a creative perspective, with issues surrounding sacredness remaining protected knowledge. The purpose of exposing some aspects of creative making within traditional healing is to highlight the value, psychological interplay and belief systems that illustrate how visual form can enhance health and wellbeing.

Due to the countless attempts of Western health treatments to deliver culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal peoples, there is a valid requisite to highlighting components of traditional holistic creative practice. This is supported by the factual evidence of no existing literature of Dharug healing practices. Therefore this dissertation offers a unique insight and value of how traditional practices in healing through ways of making and seeing serve as a cultural porthole of understanding.

Dharug worldviews are a set of shared perceptions and interactions of natural adaptations (Olsen, Lodwick and Dunlap, 1992) which include customary traditions (De La Torre, 2004) and ancestral verity. Perception includes experiential insight based on relationships with all living things through equity, sacredness and significance (Simpson, 2000).

As opposed to Western perceptions within a healing component, theories are based on communal and environmental influences rather than the sole perception of self. It is this major variance which produces challenges in adapting programs to suit the collective rather than the individual.

Hence, the term 'creative' from a Dharug standpoint is bound within humanism, which considers ways of knowing from a shared standpoint. In contrast, western viewpoints consider creativity is an individualised process that enhances self-ability (Sawyer, 2012). To elaborate further, western art is often reliant on externalised subjective influences rather than internalised insight. This is why forms of making within healing provide a sense of enrichment to internal wellness.

Ways of making and seeing within creativity also lead to a deeper sense of understanding of cultural and spiritual importance within collective growth and harmony appreciated as having innate healing abilities. Interconnectedness establishes empathic behaviours through spiritual transformations (Koss-Chioino, 2006) that foster social insight. Thus spiritual transformations are psychological holistic approaches of cultural embodied sense making.

In considering spiritual interconnectedness, many theorists fail to recognise Aboriginal understandings of holistic importance within the environment as being a relationship based and spiritually transformative. Psychosocial approaches within Dharug practice consider the importance of relationships within the environment as an influential experience that facilitates health and wellbeing. In extending this further, a healthy environment creates healthy people. It is within these understandings that terms such as 'situational circumstances' express the influences of environmental conditions. From a Dharug standpoint situational attachment to space and place offer a culturally validated psychological system of knowledges, reflective to the natural environment.



For example, traditional healing ceremonies are performed on the earth surfaces with natural environmental resources such as plants, oils and animal products being part of treatments. Environmental spiritual connections are consequently spiritually symbolic, having an importance to social place rather than a cognitive space.

### **Dharug creative psychological healing**

There is minimal public literature from an Aboriginal perspective on psychological healing (Vicary and Bishop, 2005), possibly due to the overall disinterest in studying human transactions and relationships within natural environments (Ulrich, 1993). The categorisation of creativity as 'art' from a western perspective, also plays a key role in determining forms of making as ascetical rather than cultural knowledge, subsequently obscuring other inherent theories.

Dharug symbols are visual expressions of knowledges of both conscious and unconscious reasonings that have the capacity to transfer the onlooker beyond the superficial boundaries of externalised form to pursue internalised clarity and meaning (see Lawler, 1991). Henceforth, visual cultural symbols act as transmuted processes to inform, connect and capture knowledge through the interplay of imagination, intuition and curiosity.

### **Rudimentary symbols of collective reminders**

The intentional use of rudimentary symbols within healing offers uncomplicated memory recall embedded within Dharug learning systems. Within this process, simplified visual forms can be easily regenerated through imaginative and intuitive connections to bring sense making to a higher order.

Creativity furthermore engages cultural identity (Matarasso, 2000) as cultural symbols offer human responses to emotional and cognitive reactions within the physical and spiritual worlds. Jung (1969) also realised the significance of circular form within the Mandala symbol as an illustration of humanism.



**Fig: 70**

**Title:** Rudimentary symbols

**Descriptive storyline:** Simplified form of cultural intent.

Within a Dharug concept, circular form is a way of seeking reflective explorations which builds sense making through conscious and unconscious reasonings. Reflective explorations are considered a form of analysing experiences and circumstances; a form of processes that draws out internalised repressed emotional disharmonies into the conscious world.



**Fig: 71**

**Title:** Symbols of reflective knowledges

**Descriptive storyline:** Utilising imagination, intuition and a sense of curiosity through individualised insight provides multiple perceptions and viewpoints of seeing.

### **Dharug creative healing process**

Dharug healing practices involve holistic interpretations based on the interconnectedness within sensory mechanisms surrounding Oolгна, the energy centre of arousal and awareness. Oolгна is the storehouse for consciously felt arousal within the human body whilst unconscious awareness is a felt experience of deep intuitiveness that is ignited through imagination processes.

Imagination within healing is perceived as a process that allows a sense of freedom within open explorations in defining meaning. It is within these theories that traditional healing practices are based on internal identities as ways to address health and wellbeing.

Healing processes involve elements of collective cultural narratives through the manipulation of visually encoded symbols of internalised ritualism. The process of ritualised image making is a way of seeking spiritual transformations (see Turner, 1967) as healing is reliant on the awareness of inner feelings, intuitive gut reactions (Oolгна) and emotional responses. Ritual participation creates a psychological environment of emotional knowing within an internal space.





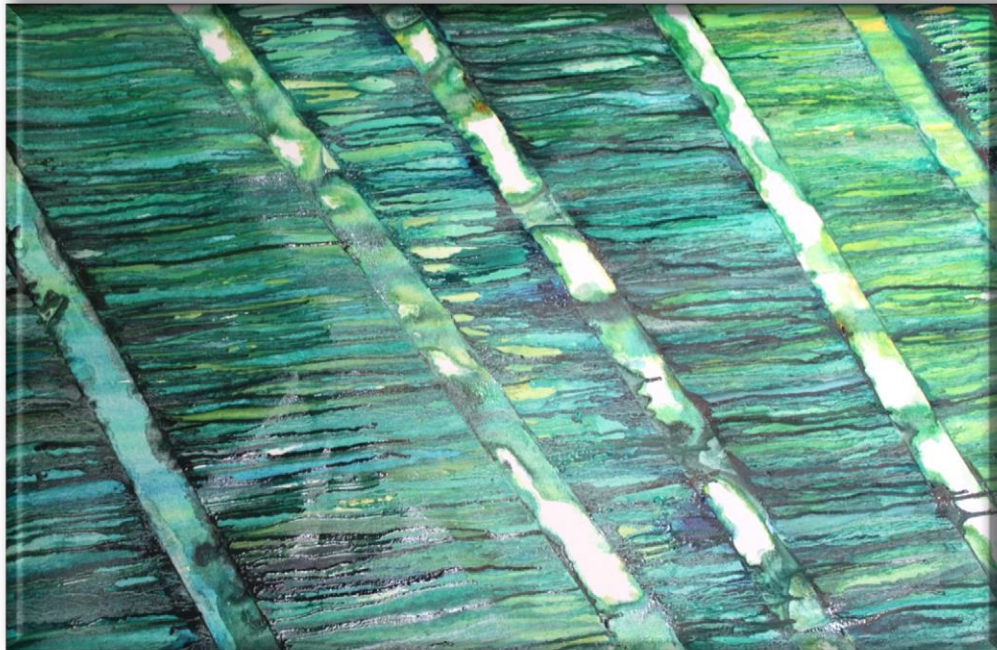
**Fig: 72**

**Title:** Oolгна healing symbol

**Descriptive storyline:** The symbol of Dhaurg healing is a holistic interpretation that illustrates interconnectedness of sensory energies. Displayed as a spiral effect, interpretations articulate internalised energies as an evolving process of open exploration in defining meaning.



It has been argued through social anthropologists that ritual participation increases communal cohesion, as forms of making and doing are ways of making meaning. For example, Richert, Whitehouse and Stewart (2005) suggest that rituals are an exegetical reflection that creates interpretation of shared meaning.



**Fig: 73**

**Title:** Ritual psychological creativity

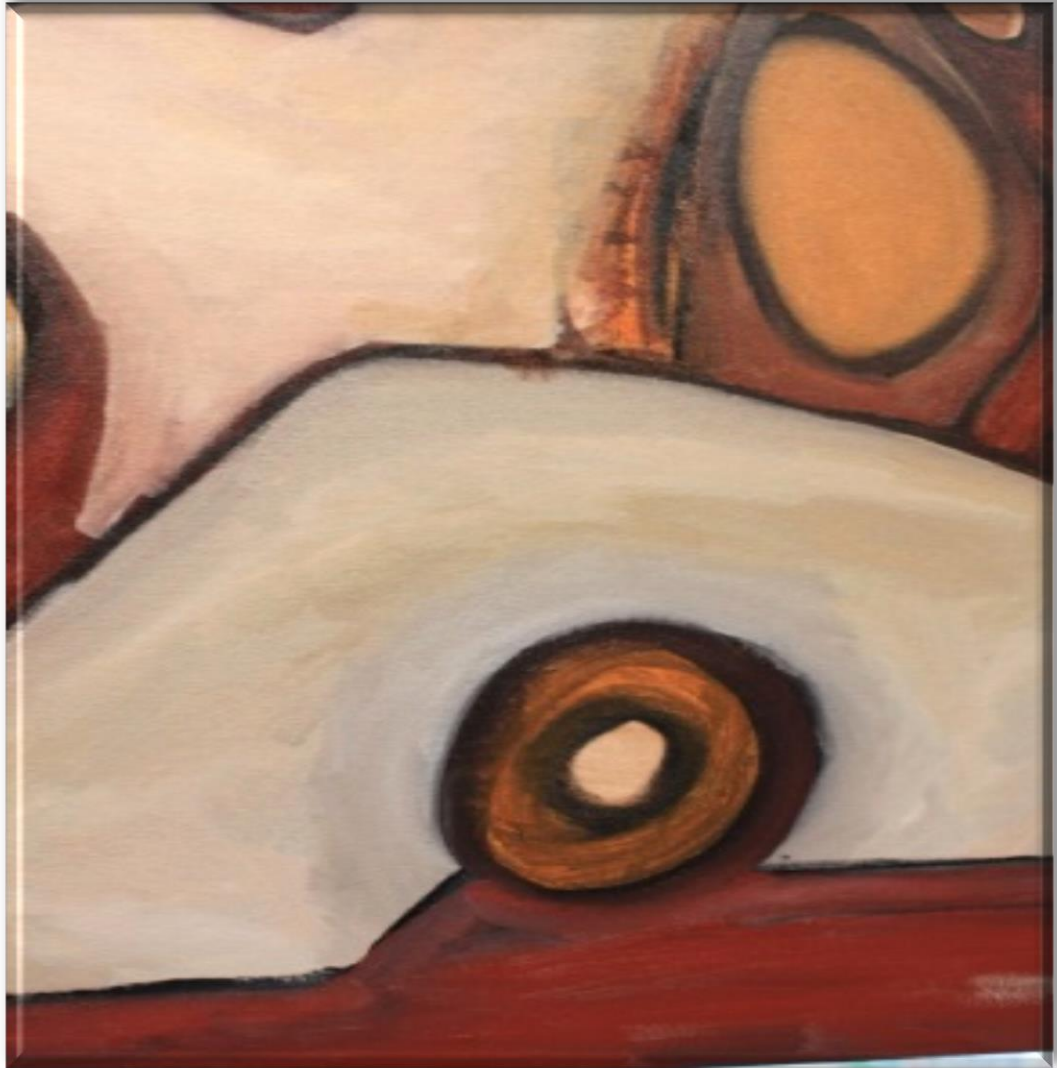
**Descriptive storyline:** The use of creativity within healing contains a sense of sacred ontology through physiological interpretations of cultural and spiritual messages representative to place and wholeness (Smalldon, 2008). Healing processes are based on the self-motivating desire to feel whole. Zhang and Bartol, (2010) confirm such theories by stating that state empowerment is influenced by both intrinsic motivation and engagement.

## **Psychological Place and Space**

Throughout Dharug Country there are many geographical areas of sacredness. These areas usually contain a strong psychic link to ancestral past and serve as a connecting point for spiritual interchange. Dharug country consists of multiple landforms that include rugged bushland terrain, soaring sandstone precipices, sea shores with abundant saltwater and fresh marine tributary systems.

Specific healing areas are often located in more sheltered areas within close proximity to salt and fresh water as both are fundamental to practice. Healing sights can also be recognised with areas containing soft ground such as sand surfaces that act as the bed or canvas for creative processes.

Dharug healing processes are multifaceted, complex, timeless and personalised. Traditional Dharug healing is fundamentally concerned with interpersonal interactions of ritual mediative enactments reinforced through cosmological manipulations of naturalistic mechanisms.



**Fig: 74**

**Title:** Creative expressions of Country

**Descriptive storyline:** Visual illustrations of Country are a psychological expression of spiritual and cultural significance. Rather than depicting Country in realistic style noted in Western interpretations, forms of reality elucidate spiritual components that reflect sacredness and belonging. It is these two components that offer a psychological reaction of emotional stimuli.

## **Psychological Approaches**

Creativity facilitated within healing is still considered a valuable form of exposing emotional truths and social disharmonies that are still witnessed by many Aboriginal Australians today. It is through making and seeing that cultural restorative processes are a means of gaining inner personal strength and empowerment.

From an Aboriginal standpoint, visual illustrations not only tell stories, but also have the ability to facilitate deep emotional healing psychotherapeutic process. Wadeson (1980) for instance states that 'creativity relates to ways of seeing, as a psychotherapeutic process' (p. 7), whilst Walsh (1994) finds similarities of traditional techniques within 'contemporary psychotherapies' (p. 7)

Similarities within traditional practice and current psychotherapeutic theories are noted within relationship based approaches. The use of group work and tools such as creativity are incorporated within both practices. However the key resemblances are within recognition of dreams and visions in self and collective analysis. Mutual comparisons in dream interpretations lie within seeking solutions to hidden meaning of memories, feelings and behaviours as a way of uncovering concealed internal conflict.

From a Dharug standpoint the body is the carrier of memories and is exhibited through bodily sensations. When internal memories become hidden or withheld, it is the belief that physical illness results as the build-up of negative toxins reacts to our energy centre (Oolгна) and creates imbalances and disturbances.

This is in direct conflict with western theories that identify memories to be linked in the limbic system (Rothschild, 2000) within the amygdala and the hippocampus. In arguing Dharug psychological theories, sensory input, perception and memory are all interrelated. It is through image making of emotionally driven conscious and unconscious thoughts that allows for strong connections to take place.

Whilst sacredness remains paramount within traditional healing identity, cultural transcendence is acknowledged within contemporary psychotherapy as illustrated through the acceptance that internal tension are suppressed thoughts and memories. Traditional healing practices are argued by Mann (1998) as a 'process of sacred psychotherapy .... of subtle energetic reality' (p. 147) with Hultkrantz (1992) also defining the link between the traditional healer and the psychotherapist in that they both help the unconscious become known and through doing so help to resolve the health problems being experienced.

### **Acquired states of mind**

Visual manipulations within the earth surfaces reflect a restoration process within health and wellbeing administered by the maker. Traditional Dharug Healers work within creative cultural boundaries where place is fundamental to ceremonial activity. Dobson (2007) affirms that traditional Aboriginal Healers work with all elements of life that consist of land, cosmology, ancestral connections and community. Wilson (2008) correctly describes ceremony as a form of connection between people and the cosmos, where Healers develop a safe space of spiritual inclusion.



There has been extensive literature documenting the nature of altered states within Indigenous peoples, worldwide but little has been recorded within an Aboriginal Australian framework. Altered states of mind are noted as meditative processes utilised by Sharman's to enable stronger connections to spiritual ancestors and the beyond. Misconceptions and a sense of romanticism from western sciences have had a negative impact on traditional practices. Such labelling includes descriptions of altered states being related to schizophrenic episodes, witchcraft and devil worshipping (Silverman, 1967). Little is mentioned of the sensory interplay of acquired mind frames.

From a Dharug perspective, trance like altered states have been incorrectly interpreted. Considering the multiple forms of sacredness associated with acquired states of mind it is not surprising that much confusion exists. The most common observational descriptions involve the use of hallucinatory drugs. Boorstein (1980) provides a more accurate holistic interpretation by stating that altered states of consciousness are produced by isolation, certain psychoactive drugs, and repetitive behaviours.

Although isolation is not a common practice within Dharug healing, The Healer did seek the use of a white flowered plant to obtain a deep spiritual connection which included repetitive ritual to produce a hypnotic state. The use of pituri, commonly known as wild tobacco (*Duboisia hopwoodii*) is often used within healing, particularly when the patient is in physical distress. Pituri has an active nicotine ingredient (Low, 1987) that is 12 times stronger than the nicotine. Such natural plants are also noted being used within American shamanism (Wilbert, 1987). Pituri when mixed and prepared with additional natural plants substances intensifies the level of potency to increase stamina to maintain lengthy healing ceremonial practices.

Alternative states of mind are also created through repetitive behaviours enhanced by rhythmical chanting and creative visual patterning.



**Fig: 75**

**Title:** The Healer, The Psychotherapist

**Descriptive storyline:** Holistic relationships within therapeutic practice bases knowledge on responses and reactions of thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

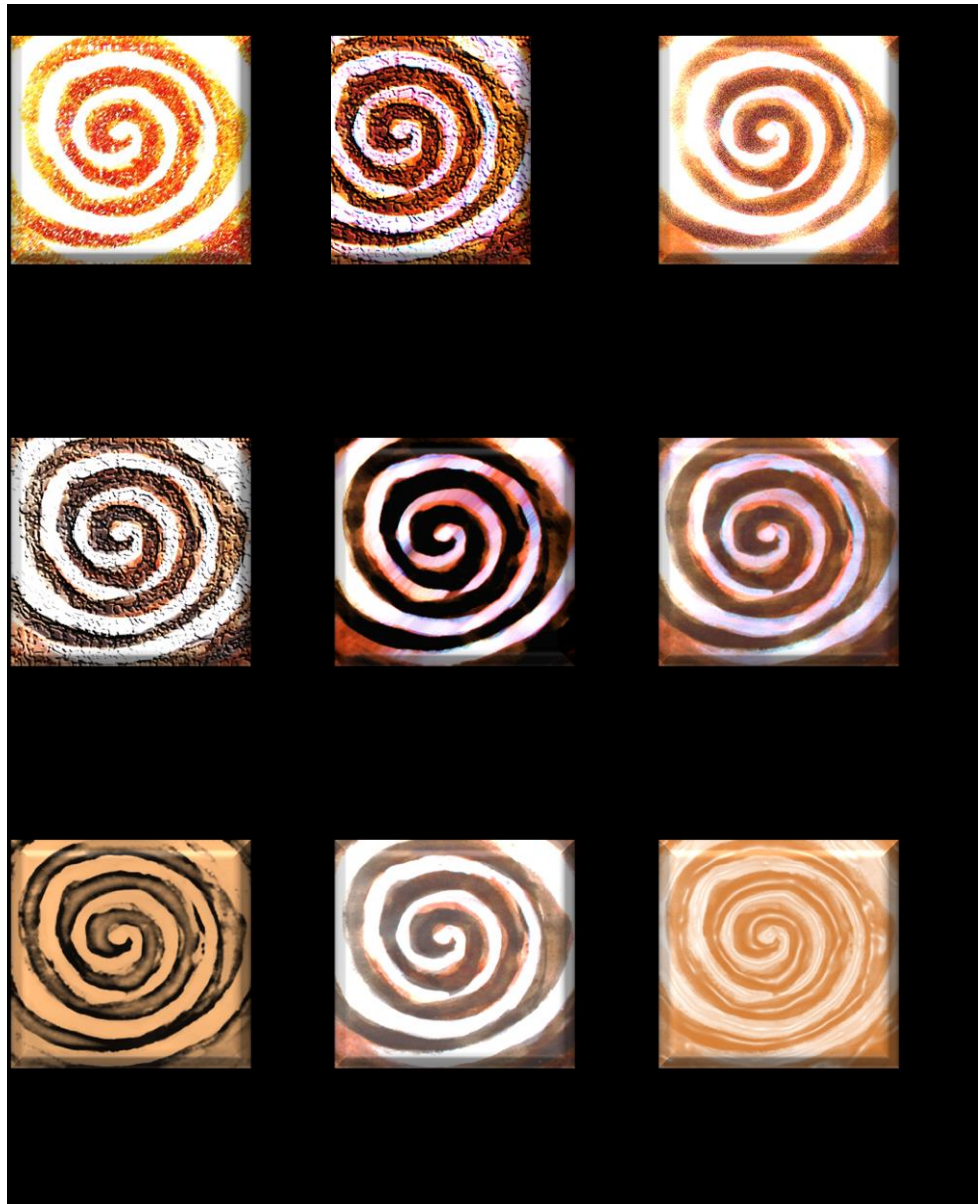
## **The science of acquired states**

Western scientific research also acknowledges that changes within electro-encephalograms demonstrate increased alpha brain wave activity within traditional Healers during sessions (Sugano, Uchida and Kuramoto, 1994). This indicates that acquired states of mind can be achieved through not only hallucinogenic drug use but through an ability to go beyond the normal boundaries of seeing. Other influential factors involving the relationship between Healer and patient confirms that a patient's brain waves can change to realign more positive pattern (see Sugano, Uchida and Kuramoto 1994).

It is through spiritual guidance that relationships between other worlds are an influential component in reaching acquired states of mind. The making of symbols for example in creative processes is an observational and cognitive interaction, guided by internalised ritualised dialogues. Deep forms of ritualised responses are illustrated through the use rhythmical repetitive symbols that bestow a transformative affect.

Spiritual manipulation within making offers an alternative process to thinking and seeing, where ritualism creates an illusion to the mind. Traditional healing techniques received through dreaming states are instigated from spiritual connections and later reinterpreted to community.

Spiritual guidance concerns balance, harmony and cosmic order (Wane, 2002) that contains instructional informations of sacredness of place and being. It is through ritual creativity that spiritual experiences are evoked within a psychosocial space.



**Fig:** 76

**Title:** Ritualised relationships

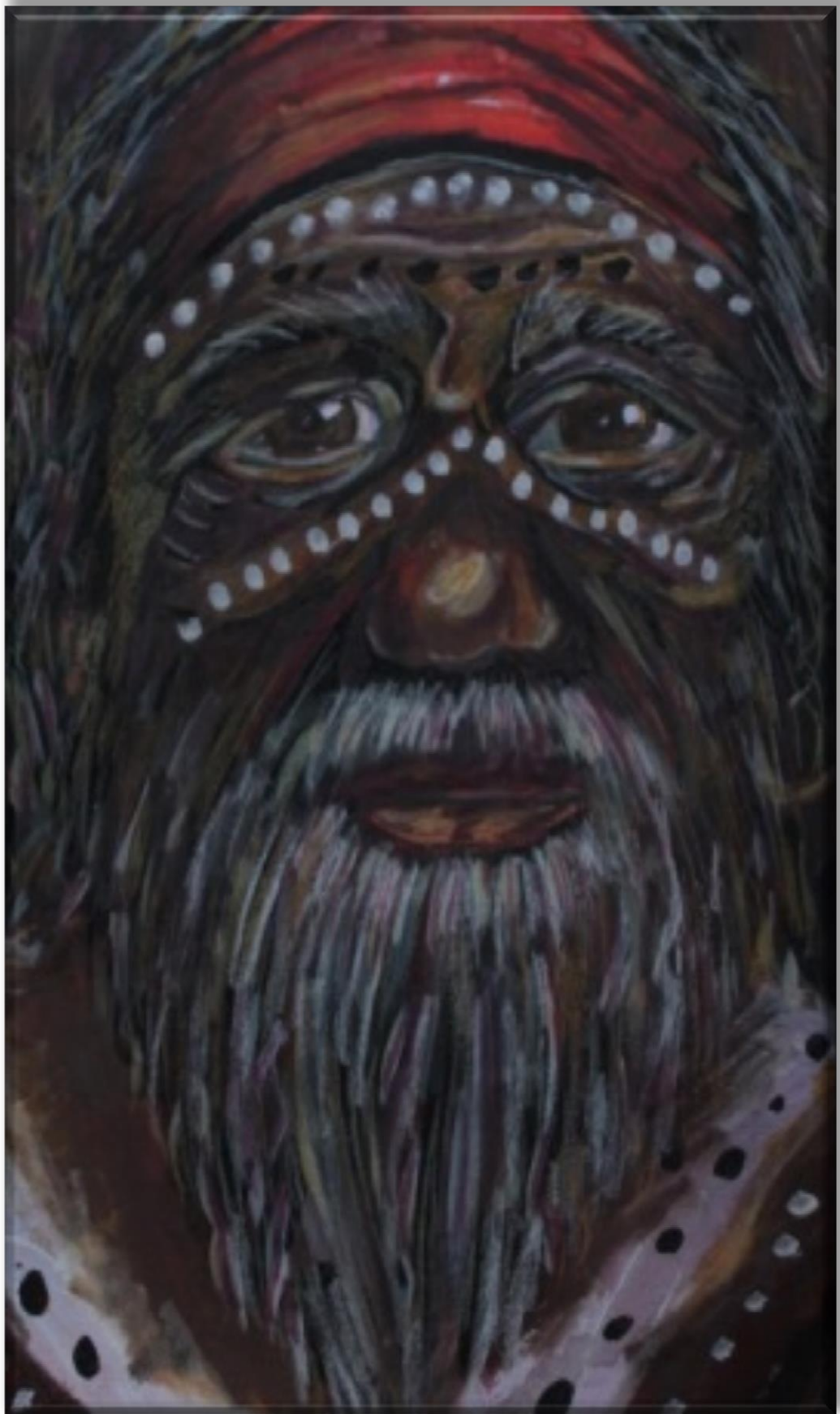
**Descriptive storyline:** Making symbols is an observational and cognitive interaction, guided by internalised ritualised rhythmical dialogue.

Entering into acquired states as a practice is precise and controlled by transitory states of consciousness into a resilient trait of consciousness (Walsh, 1995). Entering into altered states of consciousness is a way to delve into the spiritual realms. It is through the use of multiple control human sensory interactivity that embroiders awareness.

For example, auditory processes are intensified through responsiveness to rhythmic repetitive chanting and musical clap sticks sounds. Ceremonial chanting is viewed as provoking a deep spiritual arousal that unites Oolgha to place and space. Rhythmical symbolic visual form also facilitates a change within sensory receptors that creates an illusionary where perceptions, insights and experiences are influenced within the created environment. The whole affect creates a spiritually intense association of cultural rawness, void of stress, fear and anxiety.

From a patient's viewpoint, traditional healing offers a culturally validated process that bypasses the conscious mind and allows direct interaction with subconscious awareness and body relationships. Cultural healing allows individuals to perceive things differently through emotional and physical measures. Focus lies within the unconscious mind to provide avenues for healing, as it is believed that the conscious mind can be manipulated, externally influenced, limited by ideas and entrenched in set judgements. Thus the healing journey encompasses the purity within unconscious reasonings where multi viewpoints are void of judgement and a sense of freedom in thought, action and response is united.





**Fig: 77**

**Title:** Creative Healer

**Descriptive storyline:** Alternative states of mind are achieved by the Healer through creative forms of closely spaced repetitive rhythmical patterns that can induce a powerful illusion. Illusionary form connects with the senses to activate responses.

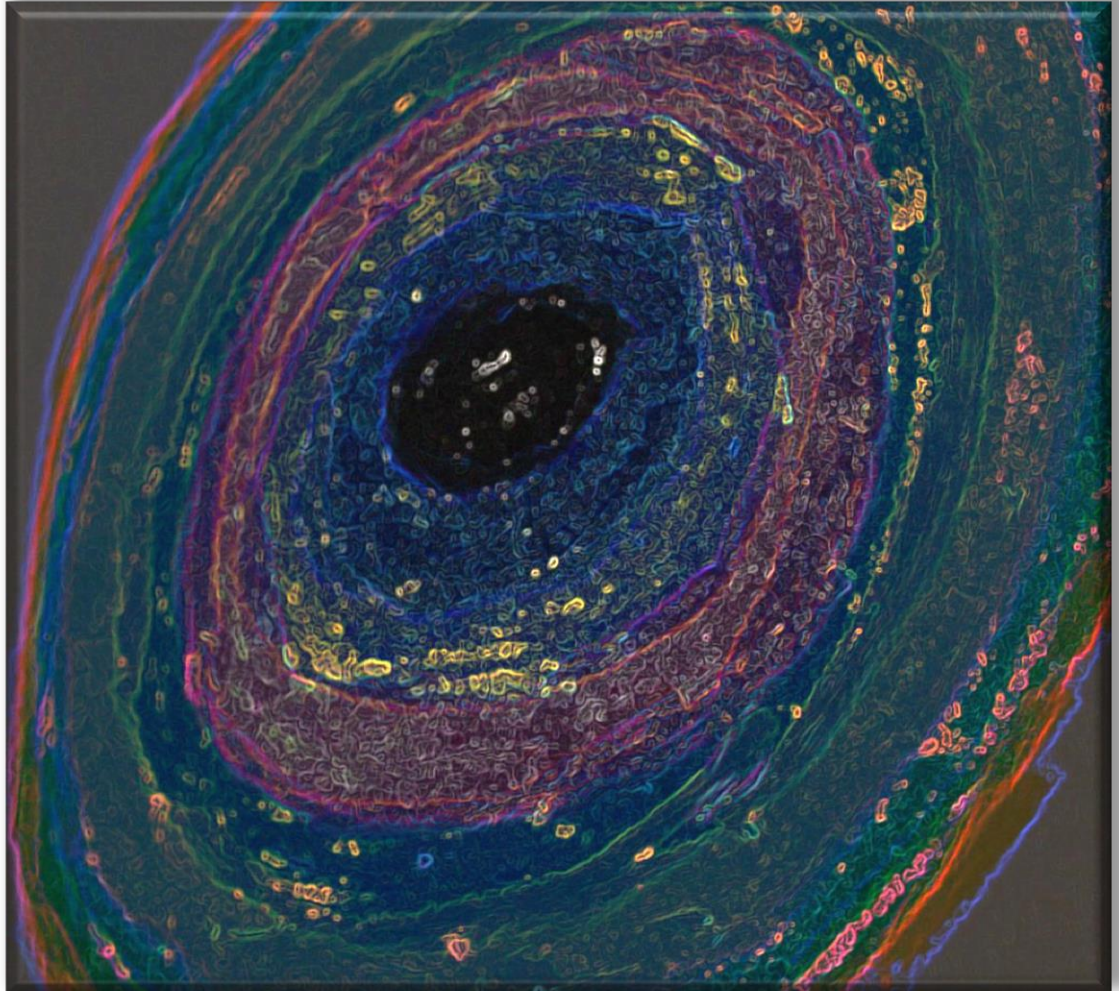
### **Preparation within process**

Preparation is essential to process and requires physical, emotional and cognitive energies to engage all the senses. Healing practices require preparation prior to regular consultation. This process may be difficult for non-Aboriginal practitioners to understand as planning is timeless and physically draining on the Healer. Preparation is also considered an act of commitment from the Healer to the Patient.

Preparation of place is an essential component to processes in healing. Place relates to the geographical area of sacredness that holds value to that community group, whilst space relates to the organised significance. A preparation within space includes creating a deep hole in the soft earth where a fire is built. Once the fire has heated sufficiently it is covered over with sand or soft soil where circular creative form of the Oolga is inscribed.

Spiral imagery is then prepared outside the circle as an illustration of cosmic energies. It is the spiral that acts as the transference of illness, assisted by travelling dreaming lines.

Zucchelli (2007) has similar theories in the interpretation of symbols, stating that spirals represent the 'constant flow of energy' with circles 'believed to symbolize the navel from which all life comes' (p17). The centre of the circular ground imagery In Dharug healing also represents the sacredness of cosmic spiritual space, usually identified with strong indentations made by stone markings.



**Fig: 78**

**Title:** Oolгна making

**Descriptive storyline:** First applications in ceremonial healing





**Fig: 79**

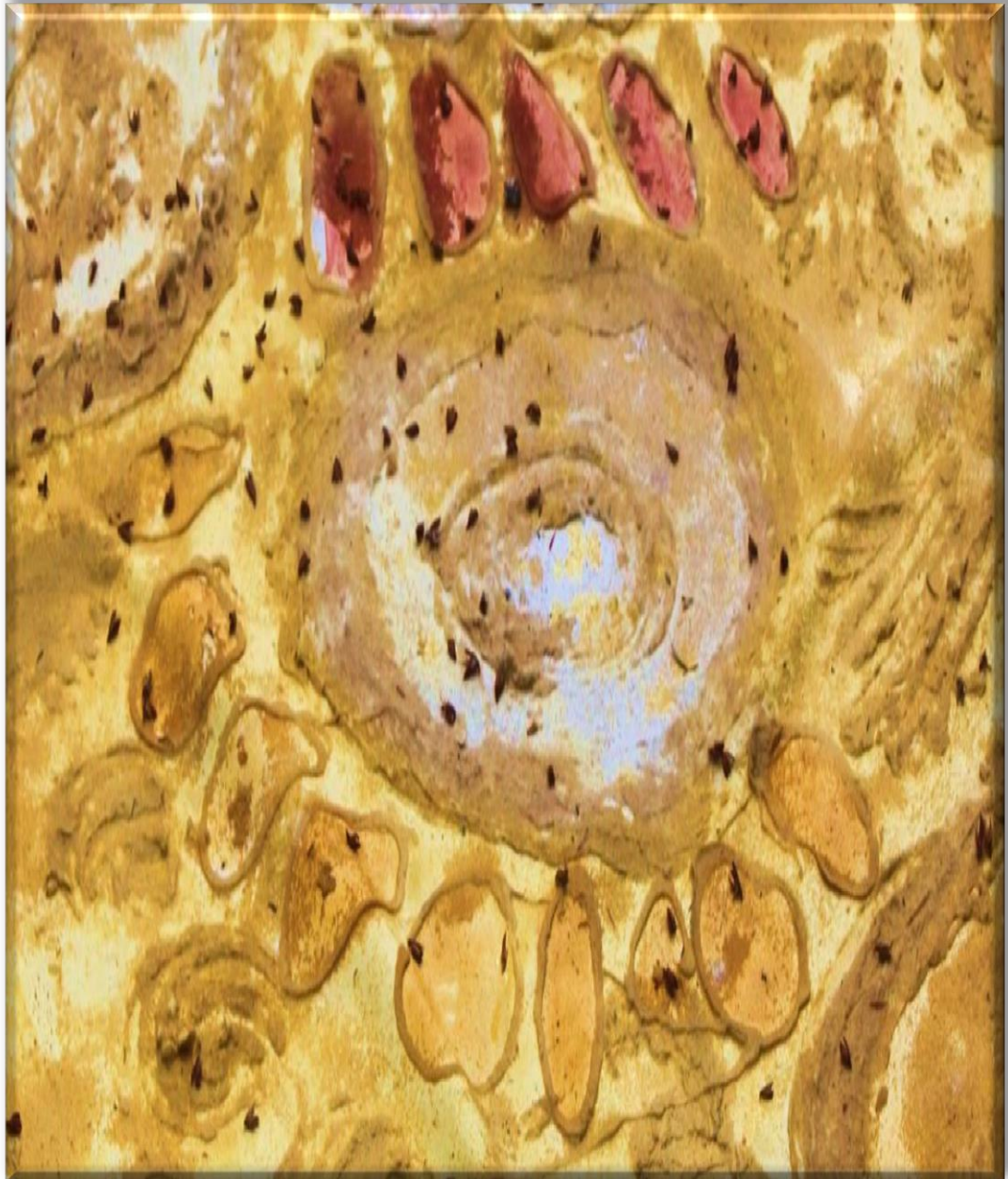
**Title:** Oolгна energy making

**Descriptive storyline:** Second applications in ceremonial healing

Surrounding the central circular image of Oolгна, rod like oval shapes are inscribed that are representational to bodily electrical energies. In ill health such shapes are considered negative and need to be expelled and replaced by positive energies. The making of such symbols acts as visual confirmations of the dispelling movement.

The next process involves the address to internal illness or dysfunctions that are often represented by rod like shapes attached with rhythmical wavy or squiggly. When applied in a rhythmical and repetitive pattern, these symbols act as diagnostic inscriptions associated with negative energies. The purpose of using repetitive form is to facilitate a pathway of transferences between negative energies into more positive forces. Therefore the process within healing functions to revitalise internal wellness where illness is trapped within the body and released into the external world. The notion that sustains such practice is that it requires more energy to store emotional illness than it does to confront it. Emotions are believed to be a storehouse of energies. When negative energies form in the body they contain different frequencies that communicate messages to the Oolгна centre, creating a psychological response. It is these negative energies that created toxicity, leaving the body in a state of numbness and weakness. For example, imbalances can cause the Oolгна and other parts of the stomach area to experience digestive problems that can infiltrate into other areas of the body. Coincidentally, contemporary sciences identify diseases as rods like shapes with wavy lines, such as bacteria under a microscopic lens. Interestingly recent scientific studies of bacterial in the lining of the stomach microscopically look like spiral shapes with curved rods associated with stomach ulcers and cancers (Egan and O'Morain, 2007).





**Fig: 80**

**Title:** Oolгна energy making

**Descriptive storyline:** Second applications in ceremonial healing. Once the initial circle has been formed other symbols are applied that relate to internal energies.





**Fig: 81**

**Title:** Energy symbols

**Descriptive storyline:** Third applications in ceremonial healing

## **Additional methods**

The use of fire is also representational of expelling negative energies and provides safe protective mechanism from undesirable influences. Smaller fires are lit around the central circle where gum, tea tree or eucalyptus is smoked. Smoking ensures that no negative forces enter the circle and thus acts as a protective measure. Oils such as tea tree, eucalyptus and emu are used in body massage techniques for the relief of ailments as well as an agent to assist with cleansing.

The individual is rubbed with oils and plant extracts, wrapped in paper bark and laid on the covered heated coals. Following the procedure the images are wiped away, removed or destroyed. The purposeful destruction of image making is due to the understanding that the individual's illness has been transferred to the image and hence may contain disease, emotional trauma or spiritual negativity.

From a Dharug perspective, heat keeps blood flowing, whilst a cold environment thickens the blood to keep the body warm. Using heat within traditional practice is associated within internal relaxation where muscle tensions can be relived, pain can be minimised and emotional comfort eased. Heat is therefore an important contributor to reducing pain related sensations surrounding the Oolгна. For example stomach and back aches are associated within Oolгна disturbances that are often noted by digestive dysfunctions, gastrointestinal disorders, abnormal bowel functioning and nutritional disturbances within the consumption of foods.

## **The science of Dharug healing**

Transference process within Dharug creative healing is arguably a science, developed over generational experiences, where data has been imprinted within memory via imagery and narrative storylines. For example, Oolгна dysfunctions are illustrated by anticlockwise spirals whilst positive health is characterised by rhythmical spirals expanding from a clockwise direction. As the Oolгна is considered the belly of internal knowledge, image making relates to wellbeing and spiritual growth.

Of further interest, studies by Gershon (1998) who extensively researched the stomach area (Oolгна), describes it as the enteric or second brain. Gershon argues that the enteric brain is independent from the mind brain, having its own reflexes and senses that creates reactions when exposed to physiological stress.

Gershon associates the enteric brain with a higher sense of consciousness that acts as an alert system through sensory warning signs of threat. This is also validated by Rhee, Pothoulakis and Mayer (2009) who state that the enteric brain is a mechanism for stress responses and behaviours.

**Fig: 82**

**Title: Symbol 1**

**Description: Positive energies**



**Fig: 83**

**Title: Symbol 2**

**Description: Negative energies**



Signs and symptoms of brain disruptions or disorders have been noted to include inflammation, chronic abdominal pain and eating disorders (Mayer, 2011). Stress-related symptoms also include gastrointestinal disorders, including irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and inflammatory bowel disorders (Reber, 2012). This has created a recent surge in gaining further knowledges to the links between the enteric brain and disorders such as obesity, gastrointestinal and stress-related psychiatric disorders such as depression (Maes, Kubera, Leunis and Berk, 2012). Hence one can speculate that there is increased recognition from western sciences on the importance on Ooligna as an indicator to psychological stress.

### **Healing Ooligna**

Ooligna relates to our internal mechanisms and connections of balance and harmony. Hence healing considerations to Ooligna are paramount. It is the belief that if we are not in balance from within, external wellness will not take place.



Begay and Maryboy (1998) have formed a close analysis of Oolгна through noting First Nations American epistemologies that describe 'everything in the cosmos is connected and that all physical bodies and all minds are expressions of a deeper spiritual essence' (p. 277) as 'the mind, body and spirit is intrinsically interrelated with the cosmic whole' (p 323).

### **Loss and trauma within Dharug psychological healing**

Oolгна has always been noted as a response to life stressors and hence influences emotional reactions. Dharug traditional Healers have always worked within the stomach area believing that Oolгна is the primary location of bodily balance and harmony.

In addressing Oolгна, the Healer is also aware of over stimulation associated with chronic stress, fear or build up emotional chaos. Over stimulation of the Oolгна is believed to confuse feelings and restrict the ability to express logical thought. Inhibiting thoughts and feelings are considered unproductive internal energies that will gradually undermine the body's defences (see Pennebaker, 1997) and cause the nervous system to overload. Overload creates disconnection within mind, body and spirit that results in confusion and chaos. Under stimulation of the Oolгна blocks natural emotional reactions but also produces health problems within the stomach and intestinal system. One example is the change of bowel functions that include irregular movements, constipation and diarrhoea. This is prevalent in today's society with disorders now labelled as irritable bowel syndrome for example, yet little attention is paid to the Oolгна, internal chaos and mind, body, spirit disconnections within treatment plans.

Loss of Oolгна is also associated with bad business. Bad business relates to an Aboriginal understanding relates to negative spiritual involvements. Unhealthy dealings are caused by unexplained illnesses (Cawte, 1996), forms of sorcery or 'pay back', which has similarities to an eye for an eye. It is the belief within many Aboriginal nations that bad business can occur through doing wrong or causing offense to cultural and spiritual lores. Breaking taboos or marrying wrong skin groups may also cause distress within Oolгна. Taboos within Aboriginal nations are unique within each community groups based on individual customary lores. Taboos are a set of codes of conduct that place restrictive practices within daily living. Marrying wrong skin concerns an established lore that ensures mortality and social morals within a group is upheld, acting as a set of guidelines to protect close family intermarriages.

Today Oolгна loss has moved into a new realm due to sensory distractions and loss of cultural knowledge. Overload can be witnessed by the multiple distractions of modern stimuli including visual and auditory technologies that places trust in externalised forces rather than internalised humanism. Loss of Oolгна also creates external disassociations within relationships and internally creates disturbances within our sensory functioning and emotional strengths. For instance Sandner (1996) describes loss of Oolгна within First Nation American peoples as 'soul loss', associating this with depression. Similar to Dharug thoughts and theories, soul loss is the displacement of an individual's spiritual link to cultural satisfactions and meaning.

Loss is therefore related to an emotional detachment, general disinterest in life or physical illness. Winkelman (2002) also associates soul loss with traumatic events, whilst Glenn (1995) expresses loss as a fragmentation of internalised impairment.



**Fig:** 84

**Title:** Soul Loss,  
Loss of Oolгна

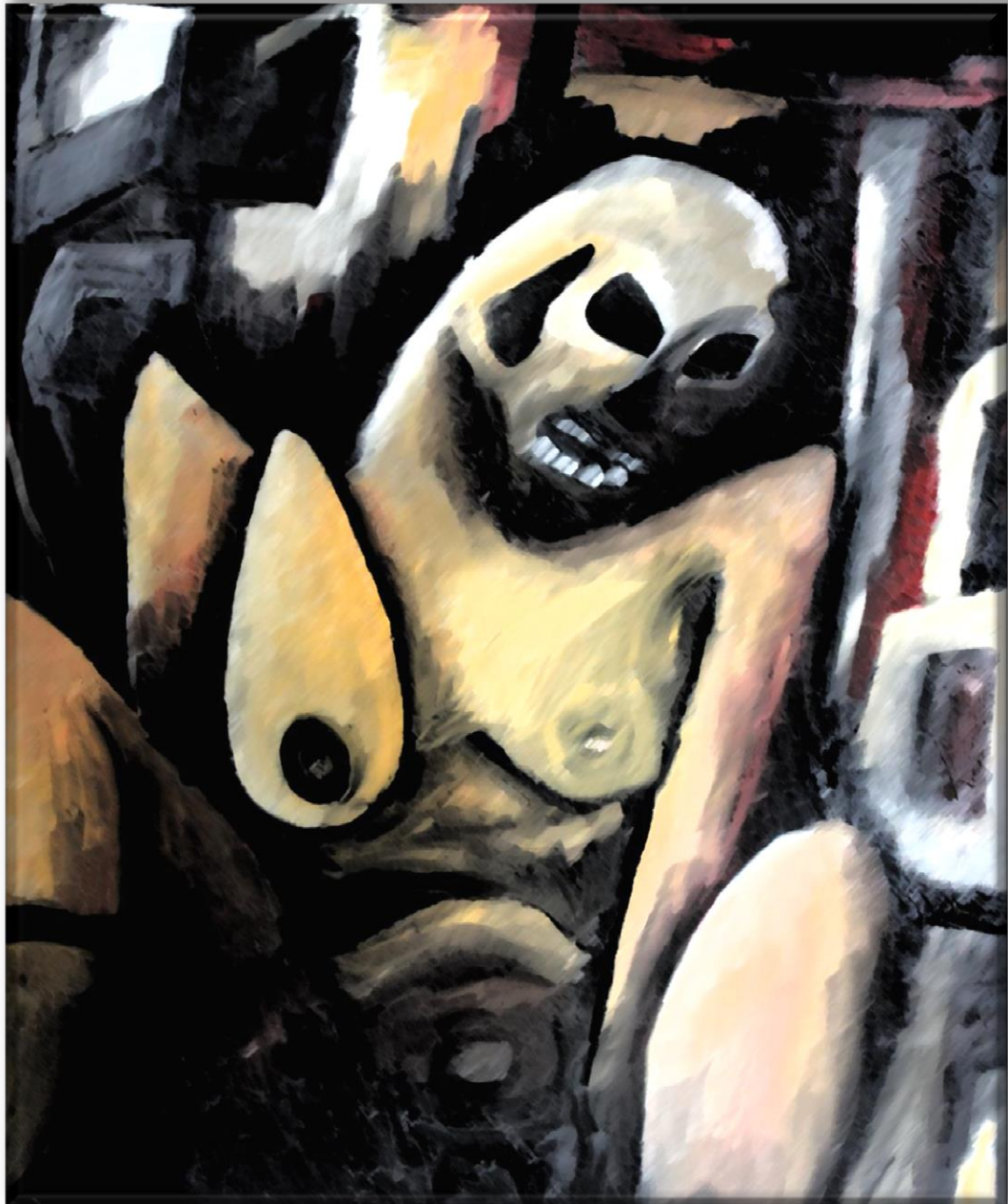
**Descriptive storyline:** Loss of Oolгна can have devastating effects on strong connectivity's of mind, body and spirit relationships.

## **Creativity as a psychological process**

Creative making is a way to illustrate emotional thoughts through responsive action. Within traditional theories, creativity is reflective to emotional feelings, hence serves as a diagnostic tool in identifying states of dispositions. Ulrich (1999) forms a similar argument by stating that individuals tend to perceive, interpret, and have associations with forms of creativity in ways that match their emotional states or feelings. Interestingly, within current research it is noted that individuals diagnosed with depression connect with negative images (see Martin, Ward, Achee, Wyer, 1993) with mood demonstration to state of mind. Literature on mood and creativity demonstrates both positive and negative influences within creativity.

Whilst some evidence suggests that positive mood can enhance creativity (see Isen, 2000), other studies have demonstrated negative effects (see Kaufmann, 2003), yet little has been considered creativity as a form of diagnosis. It is therefore argued that Art based therapies play a role within diagnosis in establishing mood specifics. However, within Dharug traditional healing techniques, creativity is used to specifically diagnose internal feelings and acts as a tool to draw out harmful energies.

Traditional healing perspectives remain fundamentally important within today's society as a way of interpreting, understanding and addressing emotional, cultural and spiritual inquiries. These arguments are based on the belief that the body holds memory and if not addressed will continue to impact on health and wellbeing issues. Schwarz and Perry (1994) also confer that within unaddressed intense emotional experiences the body over-reacts when faced with new stressors.



**Fig: 85**

**Title:** The mirror of feelings

**Descriptive storyline:** Images reflect internalised feelings of emotional mood states. Negative imagery is often provides a window of personal expressions that reach out to self and others as a form of sense making.



In considering how traditional creative healing practices can adapt within a contemporary society, making and seeing still offer a way to express and draw out emotional disharmonies. Whilst there are recognised avenues to express emotional states through developing reflective imagery that corresponds to mood, little is considered as to how images can manipulate feelings.

From a creative standpoint, Dharug therapeutic approaches illustrate how making and seeing connects to emotional space and holds value self-discovery and self-development. From within these research findings it is argued that discrepancies lie not only within entrenched categorisations of 'art' from a Western perspective as being simply a pleasurable or satisfying self-motivated activity, but a system of knowledges and cultural implantation. It is thus disputed that in labelling creative making as ascetical ideal, opens individual criticisms, judgements and material value to form or effect. Hence there is no avenue of spiritual function or cultural reasoning. Such reasoning counteracts the creative freedom within making as individuals or groups are less likely to participate in making when there are known viewpoints of judgement in product outcomes.

It is within these notions that contemporary art based therapeutic practices struggle to survive within Australian health care systems as trusting relationships between client/therapist need a sense of credulous within unrestrictive judgement. From a Dharug picture creative making offers a non-judgment environment where inhibitions in artistic flair have no place within society. Inhibitions draw on negative intake of energies and thus decrease personal abilities.

To elaborate further, viewing creative form has the capacity to change mood and internal feelings. It is argued that emotional manipulations are achieved through engaging the seven senses when observing visual form.

Thus, sight, touch, imagination, intuition, can build a sense of curiosity to entice emotional change. The following case study highlights this process.



**Fig: 86**

**Title:** Imagery influences emotions

**Descriptive storyline:** Ways of seeing influence emotional states. When we look at this case study we are able to identify how colour alone can create different emotion reactions. The first illustration contains the use of darker hues that is often reflective to feelings of coldness, void of initial attraction. The second image uses red hues that may project feelings of intensity, whilst blue hues noted on the third image speaks serenity. Colours offer a connection to present mood but also have the ability to change future emotional states.

Within this chapter, it has been argued that there remain some consistencies in traditional Aboriginal psychological approaches to contemporary theories. Most arguably are the psychotherapeutic reasonings that relate to personalised centred based approaches. What has constantly appeared throughout this research is that traditional visual knowledges have consistencies and relevance to western scientific investigations.

This is staunchly documented by amalgamated theories of both Aboriginal and Western scientific findings that internalised processes hold value to health and wellbeing. Within this chapter there have been numerous findings that place Aboriginal Dharug knowledge as a forefront leader in understanding how internal systems work within the external world.

In the following chapter contemporary creative therapies are investigated and compared to traditional appreciations within making and seeing. Through a comparative consideration, evidence supports the importance of participation within creative processes as a form of symbolic communication that considers psychological understandings relating to the human senses as essential components to healing.





## Chapter 10

### Creativity within contemporary therapies

Leaving behind those things that have wounded us  
and caused us pain....

Healing gives us back to ourselves. (Mackean 2009)

Traditional Dharug creativity within healing is adaptive to change and therefore is an appropriate culturally sensitive therapy in contemporary society. Today most people acknowledge 'art' as being of aesthetical value yet overlook the positive benefits of the natural processes and reactions involved in making and seeing. This chapter focuses on a comparative study within traditional creative healing processes and contemporary art therapy practices to illustrate similarities of grounded Dharug knowledge. Traditional creative healing practices have been compared to contemporary art therapy (Colub, 1989), although there are also differences within practice and process.

#### **Defining Contemporary Art Therapy**

Contemporary Art Therapy practice is a blending of art and therapy which focuses on the inherent healing influences of creative processes (Malchiodi, 1999). Inherent factors relate to growth originating from traditional philosophies in therapeutic making. Hence it is argued within this chapter, that contemporary practice in Art Therapy has developed out of traditional knowledge.

The American Art Therapy Association, (2012) defines creative therapy as a human activity which embraces making to improve and enhance well-being. Within these understandings, there is considerable evidence to support creativity as a valued benefit to health. However there is relatively little literature that discusses bodily immersions within creativity such as traditional Dharug earth practice and processes. A lack of published information and loss in cultural knowledge has created a void to the importance of immersion within creativity. Yet immersion within creativity provides the answers to cultural differences and understandings of image making as opposed to art production.

Contemporary Art Therapy highlights the value of participation, which Waller (1993) defines as a healing space to communicate self-expression. Other findings regarding communication within creativity are expressed by Kavalier-Adler (2000) in stating that making connects both preventative and curative measures to facilitate developmental growth, self-integration, and self-differentiation.

In presenting a Dharug perspective, I argue that traditional creative making and seeing (Bangawarra Naa) offers a space where communication is non-direct, achieved through the immersion of self and others within a mediative state. Whilst Kavalier-Adler expresses self-integration, self-developmental growth and self-differentiation, traditional practice also requires communal input.

### **Sensory responses within making**

Similarities within Dharug philosophies of sensory perceptions in making are noted by Hackmann (1998) who argues that within creativity expression is a conscious reaction that possesses sensory qualities, rather than being of 'purely verbal or abstract' (p. 301) conditioning.

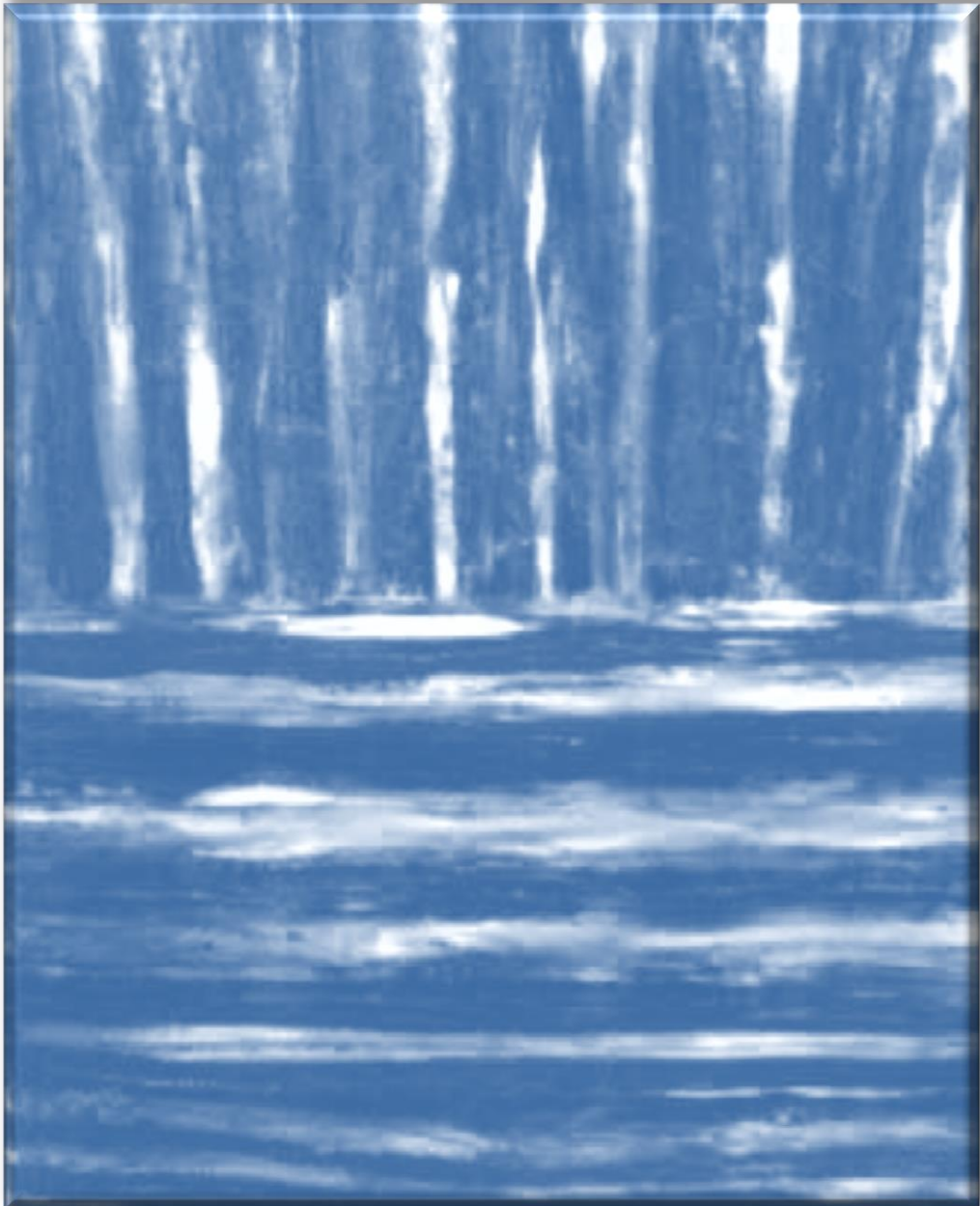


Steiner (2009) also confirms that making is a conscious expression of sensory stimuli, however does not highlight similarities within Aboriginal perspectives as being the origin of such theories. Interestingly, Rogers (1993) has a more aligning viewpoint to Dharug philosophical understandings by arguing that emotional sensory stimulations tap into inner perceptions. Rogers's comments on sensory stimulation relating to inner perceptions are more suggestive of Dharug healing principles relating to the Oolгна, the holder of internalised feelings.

Rogers (1980) also argues that creativity is also an unconscious process with Malchiodi (2007) placing considerations to intuition and imagination as an important role within sensory activation. Rogers states that 'the seeds of much of our creativity come from the unconscious, our feelings, and our intuition' (pp. 4-5) as therapeutic healing environments revolves around humanistic psychologies (Rogers, 1980; 160). Although Rogers does not acknowledge intuition as a component of the human senses, confirmation of additional intellectual insight is clarified.

Sensory visual stimulation in addressing psychological states of imbalances in Dharug healing is also noted within contemporary art therapy practices. With sensory stimulation representational within dreams, visions and spiritual encounters, self-felt interactions associated with embedded memory. This process was traditionally used within traumatic experiences as a way of revitalising memory recall by exposing hidden emotional imbalances. Comparative theories are expressed by Malchiodi (2007) who acknowledges that sensory stimulation within creativity reduces stress of felt traumatic memories such as grief and loss by activating memories that occur within dreams and nightmares. Horowitz (1967) also affirms that memory taps into a variety of human senses, with Gil (1991) endorsing sensory activities as a natural language to express trauma. Hence these notions provide evidence of the link between past and present practices.

When considering the importance of the seven human senses within traditional creative practice it is necessary to identify and clarify how making attracts connections to sensitivities within emotional expression. The question postulated is how does creativity reflect the personal attributes of emotional states? The answer lies within individual emotional responsiveness to colour, form and style. Colour for example is used as a diagnostic tool for uncovering mood and emotional states because different hues can reflect the emotional status of an individual. The following visual study illustrates how colour identifies and captures emotional mood.



**Fig: 87**

**Title:** Emotional responses with seeing – study

**Descriptive storyline:** Blue hues create a subtle mood that offers a calming effect.



**Fig: 88**

**Title:** Emotional responses with seeing study 2

**Descriptive storyline:** Red hues offer a totally different perspective to emotional mood. The effect is strong, dynamic and intensifying. Red hues create a defiant mood that activates internal alarm systems (Oolгна). Slashed lines act out additional emotional effects that emphasizes change and nuances of internal intercurrents.





**Fig: 89**

**Title:** Emotional responses with seeing – study 3

**Descriptive storyline:** Green may appear transcendental to place and space. It can create a sense of coldness or void in lacking empathy. Green hues are often associated with a loss of emotional feelings, especially when associated with dynamic strong lines.



## **Memory enhancement within making**

Within Dharug healing, memory retrieval is an important aspect of healing as repression creates blockages of internal imbalances that can later develop into physical illness. Illness is viewed as an increased internalised build-up of negative energies that overloads sensory activity. It is this overload that creates a state of chaos, where bodily senses shut down due to a reactive response of internalised feelings. Shut down refers to the internal energies no longer being able to perform due to overwhelming feelings or inability to cope and respond to situational circumstances.

Whilst some Indigenous Healers may term this as soul loss, from a Dharug standpoint, the term Oolгна loss is more consistent. The argument lays in the location and responsive actions of Oolгна, being the central internal system of bodily emotional functions, rather than being seen as a more spiritual concept.

Corresponding viewpoints are noted by Meyer (1997) in recent studies, who concluded that reactions to the exposure of trauma create an overload of the senses as a protective mechanism where the senses shut down as a coping measure. In relations to suppressed or hidden traumatic memories recent evidence are now being acknowledged as an internal imbalance. For example, Pert (1999) indicates that expressed emotions are held within the body and is a recognised stressor that can become symptomatic over time.

## **Cognitive responses within making**

Dharug creative practices consider imagery as a deep internalised psycho-neurological construct within healing, which implies making as both a cognitive and emotional process. Therefore activations of mind, body and spirit require the dual processing of all parts of the head and stomach brains as cognitive thought entwined within emotional response creates reaction.

In other words, it is reaction that creates change through combined deep thinking and feeling. This theory is only recognised by few Western researchers. McNamee (2004) for example states that success within Art Therapies lies in the integration of both the right and left hemispheres of the brain, but places no acknowledgement to the stomach brain.

It is well noted that the majority of Western theories base the relationship of creative cognitive thinking occurring only within the right hemisphere of the brain. For instance Klorer (2005) argues that the right hemisphere of the brain controls sensorimotor perception, integration and social-emotional input. Malchiodi (2008) also supports this theory by stating that storage of memory is located in right hemisphere with the left brain being associated with verbal activity and has no role within creative healing.

In arguing dual brain processes within sensory stimulation from a Dharug standpoint, conscious cognitive realities and unconscious imaginary explorations are necessary to reawaken repressed memories.

One similar theory is expressed by Durgin (2002) who suggests that sensory arousal with imagery triggers emotional reactions. Interestingly, neuroscience theories indicate that art therapy can help balance the brain and restore neuronal systems that were damaged by various kinds of trauma (Hass-Cohen, 2008), whilst McNamee (2005) states that art therapy can serve to

integrate right and left brain functions that, in turn, help integrate experiences on a non-verbal level. Lusebrink (2004) also argues that cognitive processes are symbolic to memory recall, as a way of seeking restorations within self and the environment (Malchiodi, 2003).

### **Emotional responses within making**

Dharug creative healing philosophies place an emphasis on spiritual and emotional issues in addition to mental and physical health (Moran and Fitzpatrick, 2008). Spiritual and emotional issues involve both individual and collective healing in order to restore balance and harmony (Chansonneuve 2005; Ross 2008). The goal of Dharug healing is to desensitise emotional responses within environmental influences through responsive sensory reactions stimulated through creativity. It is through this process that healing within unconscious emotional trauma can surface into consciousness reasoning (see Cicione, Fontaine, and Williams 2002).

Traditional creative healing within trauma focuses not only on externalised physical signs and symptoms of the body but the holistic nature of the person. This is also confirmed by Furnham and Forey (1994) who states that the utilisation of creativity is a process which humanises health treatment through the interaction of emotional and spiritual responses. Emotions are felt responses with 'healing as a coming into touch with the real forces of life' (Barasch, 1993 p. 318). Dharug emotional realities consider internal and external life forces that include dreams, spiritual guidance and natural environmental signs and signals.

James (1982) states that psychological emotional consciousness is an intuitive process where connections are made within the environmental surroundings including the divine and the universe.

From a Dharug perspective, emotional connections are emphasised within creativity, where making and seeing involve internal sensitivities and external responsive action. Unconscious sensitivities create an internal arousal which ignites conscious awareness. Rogers (1993) affirms such notions by stating that creativity 'lead(s) us into the unconscious, bringing to light new information and awareness' (p. 30).

Internalised responsive sensitivities and responsive externalised action are considered within Dharug healing practices as a process, process being a way to discover new knowledge. Interestingly Haplin (2003) provides credence to traditional Aboriginal practice by stating that to seek new knowledge within creativity; impulses and sensations are a 'joining art and psychology to facilitate embodied learning and expressiveness'. (p. 74).

In other words image-making cultivates and nurtures ritual form of thoughts and emotions that are consciously unacknowledged or unaddressed (McFarlane, 1993) through the recognition of internal stimuli and influences. Thompson (1997) takes this a step further by stating that 'creative impulse (are) a means of unveiling what is ordinarily hidden from everyday awareness' (p. 60). Making has the capacity to raise self-awareness to reveal imbalances of illness that are reflective of personal narratives. Rosner and Ilusorio (1995) also refer to creativity as a means of revealing personal stories of illness and emotions understandings.

The process of self-awareness within Dharug healing practices places emphasis on the connection between self-discovery of creative form and emotional state. This process is considered important as the pivotal initiation to self-recognition. Interestingly, Horowitz (1970) within recent studies states that 'a person can often tell how the image entered awareness, its duration, associated emotions, the relationship of the emotion to the external world,

efforts to change or dispel it, and the sequential or simultaneous arrangement of a series of images (p. 3).

The relationship to the external world is considered a responsive action where rediscovery of concealed internalised disharmonies are exposed. Sapolsky (1998) also affirms that through the self-discovery of image making emotional triggers are activated and hence are responsive to repressed memories.





**Fig: 90**

**Title:** Holistic relationships

**Descriptive storyline:** The deep importance within relationships to all living things holds the basis for the foundations to healing. Therefore healing needs to focus on all environmental aspects within an individual or group dynamics.

### **Imaginary responses within making**

Imagination is the free flow of spontaneous energies of both conscious and subconscious experiences which activates and stimulates sensations and feelings (see Whitehouse, 1999). Imagination therefore forms a bridge between internal feelings and the external environment that Schnebly-Black and Moore (1997) refer to as an inner vision of life.

From a Dharug perspective, creativity activates imaginative through spontaneity. Imagination is considered a nonlinear space that channels interpretations of symbols stimulated by internal dialogue. Ackerman (1999) also refers to nonlinear space as an embodied experience that lies between the subconscious and the collective unconscious. Imagination as a spontaneous act is considered a guided interlude between the spiritual worlds where cultural symbols are unconscious interpretations of reflection. Interestingly Art Therapist Naumberg (1947) states that symbols are a reflection of the unconscious mind, where thoughts and feelings are expressed through images rather than words.

Imagination and curiosity are highly driven by simplified form such as traditional cultural symbols. Simplified traditional form is void of complexities and chaos, this allowing the free flow of energy for imagination and curiosity to take place. Creative making within a therapeutic practice considers transpersonal aspects of spontaneity within imagination as a means to foster conscious awareness. It is this process that enables individuals to build alternative solutions to problem solving. Knill, Baba, and Fuchs (1995) recognise this psychologically induced process as a way to find creative answers to complex conundrums.

### **Building relationships within making**

Dharug relationships are more complex than Western appreciations, where humanism is linked to all living things. The kinship system was traditional complex and structured with strict taboos concerning skin (marriage) relations.

Relationships are also paramount to healing that places importance on participation as a group activity rather than individual consultations with the Traditional Healer. Complex relationships are witnessed through healing interpretations within health and wellbeing as when one individual is suffering, the whole community suffers alongside.



**Fig:** 91

**Title:** Relationship Space

**Descriptive storyline:** Dharug relationships are complex, structured by strict taboos and customary lores. Relationships are also paramount to healing. This illustration depicts how some relationships are strong and harmonious whist other struggle and create confusing situations.

Within traditional relationships symbols made within healing carry part of each community member, hence close association are necessary as a part of the process. From a contemporary Art Therapy standpoint similarities can be found in numerous literatures, including McNiff (1981) who describes creative interactions with others 'as an interactional process, and in order for the relationship to succeed there must be a mutuality of response' (p. 57). Ridenour, (1998) also concludes that relationships provides social benefits, builds social confidence and connectedness (Hampshire and Matthijsse, 2010) that improve ego functioning within relationships with self, others and world views (Scotton, Chinen and Battista, 1996).

### **The Maker, the Healer and the Therapist**

Traditional Image making as a process is built through trans-generational knowledges that consider psychological attributes of cultural differences to contemporary therapeutic practice. Discrepancies also lie within spiritual processes based on ritualism, lore and customary practices.

Within traditional healing, no one participant is considered more important than the other, as all members including bystanders play an active role within the healing process. The Dharug Healer is only one active player (Avery, 1991) but remains symbolically central to process as the Knowledge Holder (Waldrum, 1997). The role of the Dharug Healer is to facilitate restorative health and maintain a balance in well-being (Avery, 1991) initiated through culturally safe pathways of ritualism.

Healers support the social and emotional welfare of communities (see Moodley and West, 2005) by seeking specific underlying causes prior to treatment (Acheampong, 1989).

The role of the Healer is to correct imbalances based on considerations of space and place. This process involves a personalised holistic treatment that considers all aspects of an individual and groups experiences. Illness is seen more than a pathological concern as diagnostic treatment considers spiritual and cultural manifestations such as sorcery, soul loss, Oolгна imbalances and spiritual intrusions.

Art based therapies do not place considerations on such encounters nor is there cultural associations with spiritual, rituals and cultural validations. For example, ritualised cleansing ceremonies are often incorporated prior to practice as a way to ensure negative energies are removed before commencing treatment processes.

Traditional Healers worldwide recognise ritualism and ceremonial practice as a reflection of visual spiritual form. For example, Dharug visual symbols are culturally sacred, representational of spiritual knowledges and communally interpreted through ritualised processes. Non-permanent ground imagery within a Dharug context is guided by complex spiritual belief systems of customary lore, where the Healer is the artist, the artist being the Healer. This is in direct contrast to contemporary Art Therapy practices where symbols are personalised, being based entirely on imagination in order to capture emotional and social understandings.

Whilst imagination within visual healing is a part of Dharug philosophies, it is more actively associated as a process of emptying the mind through a meditative state that allows images to form (Sandner and Wong, 1997) and function; hence there is no associated to self-inventiveness. In clarifying further, Dharug symbols used in ceremonial rituals contain elements of ancestral knowledge and are therefore considered alive.



Ritual practice within healing is therefore a living thing, where image making is bound within customary lores rather than an imaginative self-constructed activity. Similarities can only be observed through some First Nation American healing practices where creative imagery is also embedded through ritualism (see Morrissey, 1996).

Within the realm of contemporary practices in Art Therapy there is little attention given to visual cultural and spiritual content from an Aboriginal standpoint. Yet the parody lies within recent research conducted within the field of psychoneuroimmunology that acknowledges deep cultural beliefs as an important weight in determining a patient's level of mental and physical health (Ader, Felten and Cohen, 1991). Evidence in illustrating the power of cultural beliefs is also offered from Elliot and Eisdorfer (1982) who through studies examined the relationship between a patient's belief system and traditional Healers in Mexico. Concluding evidence supports the notions that spiritual healing processes improve emotional shifts, and physiological conditioning.

If current research supports cultural practice, then questions can therefore asked as to why there is no apparent follow through of acceptance within traditional practice as a recognised field of knowing. Perhaps evidence points more to the misleading and often damaging responses concerning traditional healing practices worldwide that have resulted on entrenched historic categorisations.

Devereux (1961) concludes that shamans are mentally 'deranged' (p.1089), having similarities with acute forms of schizophrenia (Silverman, 1967) of 'non-reality oriented ideation, abnormal perceptual experiences, profound emotional upheavals, and bizarre mannerisms' (p. 22) are such examples.

According to Silverman the only difference between shamanic states and contemporary schizophrenia is 'the degree of cultural acceptance of the individual's psychological resolution of a life crisis' (p. 23). The close connections between Aboriginal spirituality, medicinal practices and health are often overlooked by medical researchers (Eckersley, 2007). The relationships within Aboriginal social processes and manipulations of cultural symbols as a physiological response (Laughlin et al., 1992) are also over shadowed.

### **Cultural safety within making**

Cultural safety is critical to healing, with relationships based on acceptance, trust and security as being the first step to healing process (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2008). Safety is argued by Rogers (1993) as the core condition to healing that involves 'a safe, supportive environment' .... created by having facilitators...who are genuine, warm, empathic, open, honest, congruent, and caring' (p. 30). Mason (2000) also concludes that 'environmental safety and security supports disclosed expressions to achieve a sense of meaningfulness' (p.431) through building cultural awareness. Safety from a Dharug standpoint is seen as a state of deep trusting relationships where and cultural fulfilment is freely accepted and acknowledged.

Safety is often witnessed as place based as it fulfils a cultural need of spiritual desire. Therefore, place not only relates to the physical world but also to the spiritual, where a sense of safety and protection is paramount prior to healing commencing. It is through traditional ritual cleansing ceremonies that cultural process reinforces self and collective assurances and security.

From a contemporary standpoint, place still requires consideration, but has adapted to environmental expressions that relates to the internal landscapes of services, that utilise cultural promotional materials such as visual images, language styles and Aboriginal specific literature that presents familiarity. Creating a culturally safe place encourages personal ease of mind, body and spirit and thus inspires participation. Rogers (1993) also affirms that 'a safe environment is always the first requisite for becoming more deeply aware of the unconscious' (p.162) and performs the role of promoting acceptance of Aboriginal concepts.

Recognition of the connections worldwide of the value of creativity within contemporary society is now of growing interest, particularly in England and America. From an Australian viewpoint, creativity as a form of therapeutic value fails to gain credence, in light of recent studies that confirm cultural practices, spiritual sacredness and deep connection to land are essential aspects to wellbeing (McLennan and Khavarpour, 2004).

This indicates an impassive response to Aboriginal cultural credibility that remains embedded within many Australian viewpoints. This lack of comprehension is also witnessed by Australian government in facilitating long term funding to more regional and remote areas to enhance community wellbeing.

### **Cultural and physiological differences in making**

Whilst there has been a range of comparative validations that support similarities within healing and therapeutic theories, one key aspect remains unaddressed. Dharug making and seeing places fundamental importance on guided immersion of creativity to mind, body and spirit absorptions that are considered paramount to removing body toxicities.

Making within Dharug healing involves the patient lying within creative form rather than being the instigator of creativity. This is performed by the Healer with community involvement in both narrative interaction and creative making. It is the immersion within creative form that yields a sense of self through heightened sensory interactions where creativity and body become one. The merging of create and bodily form is considered a natural process where deep imaginary and intuitive sensations create new ways of seeing. Hence the patient also plays an active role in healing.

### **Old ways, new life in making**

Considering the numerous similarities between traditional Aboriginal healing and contemporary Art Therapy practices, conclusions can be made that making remains a highly valued source of culturally appropriate care. It would also be conclusive to state that contemporary Art Therapy has adapted out of traditional practices although cultural and spiritual context is often omitted. Considering Dharug knowledges are built on adaptive and evolving philosophies, creative healing still holds value within contemporary society. In claiming Art Therapy as a new movement denies past ancestral knowledges of visual form as an effective process in achieving wellbeing.

### **Addressing contemporary illness within traditional practice**

A history of restrictive racial government policies prohibiting traditional healing practices was reinforced by western missionaries and government practices that emphasised a sole control of European influences based on Christian principles.

This left almost no avenues for traditional forms of healing for a nation of Aboriginal peoples. The forced removal of Aboriginal children not only had a devastating effect to communities but created a hole within the transference of transgenerational knowledges. This was particularly relevant within health and healing practices where knowledge is based on extensive relationship transferences.

Loss, misconceptions and struggles within traditional healing methods added additional stress on the inability to address change through culturally appropriate and recognised pathways.

From a contemporary viewpoint, many non-Aboriginal health practitioners are hampered by the lack of clear and practical information on Aboriginal therapeutic interventions (Waterman 2004). Additionally, traditional Healers have little experience with complex forms of associated with acts of genocide, forcible child removals and racial prejudices (see Tom- Orme, 1993).

The result is a Nation of peoples in a state of crisis with an overwhelming proportion of individuals and communities, including traditional Healers that need healing. Unaddressed internalised trauma needs to be seen as therefore a product of circumstantial situations rather than labelled as a mental health deficiency.

The resulting impact from unaddressed colonial trauma is a barrage of emotional imbalances where internalised negative energies have been redirected into destructive behaviours and attitudes. This is later passed onto the next generation as normalised learnt behaviour which is noted as a form of sensory numbing. The consequences of sensory numbing lay evident in issues surrounding low self-esteem, poor internalised connections,



dysfunctional behaviour and depressive attitudes. Outcomes include redirected violence within social networks witnessed through family destructions, pugnaciousness behaviours, hostility and physical assaults.

Recent research conducted by Zubrick (2005) found high self-esteem to be a significant protective factor of mental health, along with that strong positive relations, physical exercise and positive parenting as part of healing solutions. Considering self-esteem is a fundamental component in maintaining strong physical and mental health, healing needs to include solutions that build self-worth. In achieving self-esteem from an Aboriginal context, cultural activities build a strong sense of identity in developing resilience to negativities. Physical activity relates to being on country and being learning fundamental appreciations of seasonal activities that also provides a sense of self-worth through the acquirement of knowledges associated with sustainable living. Spiritual connections also provide a sense of self-worth in caring for cultural obligations associated with Country.



**Fig:** 92

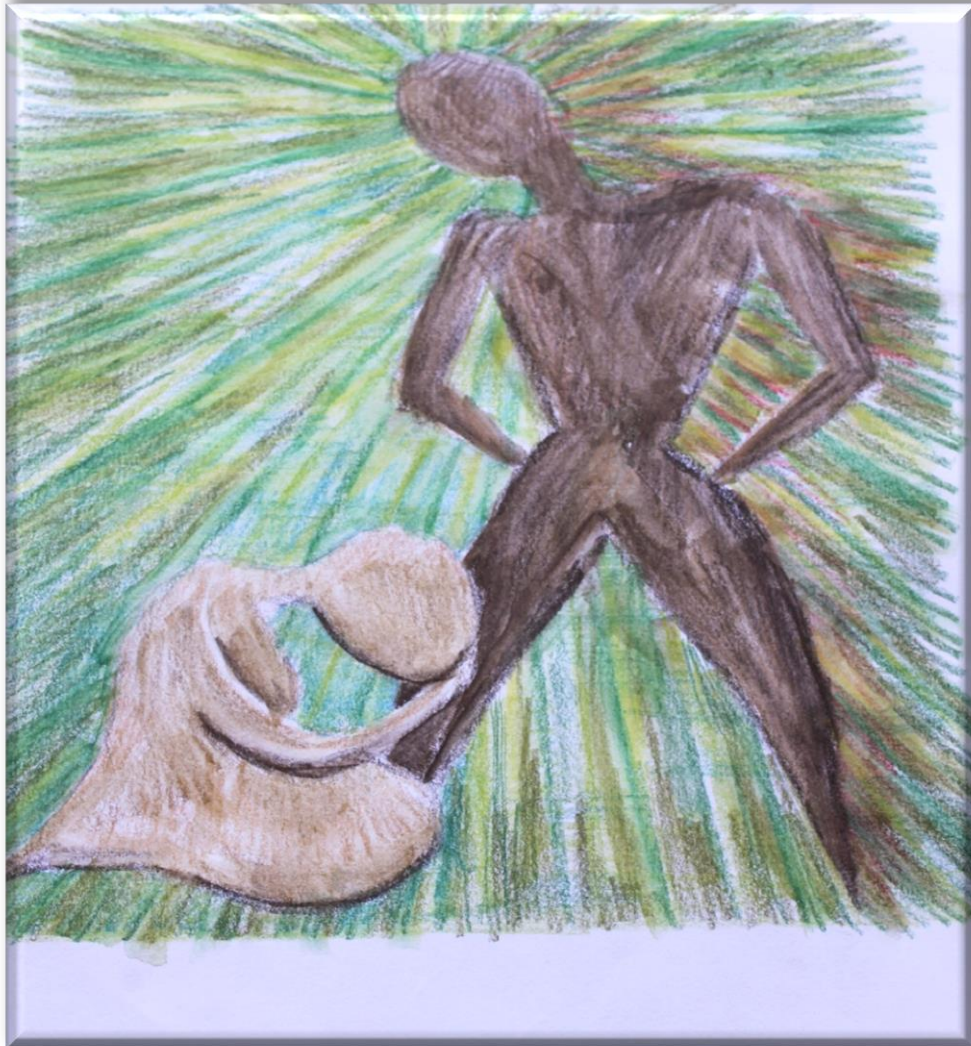
**Title:** Destructivity

**Descriptive storyline:** Loss, grief and trauma can result in destructive behaviours and attitudes which becomes normalised within the next generation. Exploring internalised negative feelings through creativity offer a way to vent emotional anger and frustrations.

The need to acquire a medium to explore internalised processes such as negative attitudes, dysfunctional behaviours and distressing emotional experiences is paramount to wellbeing. Mediums such as creativity offer connectable solutions to deep social and emotional wounds. Irwin (1991) also confirms that creative practices 'provide a cathartic for 'venting of emotions of loss' (p. 486), whilst Chapman, Morabito and Ladakakos (2001) identify making as a beneficial tool for drawing out emotional traumas.

In regaining a sense of self capacity and fulfilment, there is a need to return to the roots of experienced traumas in order to deal with underlying issues. Reclaiming self-capacities is a well-known practice within traditional healing that utilises internalised bodily senses through creative knowings. Interestingly Pynoos and Eth (1985) state that sensory methods involved in creative making is useful in debriefing trauma related issues and therefore holds value in seeking crisis resolutions.

The importance of trauma-focused creative practice involves constructing narratives through visual expression. Holistic approaches to trauma treatment holds little value in verbal accounts but bases theories on the unspoken memory of fragmented sensory and emotional elements associated with experienced feelings (see van der Kolk, 2003). It is through creativity and internalised processes within making and seeing that brings traumatic experiences to the surface.



**Fig: 93**

**Title:** Loss of self

**Descriptive storyline:** Sensory numbing refers to low self-esteem as poor internalised connections, dysfunctional behaviours and depressive attitudes. Building strength in self is a way to establish positive harmony. Healing solutions need to focus on building self-worth, self-esteem and self-resilience as a means of establishing wellbeing.

The next chapter looks more intensively at trauma and how there is a need to engage traditional practices within a contemporary framework. It is argued that trauma and loss were traditionally viewed as an internalised blockage that attributed to emotional disconnection. In achieving a sense of emotional wellness, self-control and self-direction within recovery is paramount. Although there have been numerous attempts at addressing trauma through Western health practices, the results achieved have only resulted in band aid effects that fail due to the lack of cultural understandings of internalised healing methods. Chapter 11 explores how culturally validated understandings of trauma, loss and grief impact on wellbeing through offering a culturally openness in spiritual beliefs systems.







## Chapter 11

### Addressing situational circumstances through creative healing

Dharug healing involves the deep relationships with all living things and is ultimately the most important factor that determines Aboriginal health and wellbeing. The results of colonisation within Australia have created a great disruption and devastation to the very core of relationships with self, others and the environment from an Aboriginal standpoint. Loss of identity, loss of community knowledges and loss of relationships to concepts that involve land, community strengths and individualised purpose are some examples of experienced trauma.

Within this chapter, loss and grief are presented from a Dharug stance to articulate culturally validated reasonings as to how creativity through making and seeing can address imbalances of wellbeing (Oolгна) that include reactive responses of externalised behaviours. Addressing loss and grief from a cultural perspective places considerations on internalism as a mechanism of wellbeing where experiences such as historical events still impact on contemporary society.

Developing a sound understanding of Aboriginal transgenerational experiences since colonisation through to various discriminative government practices needs to be recognised as a driving contributor to the low inequities associated to contemporary situations today. Transgenerational is not only defined within the secular family unit, but extends to the complex relationships of communities where communal knowledges and understandings have been

passed down, creating a fixed perspective embedded within many Aboriginal collectives.

Transgenerational knowledge maybe informed experiences of truths but may also include psychological baggage being passed from generation to generation. Such notions from an Aboriginal associated with psychological baggage are often described as 'humbug'. Humbug is an old English term which describes a sense of wasted baggage energies that continue to be impregnated within individuals. Embedded within Aboriginal language a sense of loss not only affects actual experiences but also impacts on developmental capabilities.

### **Defining loss, grief and trauma from an Aboriginal perspective**

Loss, grief and trauma within an Aboriginal context is often termed 'sorry business'. This term describes a state of sadness and grief from a communal standpoint as experiences impact not only the individual but the extended family and community. In considering the impact of trauma from a community standpoint, all members suffer wether directly affected or not. Therefore loss, grief and traumatic experiences of past and present require group based processes within recovery.



**Fig:** 95

**Title:** Loss is never experienced in isolation

**Descriptive storyline:** When one suffers, all suffer.

## **Violence and loss since western colonisation**

Prior to colonisation, life was sustainable, enriched by the natural environment, lores and customs of over 350 Aboriginal Nations. Disputes were rare due to the overall acknowledgment of geographical boundaries separating each nation by individual Dreamings which affirmed an awareness and respect for place.

Whilst the majority of Nations remained within their own Dreaming Countries, there were occasions such as ceremonial celebrations where visitations to other lands took place. There were only few who could walk within another's Country without the need to gain prior permission. For example, the 'Songman' or messenger moved across many Countries sharing information and stories.

The Songman is highly regarded within traditional society for his expertise and abilities to narrate rhythmical messages of past knowledges and daily events. The Songman is also a specialised dancer and retells stories, dreams and visions through his deep connections within the earth's energies.







**Fig: 96**

**Title:** The Songman

**Descriptive storyline:** The messenger of many Nations

## Historical background

It is argued that the greatest trauma suffered by Aboriginal people was the claim of Terra Nullius by early Western colonists. The fabricated declaration that Australia was uninhabited land created a sequence of absent voice for Aboriginal Nations that projected Aboriginal peoples being classified under flora and fauna, desensitised the very sole of inhumanity.

Stanner (1979) refers to Terra Nullius as the 'Great Australian Silence' where discovery was based on a delusionary fantasy of Imperialistic greed. Classified as subhuman, Aboriginal people were openly slaughtered, brutalised and maltreated. Additionally, Western Darwinism theories added to racial prejudice that has left a legacy of oppression. Stanner's referral to historical silencing is also noted within claims of discovery as opposed to already existing knowledge of the great continent of the Sothern land by many other World Countries. It is well recognised that Captain Cook was not the first to explore Australia. Aboriginal Nations have oral accounts and visual documentation of earlier visitors from Spain, Egypt, France, Indonesia and the Pacific Islands. The parody lies in each year in celebrating Australia Day by the reconstruction of Cooks landing as well as the continued teachings that focus on discovery within the school curriculum.

Since colonisation, Aboriginal communities have endured significant change through dispossession of land, social restrictions, cultural denials and discriminatory racial government policies (Department of Indigenous Affairs 2005).

Early experiences of loss was witnessed through the purposeful destruction of sacred sites, theft of land and eradication of indigenous fauna and flora by introduced hooved farming animals, all desecrated the natural ecologies. For example, the destruction of the natural environment led to the starvation of Aboriginal peoples and native animals; the destruction by early colonists of sacred sights resulted in a loss of spiritual connections; the destruction of peoples caused a loss in the complexities of relationships that all left an irreplaceable void of nothingness. Cohen and Mannarino (2004) also acknowledge relationship loss within Country as a void that once provided substantial security and reliance to the bereaved.

### **Loss of Spiritual Space and Cultural Place**

A sense of place remains embedded within contemporary Aboriginal society. For example, some individuals will not enter another Country unless their hair is tied or covered to ensure no traces are left behind for fear of spiritual encounters. Other beliefs include entering areas without authorised permission from Elders due to the fear of being spiritually harmed. With some areas having a deep sense of spiritual space or cultural place, uninvited entry is believed to cause harm not only to the intruder but those that are obligated to protect that place. There are however geographical safe spaces of neutral grounds where sharing and exchange takes place.



**Fig: 97**

**Title:** Dyngai

**Descriptive storyline:** The Dyngai, spirit of harm is illustrated with no eyes, just emptiness and an open mouth with crisscrossed teeth. Entering Country without permission can result in spiritual harm where the wind spirit may take offence to both the intruder and the community.

## **The experience of Loss**

Loss is experienced from an Aboriginal perspective as the denial of language, culture, traditional roles and responsibilities. Historical colonial trauma is described by Lipp (2004) as a form of trauma through witnessing and recalling multiple causes of death and brutalities (see Faimon, M. 2004). Swan and Raphael (1995) define the effects from colonisation and associated enforced western alienated policies as being a psychological collective of inconsolable loss. According to many Indigenous first nation peoples, colonisation created internal traumas that have transmitted through generations (Yellow Horse, Brave Heart and DeBruyn, 1998) due to the lack of empowered healing processes within traditional practices.

There are minimal documented accounts, acknowledgments or recognitions of the grief experienced from the loss of sacredness with Country. Considering the deep relationships many Aboriginal Nations have with all living things, the purposeful destruction from early colonists clearly created unmentionable sadness. A sense of sacredness includes the importance of life cycles. It is the belief that conception occurs within Country, rather than being a physical act. A woman is impregnated through a spiritual process out of the desire from ancestral spirits rather from purposeful human copulation. It is within this sacredness that a child is seen as a gift of the land.





**Fig: 98**

**Title:** Being culturally strong

**Descriptive storyline:** Traditional ceremonies offered community strength giving meaning and purpose to life.



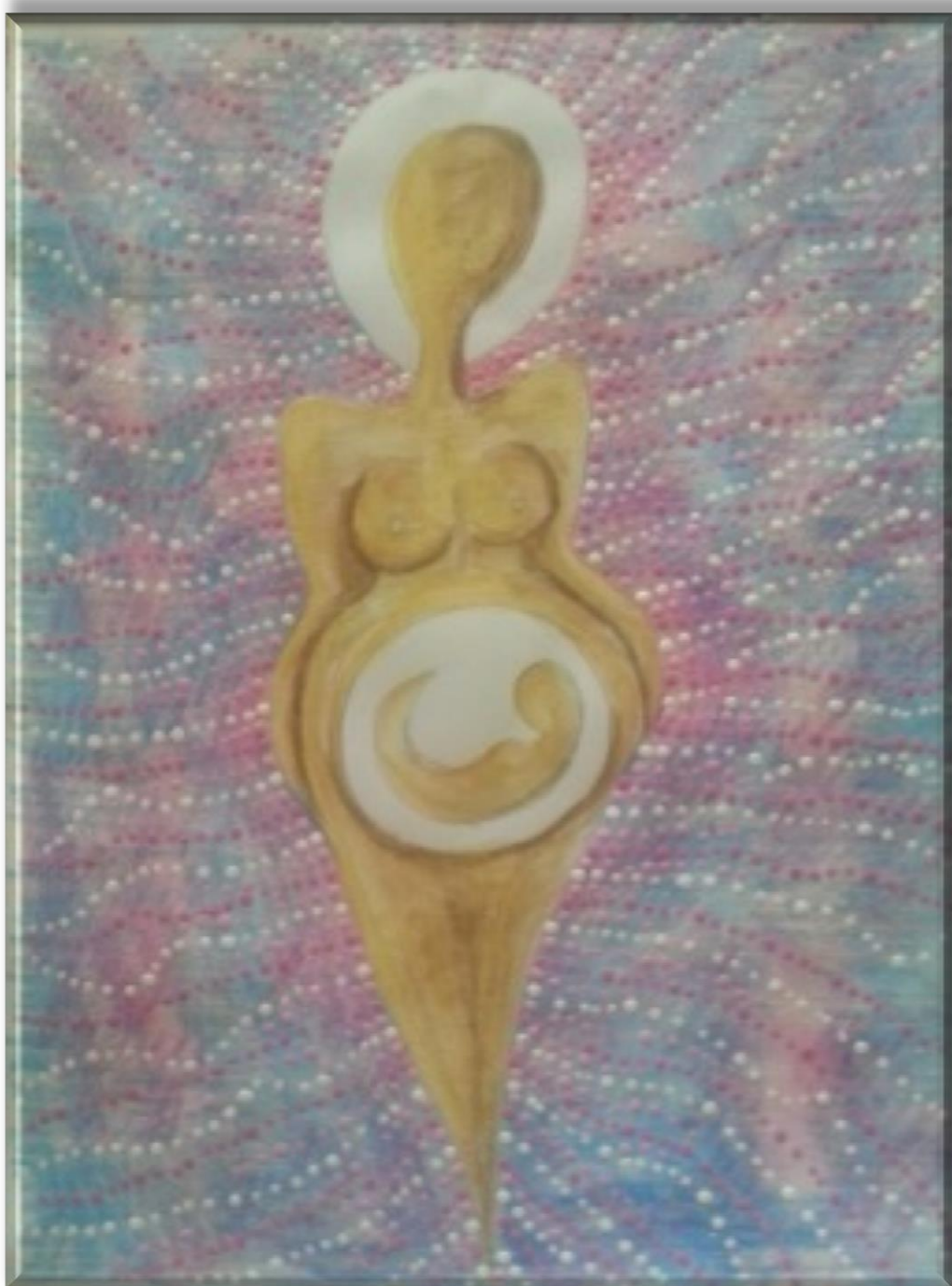
**Fig: 99**

**Title:** Crumbling within

**Descriptive storyline:** Loss of traditional ways has created an absence to life purpose and fulfilment.

The impact of racism denied Aboriginal cultural and spiritual processes to address healing through customary responsibilities. Western medicines became the only outlet for many individuals (see Swan and Raphael, 1995). With no habitual cultural avenues to address multiple devastations and alienated change, Aboriginal peoples developed deep psychological illnesses. O'Shane (1993) states that colonial trauma is still prevalent today and continues to grow in a state of crisis. Acts of genocide, loss of land, starvation, the forced removal of Aboriginal children, and the introduction of new diseases are a witness to such claims. The prohibition of traditional healing practices left Traditional Healers unable to cope with the multiple traumas of community members. Many also died at the hands of colonists or through introduced diseases.

Whilst it can be argued that spiritual pregnancies offers no logical rationale there is a general failure to see the metaphoric importance that illustrates the specialness of birth and importance of child. By illustrating importance through narrative storylines, spiritual values and cultural lores have more direct meaning.



**Fig:** 100

**Title:** The concept of birth

**Descriptive storyline:** We came from Spirit and we go back to Spirit.

### **Cultural difference in loss and grief**

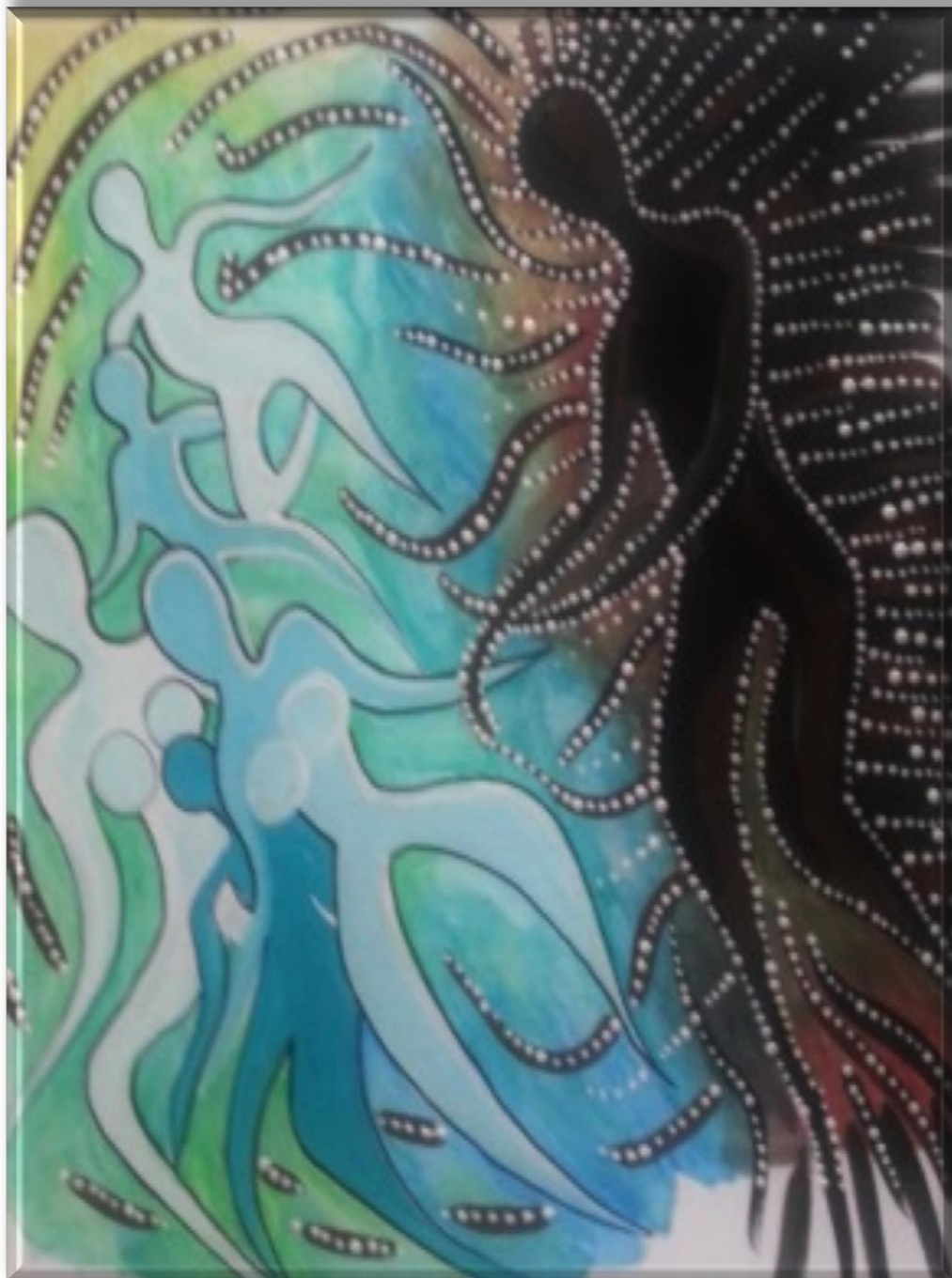
Cultural differences within loss and grief if not understood can lead to misinterpretations within health and wellbeing. For example, physical acts within experiences of loss and grief are often witnessed by self-hitting with stones, cutting of skin and talking to spirits. These behaviours can be incorrectly diagnosed as self-abusive or disturbing behaviour, categorised within mental health. Experiences of multiple losses since colonisation right up to today have created internalised chaos and physical reactive behaviours.

Belief systems also differ with cultures, with Aboriginal peoples seeing death as a pathway to the spiritual world. Dharug belief systems comprehend death as the body dying, but the soul remaining entwined within the earth represented within natural form. To elaborate further, when a person dies their soul is transformed back into the natural environment and lives within. This is one reason which verifies spiritual encounters of past relations re-entering into the physical world. Hence natural environments hold personal affiliations of remembrance of individuals who have passed on. Within death, there is a strong belief of the need to return back to sacred place.

To die within ones Country ensures the passing into the spiritual world. To elaborate further, once death takes place, the spirit/soul filtrates into the



natural environment and is humanly recognised as a part of the living world in the form of a natural object such as a plants or rock.



**Fig:** 101

**Title:** Spirit

**Descriptive storyline:** Death concerns the spirit re-entering into the natural world.

Cultural differences exist within mourning processes with Aboriginal funerals being timeless, lasting several days to weeks depending on each individual and community needs. Ceremonies involved creative activities as a way to express loss and grief; a way of honouring and acknowledging those who passed on into the spirit world. Ceremonial mourning is a communal activity where Aboriginal communities pay homage, share feelings and interact with a sense of solidarity.

Open emotional feelings of loss are expressed publically through physical actions as opposed to western controlled feelings. It is within these concepts that sacredness is expressed and valued. Sacredness within mourning practices also involves deep forms of sacredness. For example, the use of natural resources in death ceremonies included smoking of natural oils to ensure a safe passage and ritualised activities to prevent negative spiritual energies from infecting others. Smoking of the body is a common practice in both birth and death.

Burials within Dharug Nations were often performed within the river systems where the body would be laid on a floating bed of natural fibres or buried within along the sandy river banks or in protected caves. Whilst attitudes regarding birth conception have evolved there is still the desire to die within one's own Country.



**Fig: 102**

**Title:** Creative spiritual exchanges

**Descriptive storyline:** Making and seeing stories build on exchanges of feelings associated to loss, grief and trauma that are culturally appropriate mechanisms for understanding feelings.

Western colonial restrictions enforced on Aboriginal nations prevented traditional mourning processes to take place. Therefore loss and grief was denied. Dharug people struggled to survive the first onslaught from early colonists. Death rates increased to enormous proportions caused through introduced disease, massacres and starvation. Hence grief mounted with little or no time to properly burying the dead. First nation Americans also experienced similarities of unresolved loss with overwhelming sadness that created a deep hole within the psyche. For example Yellow Horse Brave Heart and DeBruyn, (1998) state that 'historical trauma is a colonised legacy of internalised feelings of unresolved grief' referred to as 'soul wound' (p. 61).

### **The experience of grief**

Grief is a complex process within many Aboriginal nations and involves communal interactions and openness of self-expression. Hence mourning is not solitary but involves the support; comfort and solidarity of others (see Graves, 1994). Mourning processes in 'Sorry Business' is built around relationships and obligatory commitments witnessed by extended communities travelling great distances to participate and share stories of the deceased person. In contrast to Western practices, many Aboriginal people will not speak aloud of the deceased name. This lore is a sign of respect that ensures

the safe flow passage from the physical to spiritual world. Speaking of the deceased's name may block the transformative process of entering the spiritual world.





**Fig: 103**

**Title:** Yarning

**Descriptive storyline:** An interchange of verbal, visual and bodily expressions to accurately describe stories and experiences that are shared mutually within a collective group.

Unlike Western societies where privacy is often an acceptable practice, Aboriginal grief processes involves a series of complex ceremonial processes. This again ensures safe passage ways in entering the spirit world. Mourning ceremonies involve the collective group and thus offers a supportive environment where mutual feelings are exchanged and shared. Kim and Park (2012) state that strong social supports from significant others has a positive influence on wellbeing through a sense of solidarity.

It is solidarity that has always creates strength within every Aboriginal Nation. Kim and Park (2014) unintentionally express another concept of experienced grief within many Aboriginal Nations based on loss within Aboriginal solidarity. For example, often witnessed today are the many disharmonies within relationships, where solidarity has deteriorated through conflicts in beliefs, factionalism and nepotism. Fractionation is witnessed within existing Aboriginal Missions through historical paradigms where different nations were forced to live together. The results have left a legacy of in-fighting, cultural clashes and spiritual differences. Nepotism is witnessed within many Aboriginal organisations where employed family members have created an imbalance within shared visions and operations often evident with the misuse of power.

Many of these situations can be related to Aboriginal nations being relocated off natural Country and forced into central missions. Amalgamated missions and institutions have a long history of internal tensions that have led to chaos and destructive behaviours. Therefore there is numerous interracial prejudices within Aboriginal nations, further exacerbating solidarity.

## **Experiences of trauma**

Whilst this chapter has illustrated loss and grief from a historical standpoint, there is also the need to reflect on aspects associated with trauma. Trauma is an experience that has deep internal and external consequences. Kleber, Figley and Gersons, (1995) defines trauma as a destruction of the 'social system of care, protection and meaning' (p. 299).

Historical trauma has been well documented within contemporary literature. Koolmatrie and Williams (2000) express trauma as forms of harm from the past whilst Faimon (2004) describes historical trauma as an total terror that has produced severe health conditions within Aboriginal communities (Durie, 2004).

Since colonisation, Aboriginal peoples have endured ongoing trauma that has created significant social, emotional, political and cultural change. The emotional effects of colonisation on Aboriginal peoples are transgenerational, a cyclic process of collective sensory responses that influences the next generation. Muid, (2006) describes the effects of colonisation as 'collective emotional and psychological injury (p. 36), resulting in dysfunctional communities (Duran, Duran, Brave Heart, and Yellow Horse-Davis 1998). Noted by Marsella and White (1989) profound trauma thrives in deep silence where solitude offers no calmness.



**Fig: 104**

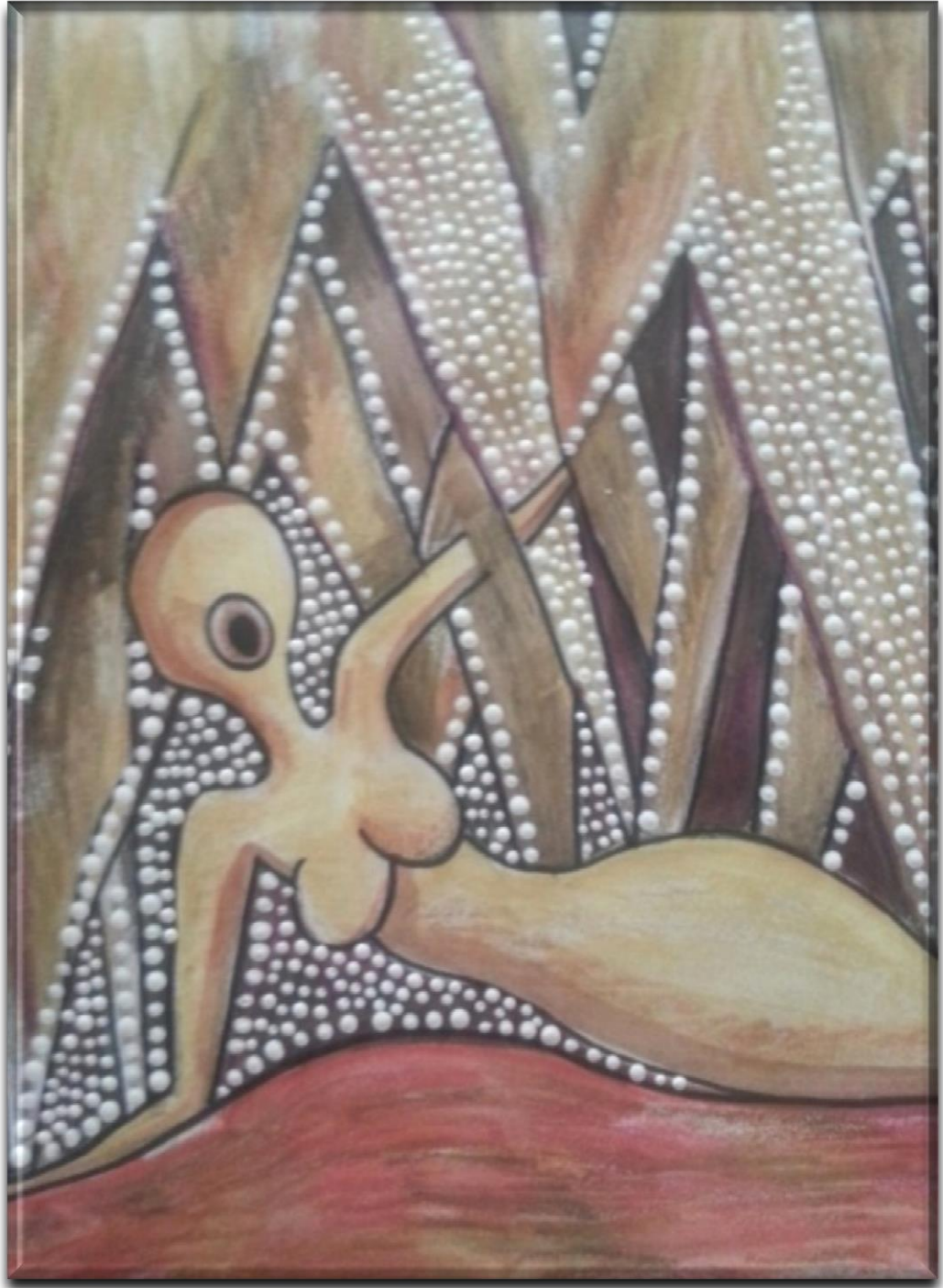
**Title: Trauma**

**Descriptive storyline:** Historical trauma has had a deep impact on internal emotional feelings and if left unaddressed can later surface into physical behaviours.

### **Collective trauma**

Trauma is noted by Muid (2006) as harm to the emotional and psychological self, resulting in what Vicary and Westerman (2004) describe as deep emotional loss. Collective trauma is the experience of a group or collective, where experiences are of a mutual encounter. Collective trauma becomes embedded within social memories as what Atkinson (2002) describes as collective stories that Brave Heart (2003) refers to as collective psychological and emotional wounds that if left unaddressed becomes embedded within lifetimes.

Ratnavale (2007) illustrates collective trauma through signs and symptoms associated to changes in behaviours and reactions that include risk-taking behaviour and deep mistrust. Vicary and Westerman (2004) also include low self-esteem, a sense of powerlessness, anger, depression and anxiety. Hence trauma impacts on internalism with feelings associated to deep grief and loss.





**Fig: 105**

**Title:** Traumatized

**Descriptive storyline:** Unconsciously trapped traumatic memories lie embedded within, surfaces throughout life, destroying the fabric of wellbeing.



**Fig: 106**

**Title:** Stolen Generations

**Descriptive storyline:** An embedded collective memory within Aboriginal psyche.

The forcible removal of Aboriginal children has had an impact on generations of Aboriginal people that have created a void and inability to know love and have knowledge of parenting skills (Vicary and Westerman, 2004). Poor parenting skills have led to attachment issues within families and difficulties maintain relationships (Vicary and Westerman (2004). According to Kellermann (2000) children of traumatised parents often experience behavioural problems with parents being role models. For example Atkinson and Atkinson (1999) state that trans-generational violence has become the normal process within families. Kleber, Figley and Gersons, 1995 also state that family violence destroys ‘the social system of care, surrounding an individual’ (p. 299).



**Fig:** 106

**Title:** Stolen

**Descriptive storyline:** Narrative storylines depicting the mandatory government policies of the forcible removal of children and the deep feelings associated with this practice

Considering relationships are a vital part of life's purpose and future the forced removal of children hit the very core of Aboriginal nation, leaving a permanent hole within each society. The extensiveness of child removals is still been disputed today and perhaps will never been properly estimated due to the often purposeful destruction of critical records within various child institutions. However what remains implanted in collective memory is that every Aboriginal person knows of someone who was affected by such destructive practices.

Collective loss through ceremony for example can have benefits to community solidarity. Considering solidarity within Aboriginal individuals and communities has reached rock bottom with infighting, organisational nepotism and challenges within Aboriginal identity, there is a need to strengthen communal cohesions. Solidarity can also be strengthened through communal creative making as cooperative participation within a group is required. Community projects that are based on group input allows for negotiation, placing all members ideas at an equal level.





**Fig: 108**

**Title:** Visual Narratives of connecting

**Descriptive storyline:** A way to connect mutual experiences.

### **Loss, grief and trauma associated with memory**

From a Dharug perspective, memories are internalised energies that can have both positive and negative reactions on the body. Healing practices consider memories as both a conscious recall and unconscious reaction. Memories that become internally imbedded within the subconscious are negative energies that drain wellbeing.

Traditional Healers focus on hidden, forgotten or withheld memories as embedded negativities are considered self-destructive. It is the belief that embedded memories can cause illness unless released through appropriate channels. Therefore Traditional Healers place a high importance on internalism as a way of addressing memory recall. Practice includes nonverbal sensory and emotional approaches to reduce stress and reawaken feelings of grief and loss (see Malchiodi, 2007). There is mutual acknowledgment to connections of the unconscious mind (Eaton, 2008) having a fundamental role within grief and traumatic experiences. Van der Kolk (2003) reaffirms such notions by stating that psychological processes addressing trauma need to focus on a nonverbal approaches that include sensory and emotional elements as a means to deactivate fears, anxiety and stress.

It is therefore argued that creativity activity is one solution to address emotional loss, grief and trauma. In addressing unconsciously trapped traumatic memories creative emotional stimuli is created through the interplay of imagination and intuitive feelings and responses. Imagination contains

elements of reactive emotional responses that are often preferred methods in disclosing personal loss rather than verbalised cognitive approaches (see Holmes and Mathews, 2005).

### **Unresolved loss, grief and trauma**

If there are no avenues to address trauma, Aboriginal individuals and communities are likely to continue on the same destructive path (Phillips 2003) where emotional feelings become even more internally buried. Herman (1997) emphasises this point by stating that response to atrocities are often banished from the consciousness as it is often too confronting to speak verbally. Herman also argues that such atrocities refuse to be suppressed and are witnessed by physical signs and social withdrawing. It is suppressed distress that causes the greatest afflictions to wellbeing. Internalised silence dulls the senses and blocks the ability to live harmoniously.

Unaddressed loss, grief and trauma are often labeled within western health as a mental illness that is associated with biological aberrations within the brain defined within chemical imbalances and thus corrected through medical prescriptive action. With often little active relationship exchanges, medications have become the solution to personalised care. Time limited consultation pressures have also added to the lack of building relationship exchanges in considering environmental or situational circumstances. Additionally Aboriginal cultural psychological theories of the Oolgha system as a determining factor of wellbeing greatly conflicts with western theories of brain dysfunction. Health care systems and practitioners need to take into the importance of building an trusting exchanges within relationships acquainted with cultural interpretations of conditional reactivity to life experiences, Aboriginal peoples will remain soul unhealthy and therefore unable to achieve their potential.

Unaddressed loss, grief and trauma escalate through intensified self-destructive behaviours, risk taking, substance abuse and suicide. These behaviours and social responses are later indirectly transmitted to the next generation as a learnt cycle of behaviours (Beals, Manson and Mitchell, 2005). Unresolved and overwhelming loss, grief and trauma leads to poor mental health that creates a cycle of deep emotional disharmony (see Vicary and Westerman, 2004). Sadly death and dying are now common events today that have created a constant cycle of grief within many Aboriginal communities. Normal grieving process is often overshadowed by the need to attend multiple funerals, allowing no natural timeframes to properly grieve. Grief therefore becomes internalised, creating imbalances and disharmonies to health and wellbeing. In addressing unresolved grief Denham (2006) states that narrative therapies offer solutions. Considering visual narrative processes are traditional accepted practices within a Dharug healing, the utilisation of making and seeing can still offer answers to addressing balance and harmony.

### **Darug healing processes**

From a Dharug standpoint, healing within loss needs to consider culturally appropriate methods in order to address the deep wounds associated with grief and its effects (Atkinson, 2002). Darug healing processes works within collective understandings, fulfilling a much needed gap in addressing trans-generational trauma.

Through culturally specific responses based on creative group ritualism, internal pain, loss and grief is eased. Within healing creative expression is helpful in reconnecting sensory feelings to explicit thoughts with the process involving the transference of pain to the image. Hence the image becomes the symbolic container of felt emotional pain. Once healing processes within

symbol work are concluded the image is physically disposed of along with the removal of emotional pain.

Dharug healing practices recognise the need to rebuild internal mechanisms of self through experiences within creative making. Considering loss is associated within relationships, creativity leads to increased socialisation (Matarasso, 1997) through the sharing of ideas and stories that rebuild rapport and connections. Increasing socialisation is important for those suffering embedded traumatic memories as one of the side effects to energy loss is isolation. If left unaddressed, embedded negativity may damage future interactions as the body is drained of positive in maintaining positive relationships.

It is through yarning (talking) and deep listening (Atkinson, 2002) where individuals can rebuild respectful relationships. Yarning is an Aboriginal term that describes the process of deep verbal and visual exchanges, where multiple forms of communication are utilised.

Communication styles are not simply reliant on verbal transfers but visual dialogues and body language. Matarasso (1997) also affirms that creativity increases social worlds and addresses loss through participation by providing a sense of purpose and direction in life (Ryff and Singer, 1998). Creativity also offers a sense of pleasure and enjoyment (Jermyn, 2004), hope and nurturing (Raymer and McIntyre, 1987) and enhances psychological well-being (Puig, Lee, Goodwin and Sherrard, 2006).

Traditional Healers seek to locate the connections between the external and internal links when addressing signs of trauma. One fundamental sign and symptom relates to the mouth, particularly the teeth. For example the clenching of the jaw and worn teeth indicate both external and internal responses. The wearing down of teeth or soreness of jaw is often a sign of

unconscious sleep disturbances. Rothchild (2000) also verifies that trauma affects the mind through both psychological and physiological symptoms. Wilson (2005) however offers a more culturally appropriate definition by arguing trauma is an imbalance which impacts on general wellbeing.

Since loss and grief within trauma is often experienced by haunting recurrent visual images within the unconscious there is a strong need to respond to dream states as a validation of experience. Spiritual encounters also play a role within healing as justified reasoning within trauma.

It is well noted for example of the common practice within many Aboriginal people of smoking a house as a cleansing practice to rid unwanted spirits. In addressing loss, grief and trauma of internalised disruption recent indicates that emotional distortions which produces delusions of self, time and place (Brewin, 2007) along with confusing internal signals that distract realities and decision making.

Current research also implies that visual memories are a common feature within many physical diseases (Hirsch and Holmes, 2007) through flashbacks and nightmares.





**Fig: 109**

**Title:** Cyclic growth of internalised trauma

**Descriptive storyline:** The nucleus of trauma, a cyclic process that consists of collective emotional sensory responses ,in energies.

### **Creativity as a way to address loss, grief and trauma**

Considering loss and grief are experienced as an internal emotional feeling, it makes sense to utilise therapies that focus on internal stimuli through culturally appropriate channels. There is also overwhelming evidence to support that creativity plays an instrumental role in addressing loss, grief and trauma. Creativity as a natural sensory mode of expression involves the use of all our senses, therefore has the ability to ignite memory recall (Steele, 1997) locked internally within.

Creativity provides a vehicle for working with traumatic memories (Schnetzer, 2005) through stimulating internal emotional elements (van der Kolk, 2003) that allow emotional feelings and destructive energies to be expressed and transferred into a more constructive channel (Davis, 2004). Self-explorative creative journeys are fundamental processes that place strength on internalism prior to addressing the physical ailments or disorders.

The use of visual symbols is a way of responding to situations of suffering. For example, ritual spiral symbols provided narrative based content on entering a relationship to the spiritual world. Rhythmical circles express a healing effect, producing a sense of serenity and relevance. Symbol making can engage in the personal meaning of loss (Tate, 1989).

Making and ways of seeing therefore can address issues of emotional sadness in a self-paced, self-directed process to improve psychosocial functioning (Torkelson Lynch and Chosa, 1996).

From a contemporary standpoint, visual images can have a correlating effect where storylines document trauma experiences and depict emotional reactions. Therefore it is important to consider memory as both a conscious and unconscious energy that can assist in health restorations. Creativity in making and seeing provides a passage of expressive freedom to trigger memory recall and allow internal energies to be released, so healing can begin.





**Fig: 114**

**Title:** Symbols communicate

**Descriptive storyline:** Visual communication can bring out what lies within



**Fig: 112**

**Title:** Symbols communicate multiple issues

**Descriptive storyline:** Visual communication remains embedded within memory and has been used for thousands of years to locate resources within the environment. However, symbols also communicate ways to healing and thus have the ability to address loss, grief and trauma through culturally relevant processes.

Within a contemporary framework, research also acknowledges the value of creativity within suffering as having a transformative effect (Aldridge, 1993) by exploring emotional realities in a safe and trusting environment (Black and Simpson, 1993). Furth (1998) also argues that creativity allows for expression in emotions within grief as making is an effective method to gain a sense of peace (Rogers and Gumuchdjian, 1997). Creative making also has the ability to reduce further stress or worry by transforming thoughts into actions (Kingma 2001). Therefore creativity serves as a vessel to release anxieties caused by grief by finding a sense of peace and fulfilment.

### **Creative address**

The need to consider both creative therapeutic interventions and western treatments can be verified by recent research findings within neuroscience that states that trauma is both a psychological and physiological experience. From a Dharug standpoint, trauma affects the conscious mind and body and the unconscious soul. Physical indications may reveal tensions and pain within the body whilst unconscious symptoms include nightmares, confusion and social distancing.



Whilst Atkinson (2002) expresses that within an 'Aboriginal context, people do not heal alone' (p. 217), the need to collectively make sense of experiences offers an avenue to address breaking dysfunctional cycles. From a contemporary standpoint the establishment of Community Art Centres bears witness to the popularity of making and offering a space to heal collectively, through the exchange of stories.

These centres provide more than just economic advantages but are a social umbilical cord for collective support and interaction. Krensky (2001) also confirms that creativity offers a solution within dysfunctional groups, by arguing that community arts projects offer a safe space where confrontations can potentially be resolved. In their study on historical trauma, Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewski (2004) stated 'the only way to address the healing needs of Aboriginal people is to open culturally-appropriate avenues for producing change in existing memory structures and belief systems that will allow Aboriginal people to regain their collective strength' (p. 80). It therefore is argued that creative place addresses emotional space. Healing from trauma requires a personal and culturally safe environment (Krensky, 2001) as culture plays an important role in the way health is viewed (Crenshaw, 2007). Safe environments are well recognised and documented within contemporary Art Therapy practices as an important process for individuals to explore views and attitudes on coping within trauma.

Black and Simpson (1993) state that in developing new coping skills, safe and trusting relationship need to be established where emotional feelings, guilt and shame can be openly expressed and internally addressed. As shame is a major factor within Aboriginal understandings, there is a direct connotation as to why creativity needs contemplation and action. Shame is witnessed through many forms of daily life as a means of personal embarrassment to community punishment. Issues concerning shame remain entrenched within contemporary society and thus needs a responsive awareness in facilitating programs that build on guilt and remorse.



**Fig: 115**

**Title:** Release from pain

**Descriptive storyline:** Creativity allows for emotional expression to be released gaining a sense of peace

Considering the impact of historic trauma in social relationships creativity creates opportunities to build stronger personal networks (Williams 1997) through culturally activities that improve sustainable community development (Barraket 2003). Creative expression either through participation or viewing are beneficial in helping survivors of trauma (Carey, 2006) by providing a space to increase confidence (Goodlad et al. 2002) though security within disclosure.

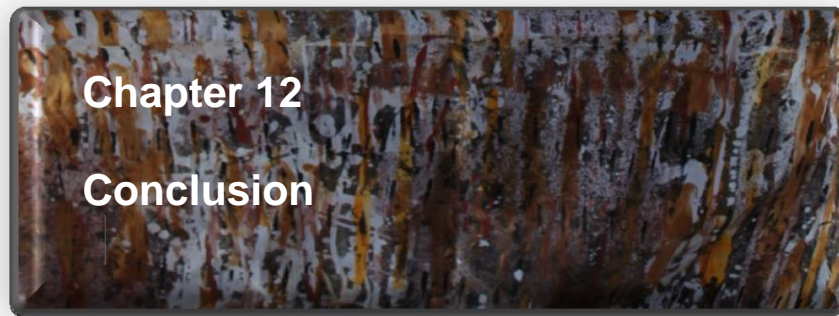
Disclosure and crisis resolution are also enhanced through creative making as sensory- based approach. Participation also provides a space in which conflicts and problems can be openly expressed as creative making offers a comfortable outlet for debriefing and decision making (Malchiodi, 1997). Participation in creativity expression has the capacity for self-reflection (Krensky 2001) that can inspire and make valid changes in behaviours and attitudes.

Considering the limited culturally sensitive healing programs in addressing past traumas, Aboriginal peoples still remain in catastrophic environments with a high rate of physical afflictions, mental health disorders and inappropriate social behaviours. There is a desperate need for funding bodies to start looking at the multiple unsuccessful band aid programs which have low participation rates, are culturally inappropriate and do not engaged a sense of community input or direction. Health care professionals also need to consider

the value of addressing health from an internal perspective and apply treatments that naturally build self-awareness prior to treating the physical signs and symptoms.

Creativity activates memories in relation to trauma (Siegel, 1999) and is a natural sensory mode of expression to enhance recollections (Steele, 1997). When traditional creative healing practices are performed within a safe environment, traumatic memories are reactivated and brought to the surface. Once a patient feels a sense of trust and openness to experimental manipulations, fears and anxieties start to lose their negative energies along with associated feelings of distress (see Rothbaum and Foa 1996). It therefore is noted that creative making and seeing offers a solution to the multiple needs of Aboriginal peoples, that defines a sense of cultural opportunities and allows for a sense of openness to deeply reflect on self and community values.





In presenting Dharug creative healing philosophies within making (Bangawarra) and seeing (naa), I have argued throughout this dissertation the importance of revitalising traditional practices as a way to combat the unaddressed social and emotional turmoils of Aboriginal peoples since colonisation. I have outlined how Bangawarrara is not a classification associated with Western Art forms, but is visual knowledge of cultural intent. Ways of making goes far beyond the sense of pragmatism as Bangawarrara involves deep imaginative and intuitive connections, generated through the transference of ancestral guidance. Making offers a cultural expressiveness that facilitates a deep emotional awakening of internal and external articulated skills rather than simply making or seeing. Visual knowledge is thereby outlined as a cultural tool that explores traditional ideologies of spiritual purpose.

As previously stated Bangawarrara is defined by informed intuitive guided knowledge whilst naa examines, analyses and interprets new knowledge through the interplay of life experiences and imagination. Dharug healing philosophies within creativity have been expressed within this dissertation as transgenerational processes embedded through ritualised enactments of Gunyalungalung lores and cultural insight. Gunyalungalung is the term to express creational periods within Dharug lores. Transgenerational dialogues are the foundations of Dharug creative practice within healing and are considered a human activity of inherent knowledge.



## **Dharug theories of internalised healing**

In presenting Dharug healing practices, internalism has been argued as an important concept that offers a deep connection within all relationships. Internalism is further highlighted as being the relationship between the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual worlds. It is these relationships that are central to wellbeing and play an important role in retaining cultural knowledges, spiritual fulfilment, emotional purpose and identity within belonging.

Dharug relationship healing is a culturally appropriate tool within healing, expressed through a unity of family and extended kin of mutually shared experiences. This concept contrast to Western practices where consultations often involve the individual and health care profession alone. Therefore it is imperative that health and wellness programs include group involvement, where support is extended from others. Relationship healing programs need to involve shared conscious exchanges of external narrative along with creative narratives that consider environmental influences. The use of symbols, for example, within Dharug healing as presented within this dissertation, has been argued to signify a transformative psychological response to environmental relationships that offer therapeutic benefit in restoring spiritual growth and deep insight into cultural knowledges. Symbols such as the circle, suggest an evolving process of continuous growth, and has been argued as an association of timelessness and motion. The visual use of circles and spirals emphasise one's own connection to spiritual space within physical place. Therefore there is a direct need to revitalise traditional cultural practices as it is the only practice that considers inclusiveness within relationships of all living things, associated to place and space.

Theories surrounding timelessness within Gunyalungalung considers self-reflection and self-growth as having no set or expected timeframes within

healing. Therefore each healing practice is personalised, devoid of constricting timeframes, to ensure individual passageways of reflection and growth meet the needs and abilities Of the individual. This is also in direct contrast to Western treatments, where healing practices are influenced through measured timeframes authorised by health professionals rather than being driven and owned by patients. It is argued that measured timeframes suppress self-ownership within healing and impacts on self-esteem. From a Dharug standpoint, inability to make self-choice and self-directive pathways within a set timeframe is considered destructive as it implies a sense of failure, particularly if expectations from others are not met.

Environmental relationships also hold value within Dharug Gunyalungalung lores. Since relationships are influenced by the environmental situational circumstances need consideration within health and wellbeing practice. Situational circumstances associated with environmental experiences are argued to be a prevalent indicator of wellbeing, but this rarely considered within a Western mental health framework. This has often led to misdiagnosis within mental health where environmental influences including dreams and visions are often discounted as not being relevant.

In defining environmental situational circumstances, traditional healing considers an individual's personal experiences to space and place. It has been argued that healing begins with analysing internalised emotions and feelings, and then proceeds to consider the physical world.

Considering the many environmental living situations that continue to affect Aboriginal peoples, including poor housing conditions and lack of access to traditional lands and resources, it has been argued that treatments should be based on social deprivations rather than a mental health condition. Therefore treatment within recovery needs to focus on restoring blocked internal energies of emotional disconnections produced by external environmental

influences. Healing programs consequently need to include cultural and spiritual responses to spiritual and cultural positive sensations that build a sense of purpose to living. The answer for many Aboriginal peoples lies within reconnecting to Country, participating in ceremonial events and having complete access to sacred sites.

### **Dharug terminology**

Presenting a Westernised scientific account of Dharug traditional healing theories within this dissertation for the first time has been difficult. One challenging aspect involves cultural differences within terminologies and embedded interpretations.

The Dharug term *Bangawarra naa*, making and seeing, offers an example, where interpretations from differing cultural world's conflict and hence meanings are lost. *Bangawarra naa* illustrates visual knowledge and does not relate to Western perspectives within art being aesthetically accessible through simple observations. It is argued that *Bangawarra* as a form of making is a guided process rather than a replication of what is solely observed. *Bangawarra* is a felt emotional response to cultural expressions with deep spiritual meaning. Complexities within traditional Dharug healing practices are an illustration of multifaceted cultural lores, spiritual rituals and social intricacies within image making.

In understanding imagination from a Dharug standpoint, it is necessary to set aside Western interpretations associated with experiences of unrealities. As noted with dreams and visions, imagination is defined as a creative resource that seeks to form a picture based on emotional feelings associated with life experiences. It is within imagination that memories are evoked within traditional healing and thus drive subjective experiences to generate new ideas that are unable to be expressed in any other form. Intuition may also be misinterpreted as a gut feeling of illogical thought, yet from a Dharug

standpoint intuitive thought is an effective alert system to danger in the environment and is therefore considered a valid concept within healing practices.

### **Dharug scientific comparative studies**

In presenting traditional Dharug creative healing practices from a scientific standpoint, there is an accumulation of evidence to support Dharug theories in making and seeing.

The Dharug word Oolгна, has been expressed constantly within this dissertation as being the fundamental component to health and wellbeing. Oolгна is identified as being located around the stomach area, directly behind the umbilical cord and is visually represented as a spiral, where emotional energies act as receptors to enable reactions to come forth. In presenting Oolгна from a cultural perspective, visual illustrations are reemphasised by written content. In providing both visual and written text, a greater understanding of essential significance and understanding is grasped. Such processes are also fundamental in Aboriginal epistemologies.

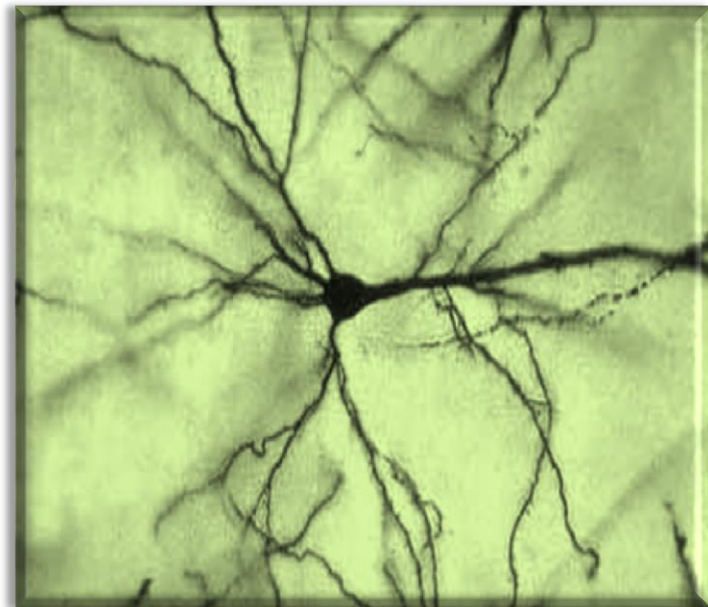
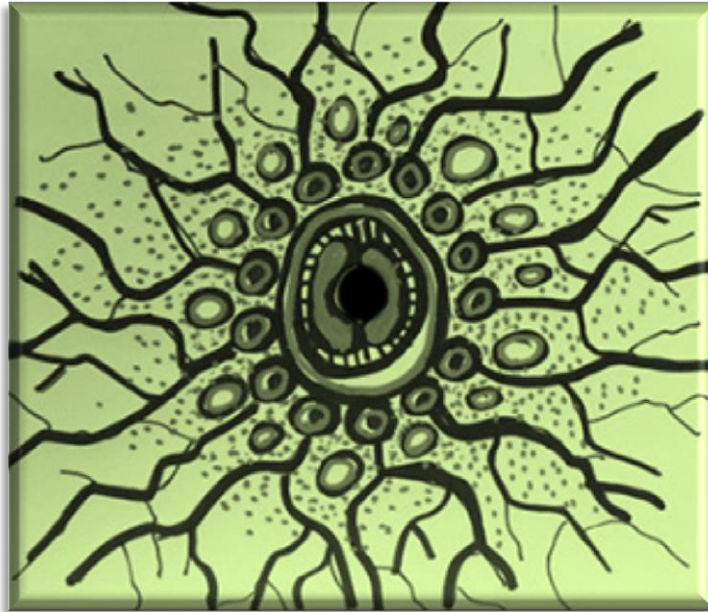
As noted in this dissertation the concept of the Oolгна being an energy containment of emotional force has been validated by various contemporary theorists such as Mayer, who states the stomach area functions as the second brain of emotional function. Previously identified within this dissertation, Gershon (1999) also affirms that the Oolгна area contains billions of neurons which act as signals to stress and illness.

As an emotional responsive area, Oolгна contains various chemical and nerve systems that impact on emotional influences, including the high containment of serotonin, the active neurotransmitters contributing towards feelings of wellbeing. As a fast acting neurotransmitter in bringing about pleasure, memory, learning and motivation, the Oolгна area arguably has significance within contemporary studies.



Oolгна, a spiral energy  
force of emotional  
containment





### **A visual comparative study of serotonin.**

The first image illustrates the Dharug symbol of Oolгна with a centralised nucleus and radiating energy lines. The second illustration is a microscopic picture of serotonin, with a clearly defined nucleus and radiating lines. Image sourced from <http://mybrainnotes.com/serotonin-dopamine-epinephrine.html>

From a visual microscopic perspective, serotonin is illustrated as having a central nucleus with radiating lines. It is argued within this dissertation that this

image has striking resemblances to the traditional Dharug symbol of the Oolgha. It is therefore argued that traditional visual form within symbols, handed down from Ancestral knowledge has validation within various contemporary theories.

## **Dreams and visions**

Often challenged within non-Indigenous realms is the way imagination involves dreams, visions or intuitive thinking to capture old and new knowledges. It has been argued that internal emotional feelings within imagination permits the freedom to discover cognitive and emotional explorations when understanding life experiences. In presenting Dharug knowledge, dreams and visions within creativity are a way of seeking solutions to problem solving, as imagination is a process intrinsically linked with intuition. This is also clarified by theorists such as Dewey (1934/1958) and Stephen (1989) who state that dreams and visions can deliberately raise conscious awareness.

Imaginations within dreams, visions or acquired states of mind have also been identified within Dharug philosophies as a process of seeking new ideas and solutions through connecting with the inner world. Dreams are considered to be influential in self-discovery as a consolidation of marked emotional memories, recognised by bodily sensations of felt experiences. Felt experiences offer a diagnostic psychological tool for the traditional Healer, where making and seeing are a reflective tool to ascertain emotional moods. Recent neurophysiologic research studies affirm the importance of dreams within memory experienced by emotive responses (Ferro, 2002).

Considering the importance of visually charged dreams and visions, healing treatments need to focus on connecting the external and internal worlds. Bearing in mind that emotional trauma is embedded within memory, there is a

direct need to utilise psychotherapeutic techniques to bring internal feelings to the surface. Illustrated within this dissertation is the knowledge surrounding internal disharmonies, identified through non conscious dream re-enactments. Such unconscious blocked memories have been argued to surface as flashbacks or nightmares.

### **Dharug seven senses**

Strongly noted within this dissertation are the principles concerning Dharug seven senses within healing. The human senses include sight, taste, sound, touch and smell but also place considerations to imagination and intuition as important contributors to knowing.

In clarifying Dharug Aboriginal theories associated with the seven senses, imagination has been argued to be an intentional process of viewing life experiences through a particular lens, where space and place are spiritually entwined. To elucidate further, Bangawarra naa is based on a connection to place and space, associated with identity, belonging and relatedness. Place is identified as correlating to ritualism by the deep connection to land whilst space refers to internalised spiritual sensory energies of connectivity. Therefore the relationship between cultural place and spiritual space are the primary factors in traditional Dharug healing practices. For this reason, contemporary healing practices need to consider the importance of cultural place within Country and the opportunity to have unconditional access to sacred sites, including birthing areas, totem locations and traditional meeting areas.

In presenting Dharug creative knowledges, imagination, as the sixth sense, combines old and new ideas that are unable to be expressed in any other form. This notion is affirmed by Van Tijen and Oblivivendi (1997) who describe memory as being the inside boundaries where imagination connects events that belong together. Dharug theories also articulate that creative imagination

guides decision-making through non-intrusive process that encourages an awareness of self within environmental relationships where external logic and internal feelings become infused. As noted this is consistent to recent research where Houghton (2002) acknowledges the link between intuitive hunches and emotions in which Dijksterhuis, Smith, van Baaren and Wigboldus (2005) describe as an alternative non-conscious process within decision making.

Intuition, the seventh sense has been practised since time began as a reliable survival feeling and skill of emotional accuracy. Intuitive feelings are guided practices initiated through Ancestral connections, where emotional communications regarding past and present come to light. Past, present and future has been illustrated within this dissertation as a part of Gunyalungalung where perspectives are of a cyclic notion based on timelessness.

Contemporary theories based on a sense of timelessness within past, present and future have also been acknowledged by Braud (2003) who states that intuitive thoughts and feelings can provide accurate informations of emotional intent. Castellano (2000) describes another interpretation of this process by stating that felt internal vibrations act as a warning system to change or danger within the environment. Ways of knowing thus serve to inform, guide and to alert us to the connections of the internal and external worlds, as intuition is a natural instinctive feeling.

Intuition within Dharug healing is seen as a natural internal alert system of unconscious reasoning but when activated, becomes a conscious signal within the nervous system. Intuition is located within the Oolгна that contains sensory nerve process, a form of spiritual guidance that encodes unconscious information. Once activated intuition becomes a conscious emotional response that enhances judgment and decision-making. It is the interplay of conscious and unconscious reasonings within creative knowledge that is argued to be a process to seek solutions and meaning. Lawler (1991) also confirms that visual expressions of both conscious and unconscious intellect have the ability

to move the observer beyond the surface of externalised form to seek internalised meaning.

As previously discussed other contemporary studies conducted by Rew (1988) claim intuition as a heightened physical reaction in which he describes as stomach tightness. Rew unintentionally describes stomach tightness as a felt response and activation within the Oolгна system. This has also been clarified by Mayer (2000) who defines the central bodily area as a receptive emotional containment.

Again Hanifle and Langbein (2005) also relate emotional responsiveness to the belly brain or 'Bauchhirn' area, claiming the stomach has its own independent brain. Interestingly, leading neurologist, Gershon (1999) states that the stomach area, Oolгна, hosts billions of neurons that signals stress and illness related emotional responses through chemical and nerve indicators. Hadhazy (2010) also confirms such theories by noting that Oolгна area contains a high level of serotonin, an active neurotransmitter that contributes to feelings of wellbeing.

Considering the high levels of serotonin levels within the Oolгна area augmenting Dharug theories in dealing with emotions prior to physical or mental treatments yields much relevance. Taking into account neurotransmitters being responsible for feelings associated with pleasure, memory, learning and motivation, it seems logical to recognise the importance of traditional internalised healing practices. It is also argued that traditional Dharug healing practices have used scientifically proven knowledges that up until now have only recently been accepted within Western science.

Intuition as an emotion response is often termed gut feelings. As previously stated from a contemporary perspective, gut feelings have been



acknowledged within various health studies, such as how nurses detected cardiogenic shock in patients with myocardial infarction through intuitiveness (Pyles and Stern, 1983).

Within Dharug traditional healing practice, intuition extends beyond simple gut feelings as it includes spiritual dreams and visions. Spiritual encounters are often expressed within Aboriginal peoples as being an informed experience with directional content. This also includes visits by animals, particularly of totem relationships. Dewey (1958) confirms that intuitive processes are based upon a pervasive sense of experience gained through deep observations acquired through dreams and visions of spiritual origin.

I have argued within this dissertation intuitive attentiveness within traditional healing aims to restore suppressed memories and past wisdoms to reinstate lost internal harmonies. This process involves the interpretations of dreams and animal visits. Dreams and visions are considered processes that enable suppressed memories to come forth so that healing can commence. As previously stated Torff and Sternberg (2001) consider that intuitive hunches can be attributed to forgotten knowledge and subconscious cues. From a visual perspective, intuition seeks to source emotional reactions of both conscious and unconscious interactions. Hodgkinson (2008) also agrees that intuition requires experiential ways of knowing that is accumulated through tactile realities such as creative form.

Intuitive knowledges have been inadequately studied within social psychological frameworks. Further research would benefit social inquiries within culturally appropriate program development, particularly in outlining the multiple perceptions of individual's feelings.

### **Sensory knowledges within creativity**

In presenting Dharug creative healing theories, ritualism is visually expressed within the earth's surface through rhythmical circular form as a process to seek emotional responses through the interplay of sensory stimulation. The use of metaphoric imagery within healing has been argued to have a transformative effect of deep psychological intent that engages the external and internal worlds. The use of metaphorical image making and rhythmical patterning is identified as a ritualised process of culturally enriched psychotherapeutic exchange. Within this dissertation, ritualism is identified through ceremonial activities that affirm social inquiries of cultural meaning.

Visual metaphoric narratives within Dharug creative healing practices requires a sense of higher complexities within intellect as knowledge is gained through analysing and interpreting complex meanings.

This is also acknowledged by Efland (2002) who confirms that metaphoric messages offer a greater insight within interpretations. The use of metaphors and symbols within healing practice, are also used as a way to interpret moods and feelings and thus act as a diagnostic tool for the traditional Healer. Ulrich (1999) highlights similarities of understandings by stating that individuals perceive and interpret creativeness that match their emotional states.

In establishing Dharug transformative cultural psychological processes involved in visual form, multi-layering approaches have been argued to be an exposure of rhythmical sensory patterning that connects internal and external natural energies to facilitate a heightened awareness.

Dharug creative multi-layering often contains images and symbols of more than one meaning with interpretation engaging a psychophysiological response. Response is argued to be achieved through the transition of internal spiritual messages of cultural dialogues where metaphoric content stimulates emotional states through channelling curiosity. As visual metaphoric thinking requires cognitive action, imaginative thought and intuitive reasonings in seeking answers, it also generates a psychological reaction in emotional arousal that increases endorphin levels. This process is validated as a relationship to mind, body and spirit that intensifies internal reactions.

From a Dharug standpoint it has been argued that pain is a basic human experience that is indicative, in part, of internal imbalances. It has been outlined that pain treatment within healing consists of four main principles; heat, oil, Country (land) and creativity. Hartwig, (1991) and Yaksh (1999) state that, the increase of endorphin levels produces pain relief. Noting these similar theories, Dharug healing practices consider physical pain as being associated by environmental influences within cause and effect. As pain sensations are difficult to put into words, metaphoric analogies, such as 'pins and needles' outline the importance of alternative explanations.

It has been established within this dissertation that traditional ceremonial practices act as a psychotherapeutic process to achieve a deeper sense of understanding of cultural and spiritual importance that imbues embodied being. Ceremonial activities are argued to be a process of emotional response sort through visual stimuli. It is within this knowledge that sensory activity illustrates physiological responses to stresses associated to environmental situational circumstances. Reconnecting and caring for Oolгна from a cultural standpoint is a way of maintaining a healthy balance and harmonious life. Yet within a contemporary framework, little is considered in the connection and

care for Oolгна, with medication treatments or psychological treatments being the only available options. Considering the state of crisis within many Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing health concerns, reconnecting to internalism offers an important way to respond to health and wellbeing issues. Health and healing programs need to focus on internal responses to wellness through culturally appropriate channels that recognise imbalances and self-care. It is argued that cultural health programs need to be responsive to claimed knowledges that place an emphasis on sensory practices based on memory stimulations based on imaginative and intuitive processes.

Imagination and intuition have been argued to play an important role within memory recall as they tap into a number of senses and thus play an active role within experimental processes. Memory recall is synonymous within traditional healing practices as it enhances creative stimuli by evoking internal recollections of past experiences. Hence Bangawarra releases strong emotions whilst naa has the capacity to recount past memories.

The use of visual metaphors has been validated as a way of connecting to suppressed memories or forgotten thoughts. The intentional use of rudimentary symbols for example, has been argued to be crucial to building memory recall as simplified and uncomplicated form embeds mind recollections. Memory work with Aboriginal peoples, who have experienced emotional trauma is identified by both physical and psychological reactions and if left unaddressed will eventually create destructive internal imbalances that can lead to detrimental behaviours. Erratic behaviours are evidence of internal failures, of loss of Oolгна associated with coping mechanisms and disconnection of self. Disconnection is ascertained as a direct response to trauma where suppressed feelings and memories become an illness from within, an internal numbing or shut down of bodily senses. Such loss is associated within inability to engage with curiosity, an underlying driving force within self-motivational skills. It has been argued that misguided behaviours are a way of reclaiming lost sensations due to emotional trauma.

Underlying causes of emotional reactions to trauma are associated with sensory deprivation or a shutdown is due to sensory overload.

### **Art Therapy and Bangawarra Naa sensory responses**

Comparative studies with new age practices, such as Art Therapy have been argued to have developed from traditional Aboriginal theories, including other worldwide Indigenous Nations who have applied sand and earth visual manipulations within a healing content. Therefore the claim of art based therapies as a new movement is contended, rather it is acknowledged as an adaption from traditional practices.

However it is argued that misdirection within practice is due to other cultural influences that have created new concepts within creative aspects to healing. For example, in direct contrast to Art Therapy practices that use personal symbols based entirely on imagination, Dharug practice utilise cultural visual knowledge, with imaginations resonating from Gunyalungalung understandings. It is this aspect of guided processes within ancestral knowledges that holds deep psychological differences. Whilst making and seeing within creativity is justified as a therapeutic response in awakening understandings of self and events, Art Therapy does not consider cultural nor spiritual acclaims of knowledge. Due to the lack of embedded transferences of cultural knowledges, new Art Therapy practices also do not consider sensory deprivation within an environmental perspective.



Deprivation of sensory stimuli is an ongoing issue among many Aboriginal communities where an impetus within environments lacks mental and social distractions. Whilst Kaplan (2000) acknowledges creativity as a contributing factor to wellbeing there is minimal attention towards withdrawn, dissociated or suppressed internal connections associated within trauma.

Recent research by Meyer (1997) however touches on the surfaces of exposure to traumatic events being an overload of the senses as a protective measure.

Unaddressed emotional turmoil is determined as loss of Oolgha that creates negative energies and reactions, resulting in emotional sensory numbing. Emotional numbing or shut down often leads to low self-esteem, dysfunctional behaviour and depressive attitudes that crush curiosity, motivation and a sense of self control.

Throughout this dissertation sensory connectivity has been outlined as an emotional response with curiosity as an important contributor to motivational drive. A sense of curiosity is understood to be a form of positive self-exploration that establishes self-awareness within wellbeing. It is the purpose of this dissertation to ascertain the need for health care professionals and government bodies to consider external and internal disconnections associated with sensory deprivations as a requirement to regaining self-purpose and personal productivity.

### **Historical confines within cultural healing**

The purposeful destruction of Aboriginal philosophies since colonisation has left a void in culturally specific healing processes, undermining thousands of years of proven practices. This destruction has led to nations of Aboriginal

peoples being left in a state of emotional, spiritual and cultural crisis unable to heal from the deep wound of the past.

It has been argued that unaddressed traumas associated from the impact of colonisation still remains entrenched within contemporary Aboriginal life. Loss and grief is witnessed by historical genocide acts, forced removals of children, dislocations from lands and racial assimilation practices. The prohibitions of cultural and spiritual belief systems have destroyed sustainable living and purpose to life, created dysfunctional living, exacerbated by loss of cultural knowledges.

### **Addressing trauma through traditional methods**

Traditional treatments in dealing with traumatic memories associated with dreams and nightmares include sensory stimulation within creativity. Such theories are also confirmed by Malchiodi (2007) who acknowledges that sensory stimulation within creativity reduces stress of felt traumatic memories, such as grief and loss, by reactivating memories. Although Horowitz (1967) affirms that memory taps into a variety of senses, there is no reference to imagination or intuition as part of the human intelligence. Whilst Gil (1991) supports sensory activities as a natural language to express trauma, there is minimal documentation regarding metaphoric imagery from an Aboriginal standpoint of unconscious experiences through guided processes as a way of triggering deep inner emotions of negative flashbacks and nightmares. Yet it has been identified by Laub and Podell (1995) that visual metaphoric nightmares associated with past trauma, is often associated with imagery describe as 'the black hole' or the 'empty circle' (p, 1002). This description of the empty circle holds much significance within Dharug healing practices as it

relates to Oolгна loss and is often unconsciously used to express and validate feelings of emptiness.

As stated in this dissertation from a Dharug standpoint, trauma affects the conscious mind and body and the unconscious soul (Oolгна). Physical indications may reveal tensions and pain within the body whilst unconscious symptoms include nightmares, confusion and social distancing. In addressing loss, grief and trauma of internalised disruption current research also agrees that visual memories are a common feature (Hirsch and Holmes, 2007) in making sense of situational circumstances. Therefore there is a direct need to re-establish Aboriginal cultural practices that include traditional healing techniques and language restoration programs to restore and regain a sense of control in cultural relevance to healing.

### **Concluding notes**

Considering past and present trauma experienced by Aboriginal peoples, grief and loss has created internal disconnections of self within cultural place and spiritual space. In witnessing the high failure rates of government and non-government programs to address trauma it has been argued evidence points to the direct lack of culturally appropriate services within health care settings. It has been argued that many service providers lack Aboriginal community consultation and employment opportunities, which are ongoing factors that contribute to high failure rates. It has also been identified that there are few culturally traditional sensitive creative therapeutic initiatives available for Aboriginal people to access, including long term sustainable funding.

The intent on presenting traditional Dharug creative healing is to raise awareness of the continued trauma embedded within Australian Aboriginal peoples since colonisation.

This dissertation aims at highlighting the direct need to maintain and preserve traditional cultural practices as a way to ensure continuity and address the lack of culturally appropriate health care practices. Considering the deteriorating health and wellbeing of Aboriginal peoples, services need to acknowledge the impact of colonisation within a larger framework that links to traditional knowledge.

Acknowledgment must also include past, present and future racism, such as the continued stereotypical assumptions that deprive Aboriginal peoples of fulfilling potential and ability.

Cultural awareness programs need to be embedded within educational institutions, health care facilities and welfare organisations to ensure a sound understanding, including revaluations of health and wellbeing content. Cultural programs need to be Aboriginally owned and meet cultural standards within articulating knowledges.

The revitalisation of culturally appropriate healing methods needs to see full and continuing financial support for programs where Aboriginal Elders within communities take responsibility for teaching children and youth. I believe that it is imperative for Aboriginal academics to come forth as leaders to effectively express, explain and reclaim past knowledges. Within this realm, traditional creative based practices need to be further studied and documented as to how making and seeing facilitates healing and improves the physical and psychological well-being. In order for this to be fully achieved, accredited training in cultural knowledges needs to be available as one way of ensuring cultural practices are not simply placed on the fringe of society.

Ways of making and seeing through creativity as a form of knowledge needs further evidence based data that considers Aboriginal epistemologies within a cultural and spiritual framework to consider holistic approaches of the deep interrelationships between the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual worlds.

The overriding message of this dissertation is the need to and value in recognising traditional Aboriginal healing practices not an innovative approach, but a consistent knowledge system built over thousands of years of life experiences and ancestral knowledges handed down from generation to generation.



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