



Ngaanyatjarra
Pitjantjatjara
Yankunytjatjara
Women's Council

Exploring Anangu understandings to strengthen support for Anangu women experiencing sexual assault

A participatory action research project



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Samantha Togni
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Cover image: Drawing by one of the Anangu co-researchers, 2018

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1 Introduction

The Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Women's Council's Domestic and Family Violence Service (DFVS) wished to develop the capacity of its service to better support women who experience sexual assault. There were indications that the level of sexual assault in the NPY Lands may be higher than the number of women seeking help for this reason from the DFVS. In addition, the DFVS team believed that their understanding of Anangu (Aboriginal) women's experience of sexual assault and its impact is limited and that this affects the staff members' ability to provide a service that effectively meets these women's needs. The same need has been identified elsewhere and a range of approaches have been used to explore, more deeply understand and respond appropriately to this issue in Indigenous communities (Fox et al., 2018; Maranzan et al., 2018; Braithwaite, 2016). Maranzan et al. (2018) reminds us that culture influences both people's approach to adversity and their help seeking behaviour, highlighting the need to acknowledge and value what Indigenous people find helpful in dealing with the impacts of sexual abuse and violence to inform service delivery.

In 2017, the DFVS initiated a collaboration with NPY Women's Council's Uti Kulintjaku Team to explore understandings and responses to sexual assault from an Anangu perspective through a participatory action research (PAR) project. *Uti kulintjaku* means "to listen, think and understand clearly" in Pitjantjatjara. The Uti Kulintjaku Project was established by NPY Women's Council's Ngangkari Program in 2012 with the aim of strengthening bicultural understandings of mental health. The Uti Kulintjaku Project brings together a team of senior Anangu women, including ngangkari, who have developed the Uti Kulintjaku Iwara way of working as well as skills and abilities to talk about difficult issues. Over the last six years the Uti Kulintjaku Team has developed a range of mental health resources that are used by Anangu and service providers (Togni, 2018).

The successful approach of the Uti Kulintjaku Team prompted the initiative to involve this group in exploring Anangu perspectives and experience to improve service delivery, including the efforts to support healing. DFVS staff and Uti Kulintjaku Team members met to consider the idea of a collaborative, sexual assault research project focused on exploring Anangu understandings of sexual assault with a view to informing and strengthening the DFVS practice. The outcome of this meeting was the development of a PAR project, which is the focus of this Report.

The project officially commenced in April 2018 with funding from Territory Families and from the former South Australian Department of Communities and Social Inclusion. The project's funding has supported four workshops across 2018 and 2019. These workshops have been the central action learning mechanism for the team of co-researchers which includes Anangu and non-Aboriginal DFVS staff members and senior Anangu women who are members of the Uti Kulintjaku Team.

This Report describes the project's scope, methodology, process and activities in Sections 3, 4 and 5. Section 2 describes to project's context within NPY Women's Council and the NPY region as well as situates this project within the broader context of sexual and domestic violence and responses to this violence in other Indigenous communities. Key learnings from the project overall are presented in Section 6, while Section 7 presents the project's key outcomes and Section 8 considers the need to continue this work. The co-researchers' reflective drawings and their accompanying stories are presented in Annex A.

2 Context

2.1 NPY Women's Council and responding to sexual violence

The NPY Women's Council has been operating a domestic violence service, known as the Domestic and Family Violence Service (DFVS), for Anangu women of the NPY Lands for 26 years. In the last few years the DFVS has gone through a review and strengthening process and has recently developed a trauma-informed violence prevention practice framework that is being implemented to inform practice across the whole organisation (Tucci et al., 2017).

Sexual assault is a pervasive issue for Anangu in the NPY Lands' communities and has serious effects on the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities. However, the body of knowledge relating to what works in responding to sexual assault experienced by Aboriginal women is quite limited (McCalman et al., 2014). Anangu understandings of the nature and experience of sexual assault are critical to developing effective responses that meet Anangu women's needs – how we understand an issue relates directly to the identification and development of a suitable response. As Calvino (2016:5) cautions, “shared meaning between helper and client cannot be assumed” in situations where Indigenous clients are assisted by non-Indigenous workers.

NPY Women's Council's DFVS wanted to increase its understanding of sexual assault in the context of the NPY Lands in order to strengthen its ability to provide support and services to Anangu women who have experienced sexual assault. The existing Uti Kulintjaku Iwara, or way of working, and the willingness and enthusiasm of the senior women to participate, offered the ideal vehicle to do so, providing a unique opportunity to develop an innovative research project through the collaboration between the DFVS and Uti Kulintjaku Teams.

The main aim of the project was to strengthen NPY Women's Council's response to sexual assault on the NPY Lands through engaging Anangu knowledge and understandings. This project builds on the recent work of the DFVS to review and develop its practice and the work of the Uti Kulintjaku Team in increasing shared bi-cultural understandings of mental health and trauma and developing capacity to talk about difficult things in clear and safe ways. Guided by the senior Anangu women, the intention was that these new shared understandings of the nature and experience of sexual assault would inform the DFVS to promote culturally safe practice and better meet the needs of Anangu women who have experienced sexual assault.

2.2 Understanding this project within the national and international context

Sexual assault is a serious crime. Understanding the prevalence of sexual assault in Australia is difficult due to unreliable data collection and recognised under-reporting of sexual assault with many victims/survivors reluctant to report experiences of sexual assault to police or other services (Olsen & Lovett, 2016; McCalman et al., 2014). Over more than a decade there has been considerable political and media attention on family violence and child sexual abuse in Indigenous communities resulting in several government inquiries (Gordon et al., 2002; Wild & Anderson, 2007; Mullighan, 2008). These inquiries highlighted the extent and consequences of family violence and sexual abuse on the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities and made recommendations for strengthening prevention and service responses as well as for creating better data collection systems.

Family violence continues to be a pervasive issue within Indigenous communities. Available data reveals that in 2002, 2008 and 2014-15, the rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults reporting experiencing physical or threatened violence, remained unchanged at around one in five (21.8%). This was 2.5 times the rate for non-Indigenous Australians, after adjusting for differences in population age structures (SCRGSP (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision), 2016). According to available police records, in 2015, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experienced physical assault at 9.1 (South Australia (SA)) and 11.4 (Northern Territory (NT)) times the rates for non-Indigenous women and reported sexual assaults by a family member were 1.2 (SA) and 2.6 (NT) times the rates for non-Indigenous women (SCRGSP (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision), 2016).

Despite the national attention on Indigenous family violence, there is a paucity of research to establish a reliable evidence base around the incidence and prevalence of Indigenous family violence (Blagg et al., 2015). However, the reality is that the rates of sexual violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are likely to be much higher than reported in official data. Anecdotal evidence and submissions to inquiries indicate that sexual violence in Indigenous communities is experienced at rates that considerably exceed those for non-Indigenous Australians (Lievore, 2003; Al-Yaman et al., 2006).

There is debate over the causes of family violence, both in mainstream and Indigenous communities. Many argue that there are a multitude of factors that interact to contribute to the 'cause' of Indigenous family violence and that this violence needs to be understood within the specific historical and cultural context of colonisation, which includes male dominance, and systemic disadvantage. This requires an understanding of the interaction of complex contributing factors rather than viewing the issue as mono-causal, that is, related only to male power and dominance over women (Olsen & Lovett, 2016; Blagg et al., 2015). It is recognised that Indigenous women experience multiple risk factors for sexual assault that occur at disproportionately higher rates than their non-Indigenous counterparts. These risk factors include poverty, socio-economic stressors, alcohol and drug use and social norms that reflect male dominance (McCalman et al., 2014).

With regard to programs to support Indigenous Australians who have experienced sexual violence, there is a scarcity of research or evaluations:

...there is currently insufficient evidence from peer review or gray [sic] literature studies of sexual assault responses targeting Indigenous Australians to confidently direct practice or policies regarding what strategies are likely to be effective in responding to sexual assault. What the review did confirm was that a starting point for any new service is to engage with local community members (McCalman et al., 2014:10).

To develop effective services to address the considerable damaging impact of sexual violence on individuals, families and communities sound research and evaluation that is informed by the experience and values of Indigenous people is required. Therefore, working with communities to develop and/or strengthen existing services is necessary to ensure that the service is culturally responsive and meets the needs of people who have experienced sexual violence within their social and cultural context.

Understandings of the nature of sexual assault and its causal and risk factors inform the development of responses to this violence (Blagg et al., 2015). It is notable that in the literature there is an absence of Indigenous understandings of sexual assault and violence, the context of this violence, and how these understandings might inform support and services needed in response. One exception is a study undertaken in rural, regional and remote settings with Indigenous young people which explored young people's experience and understandings of violence in sexual relationships,

including sexual violence (Senior et al., 2016). This study found “young people described violence as an accepted part of their sexual relationships and this normalisation led to significant tensions in their experiences and management of their everyday relationships” (Senior et al., 2016:204). Young people in this study described reluctance to access services or support in response to experiencing sexual violence. The nature and impact of violence in sexual relationships, this study found, was changing as a result of the increasing mobility of Indigenous young people, particularly their movement into urban centres for education, and their use of social media.

Māori researchers explored Māori definitions and conceptualisations of sexual violence (Pihama et al., 2016). This research revealed that Māori conceptualisations articulated the cultural transgression of sexual violence and its collective impact on the whole family with its implications for previous and future generations. These conceptualisations were understood as inextricably linked to Māori experience of colonial violence. This study argued that public policy in New Zealand did not engage with Māori understandings of what constitutes sexual violence and as a result policy responses “continue to locate sexual violence only at the level of individual violence and as such the collective experiences for Māori of colonial violence remain invisible in a healing context” (Pihama et al., 2016:48).

Similarly, Olsen and Lovett’s (2016) review of literature relating to Indigenous perspectives on dealing with violence against women revealed cultural differences in understanding the nature of violence particularly with regard to “the centrality of family and community, as opposed to individuals or couples, in Indigenous perspectives” which “fundamentally alters the desired approaches to caring for women who have been victims of violence and working with men who have been perpetrators of violence” (Olsen & Lovett, 2016:4). These studies exploring Indigenous understandings and experience of sexual assault are important in informing the development of responses to sexual assault.

The final report of a recent study of innovative models in addressing violence against Indigenous women argues that Indigenous men and women need to be recognised as the “principle bearers of knowledge on family violence rather than simply helpless victims or incorrigible offenders, bereft of agency” (Blagg et al., 2018). Place-based, Indigenous-led initiatives to respond to family and sexual violence in Indigenous communities are understood to offer the best chance for developing effective responses to family violence (Blagg et al., 2018; Olsen & Lovett, 2016; McCalman et al., 2014). Further, Menzies (2019) argues that practice approaches guided by trauma theory are imperative in order to address the challenges that exist within Indigenous communities. She notes that trauma frameworks are yet to have a significant influence in much health and human services practice with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and identifies a need for researching theoretically informed trauma and recovery healing services for Indigenous Australians (Menzies, 2019).

In developing appropriate service responses, research conducted overseas highlights the importance of staff working creatively and collaboratively with clients in recognition of the complexity faced by women who have experienced family or sexual violence (Fox et al., 2018). Calvino (2016), for example, emphasises that work with Māori experiencing intergenerational sexual abuse requires what she terms “the utilisation of a creative and culturally meaningful helping praxis”. Rather than focusing on the “treatment of individual survivors”, with “the helping professional held as a central component of the process”, she argues that culture must be central to methodology, which has implications for both the goals of the helping/healing process and the kind of pedagogies used. She describes a research-based pūrākau [myth, ancient legend, story] approach to restoration and recovery that uses both archival and interview approaches as a potential model through which to develop more contextual and transformative practice approaches (Calvino, 2016).

The work of developing appropriate service responses must be contextual, and grounded in the cultural and material realities of the service users. And although the literature indicates that place-based initiatives that deeply consider context are likely to have the best outcomes, more evidence for what works at local levels is required so decisions about situated responses to Indigenous sexual assault can be made with more confidence (McCalman, 2014). In particular, this includes designing the best processes to develop them.

This NPY Women's Council project has the potential to contribute to developing the body of knowledge in the public arena on Indigenous understandings of sexual violence and inform other organisations and communities wishing to develop trauma-informed, place-based initiatives to address sexual assault against Aboriginal women.

3 Project scope and key research questions

The stated aims of this project were to explore Anangu understandings of sexual assault, how sexual assault affects Anangu women, their families and communities and to explore how these understandings can inform the strengthening of services and support for Anangu women who have experienced sexual assault.

Key research questions guiding the project were:

- What are Anangu understandings of sexual assault and its effects?
- How do you talk about sexual assault with Anangu women in a safe way?
- What support do Anangu women need if they have experienced sexual assault?

Other research questions and areas of inquiry that arose as part of the PAR process are reported in Section 5.3.

4 Methodology

We adopted a participatory action research (PAR) approach. PAR facilitates an iterative learning cycle of reflecting, planning, acting, observing and sharing to engage stakeholders in identifying issues and planning, implementing and adapting actions to achieve the desired change. PAR is often described as a research approach that features the opinions and decision-making of those that are marginalised and voiceless in issues affecting their lives (Stringer, 2014). PAR's systematic and cyclical process is an effective approach to general problem solving at the local level (Boyle, 2012). This approach develops an understanding of the cultural and historical underpinnings of social structures and relationships, and how these impact people's experiences (Baum et al., 2006).

By utilising this research approach the decision makers, the actors and the people affected by these actions are able to collaborate and decide the best approach going forward to achieve mutually agreeable outcomes. In this way it is recognised as an empowering process (Boyle, 2012).

A PAR design requires a set of practices that take into account the human and social dimensions of the context and is guided by four core working principles of genuine, positive working relationships, effective and constructive communication, effective participation and inclusion (Stringer, 2014). These principles guide the research process to ensure that it is conducive to effective outcomes and change desired by those most affected. In practice the principles are enacted and facilitated by the research facilitator.

This approach involves the co-researchers defining and exploring the issues, outlining the possibilities for improvement and the actions for change. Through the iterative action learning cycle, each stage impacts and informs subsequent stages with the research facilitator facilitating a process that promotes participation, reflection and learning.

In this project, the key mechanism of these iterative action learning cycles was a series of four workshops facilitated by the research facilitator working with an interpreter. The workshops brought together a core group of ten co-researchers who made an informed decision to participate. This group included senior Anangu women (four), Anangu DFVS staff members (three) and non-Aboriginal DFVS staff members (two) as well as a psychotherapist, experienced in working in the context. The workshops were supported by the interpreter, who has experience working with Uti Kulintjaku Project; the research facilitator, who has worked with the Uti Kulintjaku Team for six years undertaking the project's evaluation (Togni, 2018); and the Uti Kulintjaku Project Officer, who has been in that role for six years also. Anangu were the majority of participants in each workshop by design.

The core group of ten co-researchers was stable throughout the project and there was a high rate of participation in the workshops. The majority of the Anangu co-researchers (four) participated in all four workshops, as did the psychotherapist and the research facilitator. Of the remaining five co-researchers, four participated in three of the four workshops. Between the third and fourth workshops one of the non-Aboriginal DFVS staff member co-researchers resigned and was replaced with another non-Aboriginal DFVS staff member in the project's fourth workshop.

The workshops were guided by the Uti Kulintjaku Iwara, or way of working – developed through the Uti Kulintjaku Project. This approach places culture and cultural knowledge at the centre of the research project and aims to increase bi-cultural understandings of complex issues through also exploring Western knowledge and understandings of these issues – taking time to deeply explore the translation of concepts and their contextual meaning, not merely the translation words. This way of working includes four core components to support clearer thinking and ensure sensitive and difficult issues can be talked about in a safe way in a cross-cultural setting (Togni, 2016). These core components are outlined below.

Uti Kulintjaku Iwara – core components

Thinking work	Exploring language, meaning and conceptual understanding associated with the issues
Supportive work	Social and logistical support to ensure the Anangu women can participate effectively as well as the support provided by the women to each other
Emotional work	Dedicated time provided for healing and therapeutic aspects of the project
Reflective, iterative learning and evaluation	Regular reflection on how the process is working, how people are feeling, what is being achieved and what needs to change

All the senior Anangu co-researchers participating in this project were part of developing the Uti Kulintjaku way of working so were familiar with and experienced in this approach as was the

research facilitator. These women were able to guide the other co-researchers to understand the approach and to participate safely. The psychotherapist had previously been engaged by the Uti Kulintjaku Project so she was known to most team members and was familiar with the way of working.

The workshops were audio-recorded with permission of participants and a record of the discussions was written up as workshop notes. On several occasions, participants requested the audio recorder be turned off when sensitive information was shared. Outcomes, actions and learnings from the workshops were documented by the research facilitator and shared with all co-researchers. These were revisited at the beginning of each workshop as part of the iterative action learning cycle.

The workshops were held in Alice Springs at a venue frequently used by the Uti Kulintjaku Team, and each was held over two days. Most of the Anangu participants had to travel long distances from their home communities to attend, and were remunerated for their time. The research facilitator, and the Uti Kulintjaku team members, always mindful of the possible triggering effects of discussing difficult topics on individuals who may have experienced trauma, ensured that all participants felt safe to take any action that was required to deal with their feelings – this is part of the supportive work component of the way of working. The psychotherapist was engaged in the project to support the emotional work component of the process. Applying the Uti Kulintjaku Iwara approach to workshops supports participants to discuss sensitive and challenging topics; the issue of trauma was discussed openly within the group. Trauma-informed activities were included during the workshops such as meditations, art and creative activities such as drawing and colouring in. The final session of every workshop was dedicated to reflection and healing through drawing as part of the emotional work component.

Ethics approval for the research was granted by the *Central Australian Human Research Ethics Committee* early in 2018.

Data including the detailed workshop notes, the audio recordings of the workshops, the co-researchers' reflective drawings and participant observations at the workshops have been included in the analysis to identify the key learnings and outcomes presented in this Report. Co-researchers agreed that their reflective drawings and related stories should be included in the Report without the co-researchers' names (Annex A) and that all detailed discussions and personal stories shared in the workshops would not be shared outside the group.

5 What we did and how we learned

5.1 Knowledge and relationships

- ✚ The project brought together Anangu and non-Aboriginal women with a range of experiences, knowledge and relationships to each other. The four senior Anangu women are all members of the Uti Kulintjaku Team and so have worked together on that project for several years. Through the Uti Kulintjaku Project they have developed knowledge of trauma from a Western perspective and developed capacity to talk about difficult issues in safe ways. These women come from three different communities spanning the three jurisdictions that are part of the NPY region in Central Australia. Two are Ngaanyatjarra speakers and two are Pitjantjatjara speakers. These four women are recognised and respected cultural and community leaders and three of them are also current NPY Women's Council Directors.

- ✚ The three Anangu women who are employed through the DFVS have lived experience of family violence and have been working in the DFVS for a couple of years. They are all Pitjantjatjara speakers and come from different communities across the NPY Lands. They have family and cultural relationships with the senior Anangu women co-researchers and they had close working relationships with the non-Aboriginal DFVS staff member co-researchers. To this project they brought their cultural, community and lived experience knowledge as well as their experience working in the DFVS.
- ✚ The psychotherapist, interpreter, research facilitator and Uti Kulintjaku Project Officer all had pre-existing relationships with each other and the senior Anangu women through their work with the Uti Kulintjaku Project. Most also had working relationships with the non-Aboriginal DFVS staff member co-researchers. In addition to supporting the emotional work within the Uti Kulintjaku Iwara, the role of the psychotherapist was to share Western knowledge and understandings of sexual assault and its impact. The non-Aboriginal DFVS staff members also brought their experience of working in the DFVS and their knowledge of the impact of sexual assault.
- ✚ In the initial workshop we clarified everyone's roles and relationships and the knowledge and experience that they brought to the project.

5.2 Working in the Uti Kulintjaku way with iterative action learning cycles

- ✚ The Uti Kulintjaku Iwara – the path to clear thinking – underpinned how we worked, centring culture, cultural knowledge and language and supporting Anangu-led teaching and learning. This Iwara has four core, integrated components of thinking work, supportive work, emotional work and the reflective, iterative learning and evaluation, as described in Section 4.
- ✚ The thinking work drove the workshops with a focus exploring Anangu and non-Aboriginal knowledge and understandings of sexual assault and its impact. We initially spent time exploring the PAR methodology and how we were going to work and learn together. The role of the interpreter was critical in enabling this exchange of knowledge and exploration of concepts and experience to increase bi-cultural understanding. A list of approximately 200 words and phrases in Pitjantjatjara and Ngaanyatjarra was compiled through the workshops. These words related to sexual behaviour, sexual assault, abuse of power, the impact of sexual assault, kinship and protective relationships and our way of working and learning together. At each workshop we reviewed these words and their translations to check spelling, meaning and contextual relevance. This deepened the thinking and learning as we went along.
- ✚ Storytelling was a key mechanism for sharing knowledge and learning from each other. The co-researchers shared personal stories and experiences to explore the issues, understandings, culture and the complexity of the relationships and context within the legacy of colonisation. Some of the Anangu co-researchers drew pictures during the workshops and then shared the stories of these pictures to explain their experiences, ideas and thoughts.
- ✚ Relationships within the team underpinned the supportive work. The logistics and travel arrangements for the Anangu co-researchers to attend the workshops were provided by the Uti Kulintjaku Project Officer and the DFVS staff members. Social support was provided by

5.3 Workshop content and facilitation

- ✚ The key research questions provided the scaffolding and a focus for each workshop and the Anangu co-researchers led the discussion, shaping its direction and depth. The exploration of the concepts and the complexity of the context, as well as the sharing of cultural knowledge, deepened at each subsequent workshop as trust grew in the group, bi-cultural understanding increased and insights were gained. New questions emerged iteratively through the discussions at the workshops. The questions we explored over the course of the four workshops were:
 - What do we mean by sexual assault and sexual violence from an Anangu and non-Aboriginal perspective?
 - What do Anangu women think about sexual assault/violence? What are the language words to describe this experience?
 - What is the impact of sexual assault on women? What is the impact on families?
 - How do Anangu families respond to sexual assault?
 - Why do women keep sexual assault a secret?
 - How do you support Anangu women now who have experienced sexual assault?
 - Who do they seek help from?
 - How do you talk about sexual assault with Anangu women in a safe way?
 - What are the qualities needed in the person that a women chooses to tell her story to?
 - What are the important caring/protective extended family relationships for women?
- ✚ Following each workshop the research facilitator met with the non-Aboriginal co-researchers to review the workshop notes and clarify the new questions and directions of inquiry that had emerged and would shape the focus of the next workshop.
- ✚ The facilitation of the workshops was a gentle balance between guiding the exploration of the questions and holding the space for Anangu-led knowledge sharing, teaching and learning. The Anangu co-researchers led the sharing of stories and cultural knowledge and raised issues and questions related to the topics that were important to them. Following the Uti Kulintjaku Iwara, we created space for the psychotherapist to share Western knowledge about sexual assault, its impact and the healing responses to sexual assault. This also contextualised sexual assault as not only an issue within Anangu communities.
- ✚ The research facilitator nurtured and encouraged the supportive learning environment, paying attention to power dynamics, and guided the action learning cycles in the workshops. Another important part of the facilitator's role was actively listening to the stories and discussions to draw out the threads and connections within the narratives and highlight and confirm the learnings and actions.
- ✚ The discussions in the workshops were grounded in lived experience and articulated the devastating impact of colonisation and the dominance of the Australian legal system over Anangu law. Anangu understandings of sexual assault, its impact on women and families and responses to sexual assault were discussed within this complex context and situated within the experience of family violence generally. Supported by the Uti Kulintjaku way of working, which centres Anangu culture and knowledge, the Anangu co-researchers shared cultural knowledge and practices to support healing and respond to and prevent sexual assault. This is a feature of the Uti Kulintjaku Iwara, drawing on the best of Anangu and non-Aboriginal knowledge to find new ways to respond to contemporary challenges (Togni, 2018).

6 What we learned

This section articulates the key overarching learnings from the project. These learnings relate to the process, ways to strengthen support for Anangu women who experience sexual assault and challenges and opportunities for sharing our learnings to inform practice. This section draws on the identified learnings that emerged through the workshops as well as the workshop notes relating to discussions and the co-researchers' drawing reflections at the end of each workshop (see Annex A).

6.1 Effectiveness of the Uti Kulintjaku Iwara

- ✚ What we have learned about the effectiveness of using the Uti Kulintjaku Iwara in this project is consistent with its effectiveness when it was adopted by the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku (Anangu men's) Project after being developed through the women's Uti Kulintjaku Project (Togni, 2019). It is a way of working that is guided by principles rather than a rigid protocol and so can be adapted to different culturally diverse contexts to 1) support clear thinking; 2) enable genuine bi-cultural learning; 3) facilitate safe ways to talk about difficult issues; and 4) develop capacity to find new ways to respond to and address these issues drawing on the best of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal knowledge.

- ✚ This way of working places Anangu culture and language at the centre and in this way effectively engages Anangu to lead the process, drawing on Anangu culture and ways of knowing and learning. It is a process that shifts power from the dominant culture and recognises the value of Anangu knowledge in understanding and responding to contemporary challenges. As described by one of the senior Anangu co-researchers:

We are using Anangu knowledge from the past to help with the future. Similar to a more traditional Anangu way of holding knowledge and using that traditional knowledge to move forward into the future and to live well in the future – this work seems to be in this same way in this workshop. Anangu co-researcher (005), April 2019

- ✚ One of the Anangu co-researchers, whose first experience of working in the Uti Kulintjaku way was in this project, described it this way:

In this way of working we take the time to understand from both sides – Anangu and piranpa [non-Aboriginal] – and find the words to talk about things carefully and we go slowly. Anangu co-researcher (005), September 2019

- ✚ Employing the Uti Kulintjaku Iwara was effective in creating a safe place for deep listening, sharing and careful consideration of the complex issues and different understandings of sexual assault, its impact and the context. As highlighted in the quote above, this process supported genuine reciprocity in the teaching and learning between the Anangu and non-Aboriginal co-researchers. The pace of the work was described as “going slowly”, which enabled the thoughtful and considered exploration of words, phrases and concepts in language related to sensitive issues in order to develop an increased shared bi-cultural understanding. One of the non-Aboriginal co-researchers described the project's process as helping “the DV team to slow down” ((102), December 2018).

- ✚ The pace of the workshops enabled the co-researchers to “give careful attention to things that are important” (Anangu co-researcher (006), August 2018) which contributed to increased understanding and clarity to inform action.
- ✚ The Anangu co-researchers valued learning from the psychotherapist about the understandings of sexual assault, its impact and what it takes to heal following sexual assault from a Western science perspective. As one of the Anangu co-researchers shared:

We've been learning in the workshops about the effects of blame and this learning is helping. Anangu co-researcher (005), September 2019

- ✚ One of the non-Aboriginal co-researchers described her experience of the workshops as “like coming up for air” in the way they provided the space to take a step back from the frontline work and deeply consider the issues and understandings. She reflected:

It might seem chaotic and there are so many stories and they might seem different but we have all come out with something solid at the end. We have a depth of knowledge in this room and the various knowledges and different ways of thinking about this; sharing the deeper meanings of it for people and all that means. Non-Aboriginal co-researcher (009), August 2018

What this quote reveals is that the process can be experienced by non-Aboriginal participants as “chaotic” initially, as it is not the way they are used to learning. The Anangu women share stories from ancient times and personal stories from the present or the near past and the logic, connections and insights that these offer to the particular topic may not be immediately obvious to the non-Aboriginal participants. The Anangu-led Uti Kulintjaku Iwara is aligned with the Anangu way of learning. What we have learned through the Uti Kulintjaku Projects is that working in this way requires non-Aboriginal participants to listen deeply and sit with their discomfort and confusion of the process at times, trusting that clarity will emerge. As one of the non-Aboriginal mental health professional members of the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku Team reflected, the challenge for non-Aboriginal participants is to develop the ability to:

...keep back but still be active when required and not overrule. And that's a skill; how you remain involved but don't overtake, don't take over (quoted in Togni, 2019:35).

Central to this skill required by non-Aboriginal participants to effectively participate in the Uti Kulintjaku Iwara, is awareness of and reflection upon their power and privilege within this context and their ability to begin to learn in a different way. Consistent with this, within a PAR approach, awareness of power dynamics is central to the role of the research facilitator whose task “is not to push particular agendas but to neutralize [sic] power differentials in the setting so that the interests of the powerful do not take precedence over those of other participants” (Stringer, 2014:68).

- ✚ Within our project, the Anangu-led process, supported by the facilitator, contributed to effectively holding the space for reciprocal learning within an Anangu way of knowing and learning and this was recognised and valued by the non-Aboriginal co-researchers.
- ✚ The attention paid to the supportive and emotional work within the Uti Kulintjaku Project Iwara contributed to the workshops being a therapeutic environment for the co-researchers.

In the reflective sessions at the end of each workshop, the co-researchers regularly reflected on how happy, inspired and hopeful they were about the work they were doing through the project despite the difficult and sensitive nature of discussing sexual assault. This is conveyed in many of the reflective drawings presented in Annex A.

6.2 Language, culture and knowledge: the role of Anangu Support Workers and malparara way

- In the sharing of Anangu and non-Aboriginal knowledge and understandings of sexual assault there was a focus on the importance of trust in relation to providing support for a woman who has experienced sexual assault. This generated much discussion, especially as there is no direct translation of the English word trust in Pitjantjatjara or Ngaanyatjarra, rather the words used related to the context and relationships.

What I really took away from [the workshop] yesterday was the importance of language. Non-Aboriginal co-researcher (009), December 2018

- The importance of language and knowledge of culture and community when supporting women who have experienced sexual assault emerged clearly through the discussions. This was elucidated through discussions around the need to work sensitively in small communities where many people are related to ensure trust and maintain confidentiality. The Anangu women described the way of speaking “sideways” or *kiti-kiti wangkanyi* as the appropriate Anangu way of talking about sensitive issues to ensure that further hurt, distress, shame or offence is not caused. This is protective language. The connection between this knowledge of language and relationships, and establishing trust to provide support that meets the needs of Anangu women who have experienced sexual assault was clearly articulated by the Anangu co-researchers.
- The importance of the non-Aboriginal DFVS staff members learning some Pitjantjatjara and Ngaanyatjarra language was emphasised in the discussions. Not only did this offer the opportunity for non-Aboriginal staff members to learn to say and recognise key words, it also offered them the opportunity for insights into Anangu culture and understandings of sexual assault and its context. As one of the non-Aboriginal co-researchers reflected:

One example is when [Anangu co-researcher] was teaching words to the caseworkers, I was observing the response of the workers. I noticed what a difference it was making to their understanding by learning the words. Non-Aboriginal co-researcher (012), December 2018

Some of the actions arising through the process related to the role of the Anangu workers within the DFVS incorporating the facilitation of sessions to share language with their non-Aboriginal colleagues. This was viewed as contributing to the way the DFVS could strengthen its work with Anangu women, building trust and supporting healing.

- What this articulation of the importance of language, cultural and community knowledge also affirmed was the importance of the DFVS Anangu Support Workers for the DFVS to better meet the needs of Anangu women who have experienced sexual assault. The reality of the turnover of non-Aboriginal staff members within the DFVS meant that Anangu staff members, with the right supports, were potentially the long-term workforce. One of the

Anangu co-researchers who was a DFVS staff member eloquently articulated the importance of the role of the Anangu Support Workers in this way:

In our communities, domestic and family violence causes a lot of sadness and distress. This work [PAR project] is strengthening our idea that when piranpa [non-Aboriginal people] come and go from communities, they don't hold the knowledge and history for a long time in the way that Anangu do. They don't know the families and the relationships and all the information about what is happening in communities. So it is really important that when workers come from outside they need to have a malpa – an Anangu worker working alongside them and to listen to them [the Anangu worker] and be guided by their knowledge because they are the ones living in the community all the time and they are the ones who know the right people to speak to, the right way to go about it. They need to listen first and we need to start really working in this way. Anangu co-researcher (005), September 2019

- ✚ This way of working is called malparara way. Malpa means 'friend' in Pitjantjatjara and malparara means 'alongside a friend or colleague'. The malparara way is a model developed in the early 1990s by NPY Women's Council for Anangu and non-Aboriginal staff members to work together recognising the particular skills, knowledge and experience that each brings to support their work with Anangu. NPY Women's Council has developed *A Workforce Development and Capability Framework* which recognises the importance of the malparara way and how this is adapting to align with the recognition of Anangu specialist skills required in the now more complex organisation. Roles such as the emergent role of the DFVS Anangu Support Workers are examples of the work that is now required and supported through collaborations like this PAR project.

6.3 Creative ways to support recovery and healing

- ✚ The senior Anangu co-researchers shared many stories from their childhoods and growing up, and articulated ways they were cared for and ways they cared for each other. Many stories of songs were shared as they women recounted how songs were integral to their happiness, wellbeing and learning as they grew up. The importance of song was highlighted and several songs were shared in the workshops.
- ✚ The Anangu co-researchers considered ways that creative activities like singing, dancing and artmaking, led by Anangu women, could be incorporated into the work of the DFVS to support Anangu women's healing. It was recognised that these types of activities could particularly support women who were unable to speak, to engage in healing. While this aligns with Anangu culture, it also consistent with the principles of trauma-informed practice, which informs the DFVS practice framework (see Section 7.4).
- ✚ In depth discussions occurred in the workshops amongst the co-researchers relating to Tjukurpa stories and songs and their role in preventing family violence and supporting healing following sexual assault. The sacredness and seriousness of the use of these Tjukurpa songs was emphasised. The Anangu co-researchers acknowledged that there is Tjukurpa that Anangu women use to help with healing and strengthening people and

calming them down to prevent family violence. However, if, how and when these could be linked to the work of the DFVS requires further consideration and discussion with other senior Anangu women.

6.4 Anangu kinship: harnessing existing relationships of care and trust

- ✚ We spent time in the workshops considering who Anangu women seek help or solace from if they have experienced sexual assault. This led to a discussion about the protective relationships for Anangu women within their family and kinship structure. While understanding important family relationships is part of how the DFVS approaches its work with women, this discussion provided more in-depth exploration of these relationships and the Pitjantjatjara and Ngaanyatjarra words to describe these relationships within the complex kinship structure.
- ✚ The Anangu co-researchers articulated that the 'right person' for an Anangu woman to talk about her experience of sexual assault is likely to be a woman that she already has a loving and caring relationship with and a strong connection of trust. This could be a grandmother, older sister or a strong leader in her family.
- ✚ What was recognised was the potential for the DFVS to work with women in communities to support the reinvigoration of these kinship-centred protective relationships and perhaps to develop language-based resources to support this strengths-based work. This would contribute to strengthening community capacity for Anangu-led support and healing and contribute to strengthening resilience within communities.

6.5 Anangu-led strengthening of intergenerational relationships

- ✚ While the Uti Kulintjaku Iwara supports reciprocal learning between Anangu and non-Aboriginal participants, what we learned in this project is that it can also provide a safe place for rich intergenerational dialogue and reciprocal learning amongst Anangu. Within the PAR project important learning occurred between the generations of Anangu women, strengthening their relationships and respect for each other's knowledge and lived experience.
- ✚ The project provided a space for the senior and younger Anangu co-researchers to share their perspectives and understandings of sexual assault, its impact and the context in which it occurs. The senior women also shared related cultural knowledge. There was an important discussion about the intergenerational transfer of cultural and other knowledge that could support younger generations of Anangu women to live healthy and safe lives. The women explored the factors contributing to the challenges associated with why this intergenerational knowledge transfer is not happening as effectively as it did in previous generations. These were challenging, in-depth and respectful discussions where everyone was committed to and welcomed the opportunity to learn.
- ✚ The younger Anangu co-researchers greatly appreciated the senior women sharing their knowledge within the workshops and regularly acknowledged this during the reflective sessions at the end of each workshop, as illustrated and described in the following reflective drawing and accompanying story.

This is about the knowledge growing from when the minyma [senior women], Uti Kulintjaku team and the DV team first got together. We have started to do something and this is coming through, coming into the DV team. We talked about secret language that came up in this workshop, strong Tjukurpa that has been hidden and was shared by the Uti Kulintjaku ladies. It's like the pretty flowers, it made me really happy. Thank you, I'm really happy that you are here and sharing this tjukurpa. Now it's really big, it's like the pretty flowers. Anangu co-researcher (005), April 2019



- ✚ This opportunity for strengthening intergenerational relationships through a dialogue focussed on better supporting Anangu women who have experienced sexual assault has contributed to the younger Anangu women feeling stronger in the work they are doing in the DFVS, as discussed in Section 7.3.
- ✚ These discussions relating to the value of cultural knowledge in considering and responding to contemporary challenges also led to the Anangu co-researchers expressing a desire to engage members of the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku (Anangu men's) team in the dialogue. The women believed that it was necessary for men's knowledge and perspectives to be shared together with the women's so they could work together with an increased shared understanding to support family violence prevention (see Section 8).

6.6 Challenges and opportunities: applying knowledge and learnings and taking action in practice

- ✚ While the PAR project supported a rich learning environment from which key learnings were articulated and actions identified, the challenge was how best to transfer these learnings and implement the actions in practice within the DFVS. As a new project we needed to create ways to apply the new knowledge generated and put the actions into practice. The workshops were an immersive experience for the co-researchers where articulated learnings and actions were informed by the in-depth discussions and strengthened shared bi-cultural understandings that were developing over time. As highlighted above, these workshops created the space for the DFVS team to "slow down" listen and think to be able to understand clearly, and the co-researchers greatly benefited from this. The DFVS staff member co-researchers were also able to take these learnings into their practice, as discussed further in Section 7.

- ✚ The DFVS is a busy service, responding to crisis situations as well as providing ongoing support to women and their children across the NPY Lands. During the period of this project there was considerable turnover within the DFVS staff team, including at the management level as well as one of the project's non-Aboriginal co-researchers who left before the fourth workshop.
- ✚ This reality presented challenges for the co-researchers, who were DFVS staff members, to establish a process to regularly share the learnings coming from the PAR project with the broader DFVS team. The co-researchers provided updates to the broader DFVS team at staff meetings but these were necessarily brief given the forum. Several of the actions were able to be implemented in practice, especially those driven by the Anangu staff member co-researchers around sharing language and facilitating discussions in language with women on bush picnics. These activities to transfer learnings and implement actions were dependent on the DFVS staff member co-researchers rather than embedded systematically as part of a DFVS learning strategy. We have identified the need to develop a more systematic process as a key focus for the next phase of the project, as outlined in Section 8.
- ✚ In addition, there is the ability for the learnings to be shared within communities as described by one of the Anangu co-researchers:

We got together to talk Anangu and piranpa [non-Aboriginal people] and then going back to the communities and talking with the young women, it can help. It's in the communities, it's happening, going out there to talk to them. Making them feel happy and good inside by sharing that story... What I think is that the learning and sharing is helping to start talking like with the girls and the senior women together... we are getting stronger, feeling stronger to take it back out to the young women, each time we come together [in the PAR project workshops]. Anangu co-researcher (005), December 2018

- ✚ One of the key features of the effectiveness of the women's Uti Kulintjaku Project, which has been going for six years, is that as an Anangu-led innovation it operates within the Anangu domain. The Uti Kulintjaku team members are embedded, connected and have influence within the Anangu domain and so can use the learnings through the Uti Kulintjaku Project and draw on their own cultural knowledge in their interactions with family members and in their work in communities (Togni, 2018). This is similar for the PAR project, with the majority of the co-researchers being Anangu women who live and have key roles within different communities across the NPY Lands. Not only do these Anangu co-researchers speak the languages of the Anangu domain, they also understand the people, interrelationships and connections within the systems in this domain. As an example of this, a group of Anangu women who were working with one of the DFVS workers not involved directly in the PAR project let the worker know that they had heard about the PAR project and its focus on sexual assault and they said that they too wanted to have a discussion about this on their next bush picnic. As one of the interpreters who has worked with the Uti Kulintjaku Project highlighted these ongoing conversations within the Aboriginal domain

...will be a lasting legacy – the language and the talking – because it suits Anangu. It's what they do best. (quoted in Togni, 2018:94)

7 Key outcomes

7.1 Achieving our aims

- ✚ The stated aims of this project were to explore Anangu understandings of sexual assault, how sexual assault affects Anangu women, their families and communities and to explore how these understandings can inform the strengthening of services and support for Anangu women who have experienced sexual assault. These aims have been achieved to the extent that is reasonable to expect given that the project funding enabled four workshops.
- ✚ The project has facilitated a process that has enabled the co-researchers to effectively explore Anangu and non-Aboriginal understandings of sexual assault, its impact and healing from sexual assault, as reported in Sections 5 and 6 above. This is recognised as a key outcome and is explored further below (Section 7.2).
- ✚ The specific learnings and actions identified through the workshops based on the explorations and discussions, were aimed at informing the strengthening of support for Anangu women who have experienced sexual assault. The overarching learnings from the project presented in Section 6 suggest that strengthening services and support for Anangu women who have experienced sexual assault is not only about influencing the practice of the DFVS, it is about the DFVS working with communities to harness and support their strengths and knowledge to better support women and prevent family violence.

7.2 Process as outcome: “trust in your heart to work together”

- ✚ Creating the space and a process in the project underpinned by the Uti Kulintjaku Iwara and guided by the iterative action learning cycles that effectively engaged the co-researchers and supported Anangu-led bi-cultural and intergenerational learning is a key outcome of the project. In the fourth workshop the Anangu co-researchers shared the following in an exchange:

Anangu co-researcher (003): *Everything we have been talking about today – I’m talking about this picture [right] – it’s like we are opening this doorway for our young people, showing the way.*

Anangu co-researcher (001): *That’s what I was thinking, it’s opening and we need the pathway.*

Anangu co-researcher (005): *With the right approach where Anangu and non-Aboriginal people work together, it opens up this path and it can work. This is a good road we are sharing.*

Anangu co-researcher (001): *We really want to help people, but we have to have trusting relationships. We are talking about trust – trust in your heart to work together.*

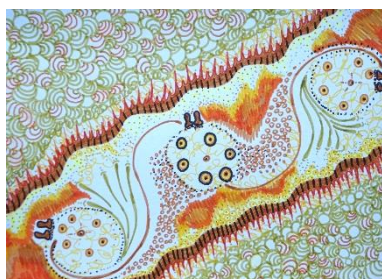
Anangu co-researcher (005): *Now the door is open.*



- ✚ The project's process was just as important as the actions in achieving outcomes from the project. It is unlikely that the depth of learning and the actions that did emerge would have been possible without this process. The process created safety to share different knowledge and perspectives and personal stories about challenging and sensitive issues and the complex context. It provided time for deep listening and reflection that supported increased shared understandings and cultivated empathy.
- ✚ Through this process the complexities of sexual assault, its impacts and the context in Anangu communities could be thoughtfully explored without judgement and in the spirit of learning and developing more meaningful understandings and clarity to inform action.
- ✚ As highlighted in the dialogue between the Anangu co-researchers, above, the process strengthened relationships and trust between the co-researchers. The Anangu co-researchers could see that the non-Aboriginal co-researchers were willing and able to listen deeply to them to better understand their knowledge and experience – this is part of the 'slowly down' to listen carefully and think clearly, which is the essence of the Uti Kulintjaku Iwara. What this contributed to was trust in the women's hearts to effectively work together with the non-Aboriginal women to strengthen support for Anangu women who have experienced sexual assault and work towards ways to prevent this violence. Reflecting on the importance of this, one of the senior Anangu co-researchers shared:

As more non-Anangu people become more knowledgeable about our way and the important stories we hold, as they join with us, that will strengthen what we are trying to achieve and how we are trying to live. To strengthen us in supporting our families and the people who are going to come after us. To enable strong family groups and use that knowledge to help grow up our children and keep them strong. We are from different places, different teams but we are doing the same thing coming together here. It's like we are an extended family like when people used to live with their extended family. Anangu co-researcher (003), April 2019

What we have learned about the Uti Kulintjaku Iwara is that it is also a process that facilitates reconciliation, creating a safe place to talk about the impact of colonisation and supporting deep listening to understand clearly and set a new path to work together (Togni, 2018). This was true for the PAR project.



We can't go back to the way things used to be but we need to examine these two worlds and how they work together. These women have shared a lot about the past and the old way of living. It is good how we are working together in this slow way. It is important to keep doing this work. Anangu co-researcher (006), September 2019

- ✚ Another strength of this process is that it promoted healing and generated hope for the co-researchers. A review of the reflective drawings done at the end of each workshop illuminates the positive energy and hope that was experienced by the co-researchers through project. This is significant given the focus on sexual assault and the co-researchers' personal connections to the effects of sexual assault.

7.3 “It has been empowering for us”: strengthening Anangu Support Workers’ capacity

- ✚ The increased confidence and capacity of the Anangu co-researchers in their roles as DFVS Anangu Support Workers is another key outcome of this project. Through the discussions in the workshops and the consideration of both Anangu and non-Aboriginal knowledge relating to sexual assault and how best to support Anangu women who have experienced sexual assault, the importance of the role of the DFVS Anangu Support Workers was brought into sharp focus.
- ✚ As the workshops progressed, the Anangu co-researchers from the DFVS team increased their clarity in relation to the importance of their roles and their positioning within these roles:

We are feeling empowered by this process to explain that we need to slow down and think about this work more carefully and talk about it in the right way and this has been informed by the knowledge of these senior Uti Kulintjaku ladies...

The Uti Kulintjaku team work in a very slow, careful way to really look at words and ideas and Anangu knowledge... To [know how to] say things in the right way, carefully.

We know we can stop and slow down, we have the knowledge. [Non-Aboriginal staff] need to stop and listen to Anangu, working together as a team. Anangu co-researcher (005), September 2019

This quote reveals that it is not just the increased confidence in understanding the importance of their roles within the DFVS in terms of the knowledge, skills and experience the Anangu Support Workers bring to supporting Anangu women who have experienced sexual assault (as discussed in Section 6.2); it is recognition of their capacity and knowledge with regard to their positioning as Anangu to influence the process and pace of the work within the malparara way: “We can stop and slow down, we have the knowledge”. The Anangu Support Worker co-researchers’ experience of the Uti Kulintjaku Iwara and the relationships with the senior Anangu women in this project strengthened their sense of agency to shape what the malparara way looks like in practice within the DFVS. These co-researchers were encouraged and inspired by the intergenerational knowledge exchange that the project facilitated and they are taking this into their work within the DFVS more broadly.

7.4 Informing Domestic and Family Violence Service practice

- ✚ Understandings and insights gained by the DFVS staff members who were co-researchers in the project are influencing and informing their work. The project enabled the DFVS staff member co-researchers to engage more deeply in thinking about the complexity of the contemporary context within the ongoing legacy of colonisation and the DFVS’s role and positioning in relation to supporting Anangu-led responses to sexual assault. It also promoted deeper thinking about Anangu people’s interaction with the legal system and how

this can compound some of the issues associated with sexual assault and healing from sexual assault.

- ✚ The project is also influencing how these staff members think about their practice, particularly with regard to becoming more mindful of relationships, process, pace and the complexity of issues, and for the Anangu staff member co-researchers, their positioning and agency within the DFVS, as discussed above. There is increased awareness of what the non-Aboriginal staff members do not know and the importance of working well with Anangu Support Workers to better support Anangu women.
- ✚ In addition to being part of the discussions through which the Pitjantjatjara and Ngaanyatjarra words and phrases relating to sexual assault and its effects were identified, the DFVS staff member co-researchers have access to the word list that was generated through the project. This list includes more than 200 words and phrases and is available to all DFVS staff. The co-researchers also agreed that this list of words and phrases could be shared with the Aboriginal Interpreter Service to include in its glossary to assist the work of interpreters who are working with women who have experienced sexual assault.
- ✚ Importantly, the learnings through the project are valuable in informing and supporting the implementation of the DFVS's *Strengthening Community Capacity to End Violence* practice framework (Tucci, et al., 2017). As one of the non-Aboriginal co-researchers reflected:

We started with a big story, this big tangled story and we were trying to pull it apart to understand it, and eventually once we'd done that we came to some really strong tjukurpa [story] and we talked about culture and relationships and the importance of those relationships. It made me think about the DFVS new framework, or the way we are working now within our service, which is all about strengthening communities to end violence. I feel like what we have been talking about the last two days is that. You were sharing your knowledge about how to strengthen your communities to end violence; that knowledge came out and it made me so happy because that's what we are trying to do with this work is to draw on Anangu knowledge and skills and to find out what's working already in your communities and acknowledge how important this is. Non-Aboriginal co-researcher (009), April 2019

- ✚ While we are not currently aware of the extent to which the project's learnings are understood by the broader DFVS team who have not been involved directly in the PAR project, we anticipate that this is limited. As discussed in Section 6.6, it has been challenging to establish a process to regularly or effectively share the learnings coming from the PAR project with the broader DFVS team due to staff turnover, including at a management level and competing priorities for the staff members. However, this is important and has great potential to strengthen the DFVS to be better meet the needs of Anangu women as well as strengthen community capacity. Developing and embedding a process to transfer learnings from the project to strengthen practice as part of the DFVS's embedded learning strategy will be a key focus for the next phase of the project, as outlined in Section 8.

8 Continuing this work in the future

- ✚ There is a strong desire to continue the project to deepen the learning, increase shared bi-cultural understandings, strengthen relationships and inform practice to better meet the needs of Anangu women. The project, its approach and process are highly valued by the Anangu and non-Aboriginal co-researchers as well as the DFVS and NPY Women's Council. Through presentations by the DFVS team at national conferences, the project is also gaining attention and recognition as a leading innovative approach to strengthen responses to and prevent sexual assault within Indigenous communities. The project creates a unique and safe environment for learning between cultures and generations, increasing bi-cultural understandings and clarity to inform action within this complex context.
- ✚ Much has been achieved within four, two-day workshops, however this is just the beginning; there is much more that can be achieved if we continue the project. The next phase of the project will continue to track progress with the actions and consider the learnings that were identified in this initial phase. The project's continued iterative action learning cycles underpinned by the Uti Kulintjaku Iwara and the strong relationships between the co-researchers will support deeper knowledge to be shared and insights to be gained to continue to increase the shared bi-cultural understandings of sexual assault, its effects and its context. Through this learning and inquiry process, new research questions will be identified to strengthen further the work of the DFVS to support Anangu women who have experienced sexual assault and to identify ways of working to prevent this violence. This will continue to support the DFVS to bring its *Strengthening Community Capacity to End Violence* practice framework to life.
- ✚ The next phase of the project will also require a focus on developing a process or pathway to share the learnings and actions generated through the project more effectively with the whole DFVS team to inform practice. We need a process that is embedded as part of the DFVS's learning strategy to ensure that the project's work is utilised effectively to strengthen the way the DFVS supports Anangu women who experience sexual assault. This process will also include the opportunity for DFVS staff members to feedback to the co-researchers how the practice is working and if and how it is making a difference. It is anticipated that the learnings generated through the project will have implications for strengthening the DFVS to better meet the needs of Anangu women more broadly, not only those who have experienced sexual assault.
- ✚ The Anangu co-researchers have indicated that they want to engage members of the Uti Kulintjaku Watiku (Anangu men's) team in aspects of the next phase of the project. The purpose of this is to broaden the dialogue to include the men's cultural knowledge and strengthen the learnings to inform practice, particularly with regard to preventing sexual violence. This is consistent with the emergent nature of this Anangu-led innovation to support the development of the DFVS's capacity and effectiveness in supporting Anangu women. Other, as yet unknown, ideas and initiatives will evolve in the next phase of the project.
- ✚ At the time of writing an opportunity has been identified to apply for funding to support the project in its next phase.

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10 Annex A: Co-researchers' reflective drawings

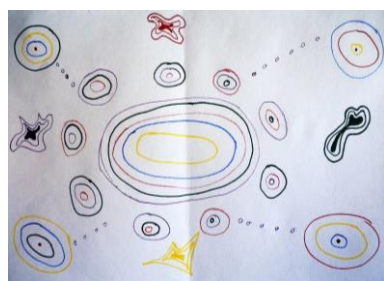
Co-researchers were invited to reflect on and draw pictures to share their thoughts, feelings or learnings at the end of each workshop. These drawings and their stories are presented here.

10.1 Workshop 1



Here is a Ngaanyatjarra woman who has gone through many things in her life, violence, assault and sexual assault. She has many problems. She is just sitting there and thinking, “Who can I trust? Who can I trust to help me? To encourage me? Where can I go for guidance and encouragement to put me on the right path? So I can have hope in my life.” And after that, “How can I get healed, my whole life and be strong? So in the end I can be happy, have a good husband, have kids and a happy life. Forget all those other things that have happened behind.” Trust is the first step to healing.

Anangu co-researcher (001)



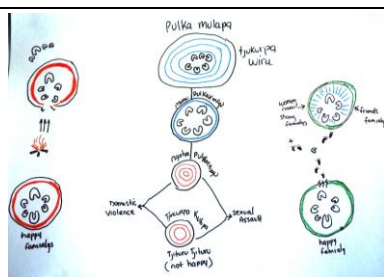
This is all of us sitting around the table. I drew all of us in the same colours but in different ways to show how we are all different but the same at the same time. We all come with our different ideas and different stories but at the heart of those stories the feeling behind them is the same. We are sharing all that knowledge together and we are putting it out there [represented by the small dots radiating out to the larger circles]. And then the four shapes with the solid colours in the centre, they are the actions that we are taking, because they are a bit more solid out of all this. It might seem chaotic and there are so many stories and they might seem different but we have all come out with something solid at the end. We have a depth of knowledge in this room and the various knowledges and different ways of thinking about this that sharing the deeper meanings of it for people and all that means. It is such a privilege to sit in this room of knowledge, especially because as a worker you get so focussed inwards on the detail. It is so great to come here and think about these issues in a broader way. The story of trust that Maimie shared is really important, there needs to be trust and there needs to be hope at the end. Like at the end of this workshop there is hope. Coming in here is like coming up for air.

Non-Aboriginal co-researcher (009)



I have drawn myself in the middle and all the ideas I am thinking about – *Kulintja tjuta: pukulpa wiru* – happiness; *atatjura kulilpai* – careful thinking; *kunpungku palyalpai* – strongly working and making things; *pulkara atunymankupai waltjanguku* – deeply caring and looking after something yourself. Giving careful attention to things that are important.

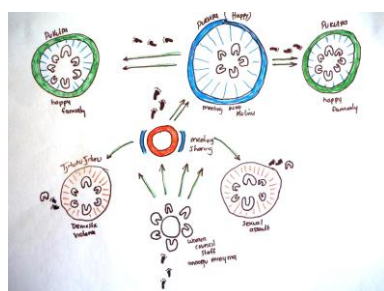
Anangu co-researcher (006)



Drawing 1: I put this circle here (*Tjukurpa kulupa*) to show that we have started. We know that domestic violence and sexual assault are really big issues and it is really sad. We have come together with the stories and we have learned more and it has gotten bigger and stronger. And we are happy because we have learned so many things, it's getting bigger. We've got everything now, it is showing us how to be strong. *Pukulpa mulapa* – it's making us happy that we know.

[On the left] I have drawn this happy family living together and then the fire came, it was burning and it struck that family. The fire that is the domestic violence, went through that family and now the mother and kids are a long way away.

[On the right] Happy family was sitting there and sexual assault came and one little kid was sitting away from family and we don't want him to go there, we just want him to come here as a family, like you mob at Women's Council, family and friends getting together and talking and healing that family.



Drawing 2: This is all of us sitting here – the research team – and all our stories went out there. Stories of domestic violence and sexual assault all came together in the meeting and now it's a big story. We know what it is and we can share this with the families to help them to be strong and have a happy family life. For me coming here to this meeting and learning so many good things from you ladies and doing the other workshop that we did, it's really good to be sharing and learning new things to help. We can share this with the families.

Anangu co-researcher (005)



The circles represent places where people are living and the red represents the trouble that is being experienced that is a bit hidden, underneath. Dust storms are coming up, stirring up trouble and then the rain comes washes all the trouble away.

The drawing around the edge shows the Uti Kulintjaku Team and the DFVS Team and then how these two teams are coming together to work on these issues to help make things better.

Anangu co-researcher (002)



I was thinking about language and meaning and thinking about how some ideas match up absolutely between two languages and some ideas don't really match up at all. I think that this process that we do together is about learning that some ideas will never match up and some ideas we can find ways to express them and just being comfortable with floating through all the ideas and learning together. When you learn a new language, your brain expands and you see the world differently.

Interpreter

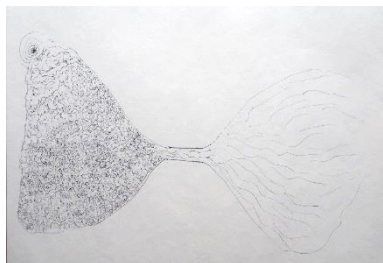
10.2 Workshop 2



We got together to talk Anangu and piranpa and then going back to the communities and talking with the young women, it can help. It's in the communities, it's happening, going out there to talk to them. Making them feel happy and good inside by sharing that story. So they can feel like a rainbow, special.

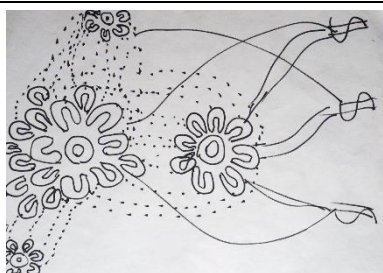
What I think is that the learning and sharing is starting and helping to start talking like with the girls and the senior women together. We are strong women doing the work and the circles in the drawing are growing as we are getting stronger, feeling stronger to take it back out to the young women, each time we come together.

Anangu co-researcher (005)



This drawing is about something happening to a person that brings about in their whole being confusion, jittery confusion; it's very unsettling. They need to find the right person to talk to and through that process of connecting with the right person they feel better. It calms everything down, and they get their flow back.

Non-Aboriginal co-researcher (010)



It is an organisational image. This is the Uti Kulintjaku group [largest group], sharing our way of working with other teams within NPY Women's Council. This is the men's team [smaller group at the top]. And we are applying for funding to keep that strong work going. It shows how the Uti Kulintjaku team's strong work is spreading out to other teams and supporting other teams. We are sharing with each other. The government needs to understand how important the work is, how it is spreading out and why they need to support it.

Anangu co-researcher (002)



We have one life, one road. In the past there were all these different things. In the past we traditionally walked in a strong and clear direction. We didn't need to think about the past we were just looking forward and learning good things. And there was an inner sense of wanting to live well and wanting to be respectful and follow that good path of life. It wasn't that someone else had to tell us how to be, in our own spirit we wanted to follow along and look after ourselves.

We had to keep going, doing the same thing over and over; life is going on the road, same journey.

Sometimes there are traps and distractions along the way that might slow us down but we have to keep traveling, moving forward, looking after ourselves. This is what is going on in my mind. It's a long journey, we are always on the road – have to keep thinking.

Anangu co-researcher (006)



This is a story of something that happened in the past. There is a large creek bed in Ernabella. There were many traditional shelters in the creek bed and there was something really sad happening at this time, there was a big sickness came from another place. It came for Maralinga, struck the people at Ernabella, old men, old women, children and young people. This was when the missionaries were there.

I am wondering about what the missionaries were thinking at the time; where they worried? Because the missionaries back then were working with Anangu at the time, they were helping people with all sorts of things. They were helping people with food and getting firewood for the people to use. The missionaries are [in the picture] giving out firewood and food to the people who were sick. When that happened at that time the piranpa really looked after those people. After this time that when my generation was born. A lot of people died at this time. Our parents' generation was around at that time and they were working. We learned from them and we were going along a good path at that stage. It's like that we we'd like to live now really working properly together with non-Aboriginal people and Anangu working in a reciprocal way. We are lucky to have Women's Council so we can talk and think about these things together. Because when we are gone, how are the next generation going to be?

Anangu co-researcher (003)



I was looking at the minyima [in her drawing from Workshop 1] and something sexual happened to her. But in her own way with help from families, she was able to become strong again. Within the whole house if we have a lot of girls we should have all these things [in the drawing] – but the main one is love, love in the home for all the children you have. Protection. Don't let them wander off. In the community we should be having activities for them during the day and at night but not too loud like the disco. Disco just makes them wander off. Our teenagers need guidance, send them to school and teach how them to behave. They can get teaching at school but at home too. Women and girls talk about culture and those things we have been talking about here. Going with the ladies for inma or hunting to learn.

Families need happiness in the community. And encourage them not to stay out late, be home early, otherwise something might happen to them. Make your home a safe place. Your own house and other families living in one community. In the home we need to have a happy environment, inside and out. Don't leave one child out, otherwise they will wander off.

Anangu co-researcher (001)



The spiral is showing how we went deep to talk about this hard and sad stuff and the green line is showing how we came back out with the story and it's gone off in so many directions. So much thinking that we can take away with us. And these things here are the fruits that we will can back to our work in our communities and our families; the learnings and actions that we take away with us. And this shows us all the knowledge that is coming out from this deep thinking. We went deeper this time, we brought out more richness.

Non-Aboriginal co-researcher (009)



I just wanted to draw a place that I feel keeps coming up in our conversation. A place of healing. A place where we can go and sit and talk to each other and where hard conversations happen but also healing and good conversations.

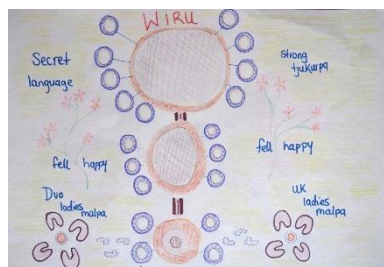
Non-Aboriginal co-researcher (008)



I like drawing people and so I drew different things I could see like hands and feet and heads. I was thinking about we often talk about women victims in this situation. I was thinking how much strength women have and how many good ideas we have and how cool we are and how amazing we are and how strong we can really be. Actually it is the people that are making the trouble that we should be feeling sorry for in a way because they are the ones with the problem. And we have a lot of strength.

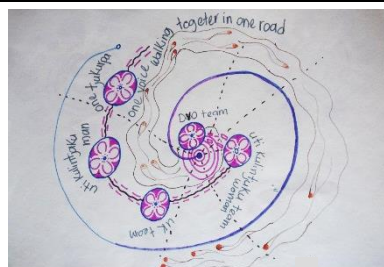
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10.3 Workshop 3



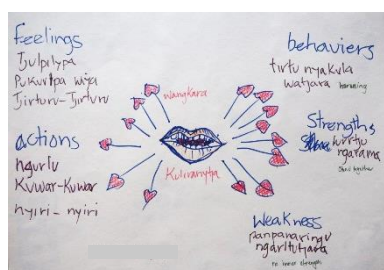
This is about the knowledge growing from when the minyma, Uti Kulintjaku team and the DV team first got together. We have started to do something and this is coming through, coming in to the DV team. We talked about secret language that came up this workshop, strong Tjukurpa that has been hidden and was shared by the Uti Kulintjaku ladies. It's like the pretty flowers, it made me really happy. Thank you, I'm really happy that you are here and sharing this tjukurpa. Now it's really big, it's like the pretty flowers.

Anangu co-researcher (005)



We always come together with the Uti Kulintjaku women. It's like one tjukurpa, one voice walking together on one road. We always like coming back together to learn. Every time we come here we learn more things, every time we go back we take this with this, the work we do – it's like growing and it's a little bit like recycling, we are doing the same thing but new ideas are coming in.

Anangu co-researcher (006)



We were talking [during the workshop] about these things with love [all the hearts coming out in the drawing] trying to find a way to get it through to help these people who are working. I was trying to find one word to include in each of these areas [shown in the drawing]: to talk about our feelings – *tjulpilya, pukrlpa wiya*, that's what we were talking about when they are going through domestic violence; *tjirturu-tjirturu*. They get annoyed when they are being humbugged, harassed: *tirtu nyakula watjara*. Poor things, this is what they are going through. And actions, there are three actions: *ngurlu, kuwar-kuwar* and *nyiri nyiri*, they don't even want to do near that person. They feel weak and they are very sad. They are a very sad person and they need a lot of help and support to get their strength back. The only way they get their strength back in their spirit and lives is when we are all standing together. So we need to stand together: *lurrjtju ngarama*. Helping each other in whatever ways.

Anangu co-researcher (001)



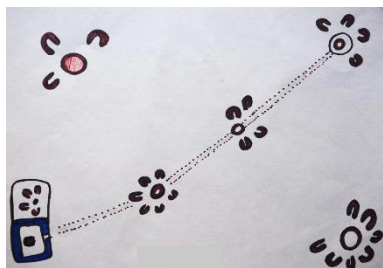
The workshop here is a good one from yesterday and this morning – *pulka!* All the words we have identified; the words about family, it's like making a family tree, a family tree for our relationships; a relationship tree. New words came up in English and old words from our language. We are losing those words; we have never asked to bring it out these words before. We need to have the piranpa way of talking about relationships so we understand that too – next workshop.

Anangu co-researcher (002)



I'm talking about something from the past, a really long time ago before we were born. A long time ago they met at a place called Ernabella [before whitefellas]. When they first came there they lived in separate camps, people from north, south, east, west, in separate camps looking after family together. They lived well, with strength. They travelled back to their traditional country. So they're all people with different ways of speaking and they were living in one place and they would go back to their places where they originally lived, where their languages came from. And they used to do good things. They learned a lot about the traditional practices at that time, they became knowledgeable about those traditional practices – things that came from the past. I am comparing this process today of us coming together with non-Aboriginal people here to take ideas from the past in the same way that people lived back then, in the same way that they carried traditional knowledge through to carry them through to the future. We are now engaging a process that is similar to that, in that we are using Anangu knowledge from the past to help with the future. Similar to a more traditional Anangu way of holding knowledge and using that traditional knowledge to move forward into the future and to live well in the future – this work seems to be in this same way in this workshop. As more non-Anangu people become more knowledgeable about our way and the important stories we hold, as they join with us, that will strengthen what we are trying to achieve and how we are trying to live. To strengthen us in supporting our families and the people who are going to come after us. To enable strong family groups and use that knowledge to help grow up our children and keep them strong. We are from different places, different teams but we are doing the same thing coming together here. It's like we are an extended family like when people used to live with their extended family.

Anangu co-researcher (003)



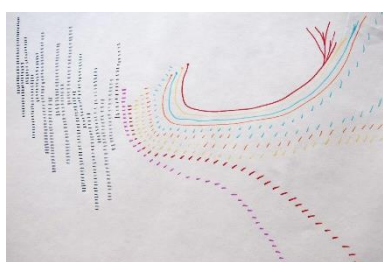
These people are living well and healthy – little children with father and mother – they are happy. There are different families living in different areas. From there one man went and he is living by himself. He has children. One man's living in jail and the other family says that's alright we put him in jail so you can live in peace for a while.

Anangu co-researcher (007)



There are flies in my picture. We are here in this beautiful place and I've been listening to flies buzzing and birds, simple things and drinking cups of tea – and these are the many ears; all ears. And this is me and I've got a good feeling, feeling like I understand – I've been listening and I think I understand; it's a good feeling.

Non-Aboriginal co-researcher (010)



I had this feeling that I'm sitting and listening there is so much to take in. There's lots of stories, there are so many questions that don't have any easy answers. All of this was falling into me, into my body. When we start the meeting we don't always know where we are going, but somehow by coming together and everyone sharing their stories and particularly the senior women sharing their knowledge, we find a way to move forward. And when we find that way forward, there is always something good that comes out of that. At the beginning there is still that trying to make sense of everything and that can be really difficult and sometimes overwhelming but we always get to a good place in the end.

Non-Aboriginal co-researcher (011)



We started with a big story, this big tangled story and we were trying to pull it apart to understand it, and eventually once we'd done that we came to some really strong Tjukurpa and we talked about culture and relationships and the importance of those relationships. It made me think about the DFVS new framework, or the way we are working now within our service, which is all about strengthening communities to end violence. I feel like what we have been talking about the last two days is that. You were sharing your knowledge about how to strengthen your communities to end violence; that knowledge came out and it made me so happy because that's what we are trying to do with this work is to draw on Anangu knowledge and skills and to find out what's working already in your communities and acknowledge how important this is. I just want to acknowledge you. As you were saying Maimie, it was a really good two days of talking and I feel like I learned so much. This is my last workshop and I have loved working with you, it has been such a privilege. I'll miss you ladies; you are very special.

Non-Aboriginal co-researcher (009)



This spiral is the knowledge that is coming out of this group; a really solid thread; this is a really strong knowledge. The purple line is the knowledge, the orange line is the people bringing it out, sometimes that line gets thin, but there's always someone else coming along to help and keep the knowledge strong. The knowledge flows out to other people and other places, starts new conversations wherever it goes. And we don't always know the effect it's going to have, but other groups learn from this group and take the knowledge out. It strengthens as it goes.

Non-Aboriginal co-researcher (008)

No image available

It's the drawing I've been doing all day. I'm always thinking about language. It's a privilege to be here, I'm thinking about the politics happening in this place and this workshop has been really rewarding for me because part of me is frustrated that we are still having these conversations that people need to learn language and understand Anangu way of doing things because I feel like they are conversations that have been happening for a really long time. But also I think it has been a really honest and strong space for those conversations. And there is some sadness, because like Maimie was saying, Anangu have to teach new people over and over. It is amazing how generous Anangu are with their teaching and I have benefited over the years from all that teaching from so many different people.

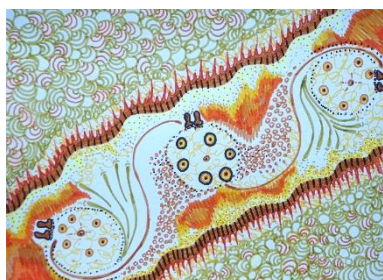
Interpreter

10.4 Workshop 4



The happy sun is shining. We've been through two tracks, the two tracks are coming together through this work. Learning and understanding and working together made me feel really happy. It's really nice to work with you ladies. We really enjoyed doing this. It's not just work, its taking this learning to our communities and remember what we have been doing.

Anangu co-researcher (005)



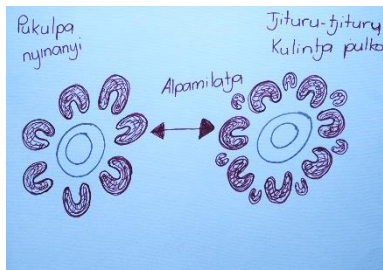
This is two stories – on one side this is a whole lot of people living in the old days speaking Pitjantjatjara and living in their cultural way and it was good. One the other side, this is today, our language has changed. A lot of the time people are buying food from the store, sometimes they will go out hunting. There are mobile phones, Facebook. The middle - is us in this room thinking about how things used to be and how things are. And comparing and contrasting and thinking about how these two sets of living experiences inform each other. There are so many things we have been talking about in this group, it's all really important, talking and thinking about our children. It's an important space we have created. We can't go back to the way things used to be but we need to examine these two worlds and how they work together. These women have shared a lot about the past and the old way of living. It is good how we are working together in this slow way. It is important to keep doing this work.

Anangu co-researcher (006)



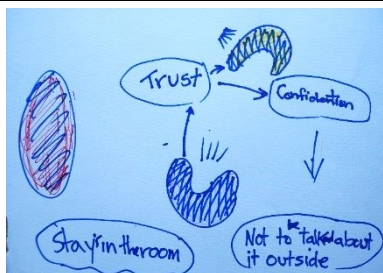
These are senior man and women sitting separately but together. In the middle is the Tjukurpa they are holding together – this Tjukurpa they collaborate to hold and share and look after together. On the outside are the all the things that have arrived in our world today, it represents this other way but the people are still there holding the Tjukurpa. It was such a happy home that we grew up in with those old people. It was safe, growing us up happily.

Anangu co-researcher (014)



On the left side is my and my generation's experience of childhood, happiness and good ways of living and health and wellbeing. And on the right is young people's experience today of trouble and trauma and difficult ways of growing up. The arrow between the two is like helping - people who have experienced happy childhoods and know about living well have a lot of knowledge and are willing to help those who are growing up in hard circumstances.

Anangu co-researcher (004)



What happens is she wants to share it out to someone, she wants to tell her story. She has got to have trust in that person. Whatever story that she tells should stay in the room because it's confidential and not taken outside the room.

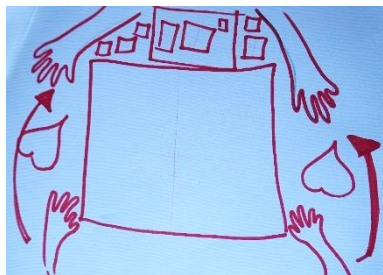
Anangu co-researcher (001)



There are two stories with this one, or maybe three. Thinking about being a malpa to Anangu and when you're working alongside you only know some of the story but there is so much more to the story that's underneath that we don't know. So it's being aware of what we don't know. So there is all this happening underneath but we only see the little bit on top. So much more we don't understand. That why it's important or have these places where we can listen to your stories and share and start to understand a little bit more of what's underneath.

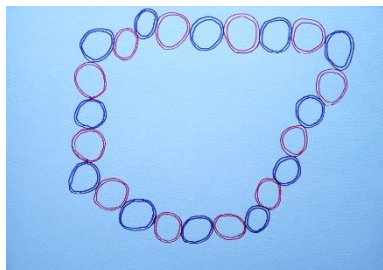
And there is a similar story for women who have experienced sexual assault and sexual violence; we only know a little bit of the story, even when they are brave enough to tell us something. There is so much we don't know, we only see. And we only know a little bit of the story for the person who is the perpetrator. So there are three stories in this.

Non-Aboriginal co-researcher (011)



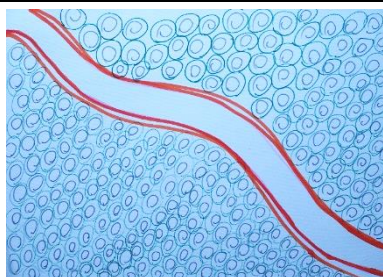
It's about when we share story. This person is sharing their big story with another person who is ready to catch it, catch all that story. I know it can be hard for the person to hear the story when they are holding so many other people's stories. It is hard and it is also a beautiful thing, it is a gift to share story because your relationship becomes stronger and you are closer together. And there is lots of love between the two of you and you can share and hold that big story together.

Non-Aboriginal co-researcher (013)



I was looking at [co-researcher's] beautiful beads all day and I've been thinking about the lady who gathered those nuts, they were probably sitting on the ground and they would have stayed there but she picked them up and put beautiful designs on them and strung them together. And Rachel wears them here today. All these stories, little bits of stories that we gather over the years. Our hopes and dreams, our family members... Sitting around the table we look like the beads. We have string them together, even those terrible things that have happened; we take those terrible things and we've painted them. They become a part of us and now we can wear that and we can loan that necklace to someone else when they need to wear it. And that's what I've been thinking about.

Non-Aboriginal co-researcher (010)



My drawing is about creating a path that goes through all the things that surround us and that surround women who have experienced sexual violence and we are creating a path for these women and also a path for ourselves – a way through.

Non-Aboriginal co-researcher (008)



So I'm thinking about the way people lived in the past, with spears, spear throwers, coolamon, digging sticks. They were very clever and had a lot of knowledge and when they looked at the bush they could identify different trees. They knew that when they saw the blooms on certain trees that that was the time when the fat on the kangaroos was getting richer. The fresh blooms, the wattle on those trees are still here today, they bloom every year like they did in the past. We still know what that means when we see the blooms. When we are going along on the road and we see the blooms on those bushes we get excited – lots of Anangu see it. These blooms on the trees are beautiful as is the process of us here talking and thinking together, in order to create things particularly for our young women, to enable things to bloom for them. This tree, these blooms is something that we have always loved, right through from the past until today. Our spirits are made glad by those blooms.

Anangu co-researcher (003)



I just started drawing glasses and then I thought about when I see paintings by older men and older women and how they see the world. It's so amazing their knowledge and the way they see the world.

Interpreter