

Indigenous healing and disaster recovery

dialogue with cascading benefits for resilience



Phoebe Quinn
Bhiamie Williamson
Prof Lisa Gibbs





Artwork by Frances Belle Parker

Structure of presentation

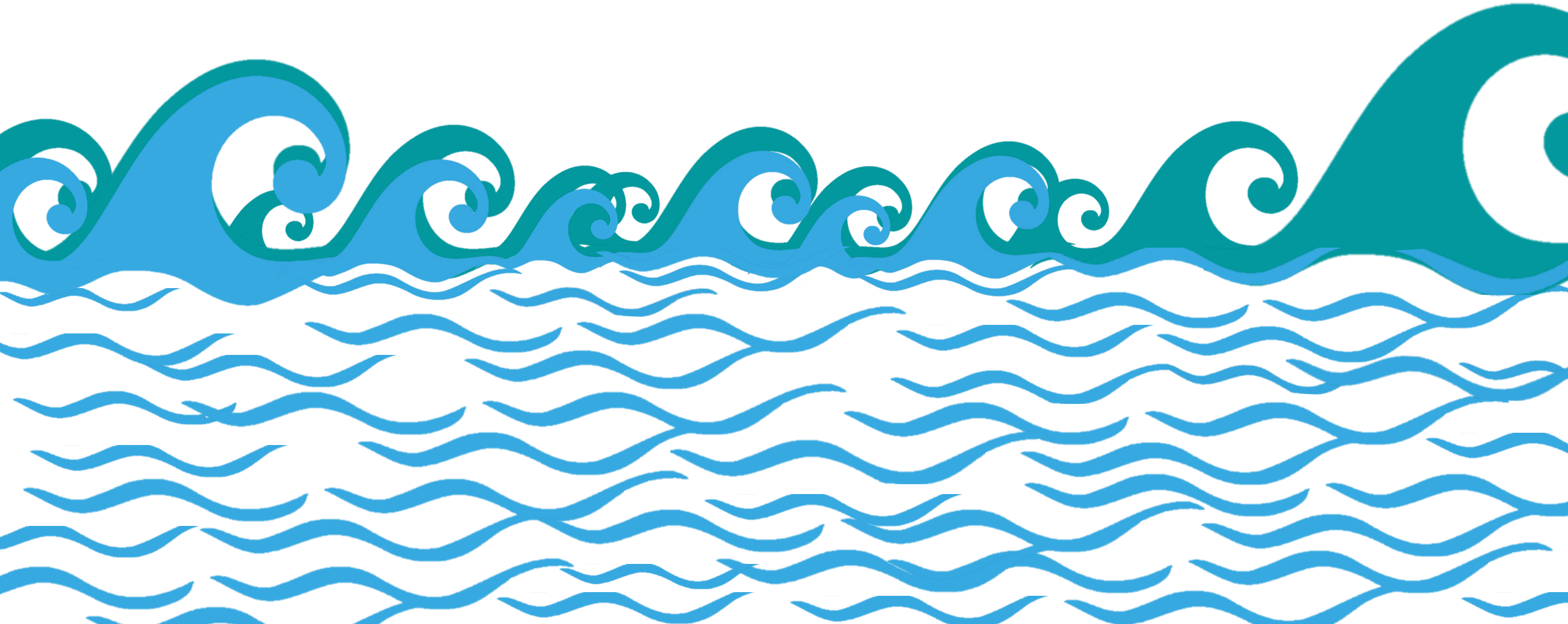
Context for our collaboration

Indigenous healing background

Engaging with Indigenous healing for deepening recovery



Indigenous healing



intercultural intellectual collaboration

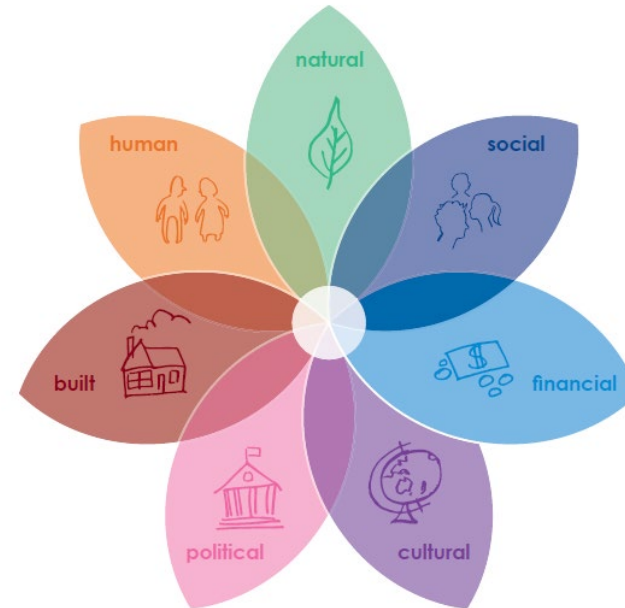


Regrowth one month after fires at Colo Heights, NSW. A legacy of displacement and racism inflames bushfire trauma for Aboriginal Australians. Vanessa Cavanagh, Author provided

Strength from perpetual grief: how Aboriginal people experience the bushfire crisis

January 10, 2020 12.42pm AEDT

THE CONVERSATION



histories of knowledge extraction



Blyton 2012, Clayton-Dixon 2020,
Williamson, Provost & Price 2023

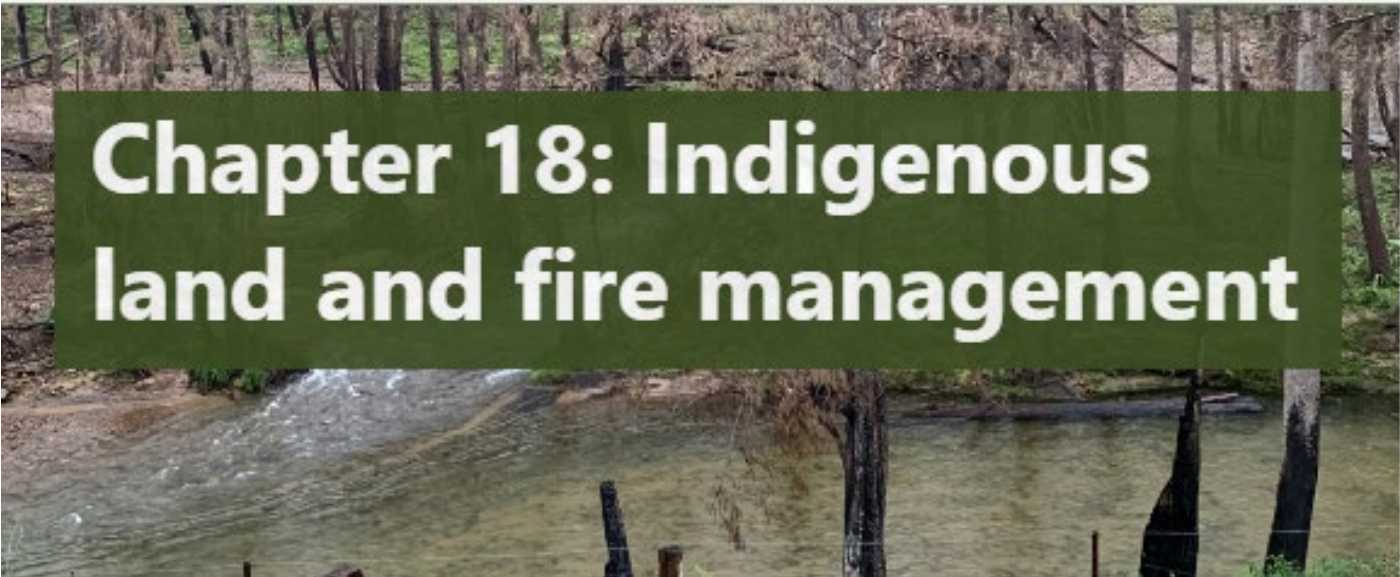


Royal Commission
into National Natural Disaster
Arrangements

[Read the Report](#) [Contact](#) [Document library](#)



Menu

A photograph showing the aftermath of a forest fire. A river flows through a landscape with charred tree trunks and sparse, dry vegetation. A dark green banner is overlaid on the image.

Chapter 18: Indigenous land and fire management

ongoing
extractivism



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Our approach

Continuous reflection, respect, communication - there is no checklist!

Weighing risks and benefits - benefits for whom?

Disaster justice, self-determination and land justice

Indigenous Healing



The Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act of 1897 (Qld)

Section 31: prohibiting any Aboriginal rites or customs that, in the opinion of the Minister, are injurious to the welfare of Aboriginals living upon a reserve.

Native Administration Ordinance Act 1940 (NT)

(4) Regulations power in respect of: (xiii) the observance of native customs

Aborigines Protection Act 1909 (NSW)

Section 20(1) - for entry and residence and the maintenance of discipline and good order, on any reserve, allotment of land on any reserve for occupation by individuals or families; appointment among Aborigines of the earnings of any Aborigines living upon a reserve; the care, custody and education of children, the mode of supply of rations, blankets and other necessaries, or **any medical or other relief or assistance**; the control of Aborigines residing upon a reserve, and the inspection of children apprenticed under the Act.

Aborigines Act Amendment Act 1936 (WA)

(5) Compulsory examination and treatment of natives afflicted with disease, or 'with a view to ascertaining if they are afflicted with disease

Aboriginal Affairs Act 1962 (SA)

Section 25 - Compulsory medical examination and treatment of any Aborigine





HealingFoundation

Strong Spirit • Strong Culture • Strong People

DECOLONIZING TRAUMA WORK

Indigenous Stories and Strategies



RENEE LINKLATER



THERAPEUTIC NATIONS

Healing in an Age of Indigenous Human Rights

Dian Million



Trauma Trails Recreating Song Lines

The Transgenerational Effects of Trauma in Indigenous Australia

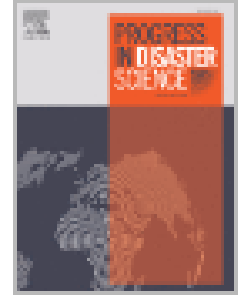
Judy Atkinson

SPINIFEX



Progress in Disaster Science

Volume 16, December 2022, 100257



Indigenous-informed disaster recovery: Addressing collective trauma using a healing framework

[Phoebe Quinn](#)^a  , [Bhiamie Williamson](#)^b, [Lisa Gibbs](#)^{a, c}

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Indigenous healing and disaster recovery: A summary of dialogue



More **culturally responsive practices** in working with **Indigenous peoples** are sorely needed before, during and after **disasters**.

And in a world of **increasingly complex and severe risks**, we need new approaches to better support disaster resilience and recovery for **all communities**.

Indigenous healing and disaster recovery can be brought together through **respectful and thoughtful dialogue** between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, to create new opportunities to support disaster-affected communities.



Full article: Quinn P, Williamson B, Gibbs L. Indigenous-informed disaster recovery: addressing collective trauma using a healing framework. *Progress in Disaster Science*. 2022. 100257. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pdisas.2022.100257>.

Contact: Phoebe Quinn phoebeq@unimelb.edu.au

Artwork by Frances Belle Parker. Design by Gemma Tarpey-Brown.

So, what might healing-informed disaster recovery support for Indigenous communities (and all communities) look like?

HOLISTIC APPROACHES TO WELLBEING

Holistic understandings of post-disaster wellbeing, encompassing people, lands, waters and non-human beings

Spiritual, cultural and social recovery strategies (e.g., artistic expression and storytelling)

SOCIAL RATHER THAN SOLO PROCESSES

Strategies that simultaneously support individual and community healing (e.g., group activities, community events, and story-telling therapies)

Frameworks and resources that are more inclusive of and culturally relevant to Indigenous peoples

IDENTIFYING AND TREATING THE ROOTS OF TRAUMA

Understanding of how personal and community contexts (e.g. intergenerational trauma, and previous disasters) intersect with disaster recovery

Embrace of systemic change (e.g. for decolonisation and climate justice) as a legitimate part of recovery processes

STRENGTHS-BASED AND COMMUNITY-LED PROCESSES

Grassroots disaster recovery initiatives that are culturally and socially specific to each community or person

Strategies for evaluating intervention approaches that are flexible, diverse and dynamic by design

THE NEED FOR SOCIALLY AND CULTURALLY SAFE SPACES

Prioritisation of culturally safe and inclusive community recovery spaces during and after disasters

INDIGENOUS NOTIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY, JUSTICE AND FORGIVENESS

Alternative models for responding to post-disaster family violence

Highlighting personal agency alongside attention to systemic issues after disasters

Deepening recovery

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CULTURALLY SAFE SPACES





Social Science & Medicine

Volume 283, August 2021, 114217



Developing a framework identifying the outcomes, principles and enablers of ‘gathering places’: Perspectives from Aboriginal people in Victoria, Australia

Jonathan Kingsley^{a b}  , Emily Munro-Harrison^{c d}, Anne Jenkins^e, Alister Thorpe^c

THE NEED FOR SOCIALLY AND
CULTURALLY SAFE SPACES



A weaving circle at the Lismore healing hub Credit: SBS / Kingsley Haxton

STRENGTHS-BASED AND
COMMUNITY-LED PROCESSES

HOLISTIC APPROACHES TO
WELLBEING

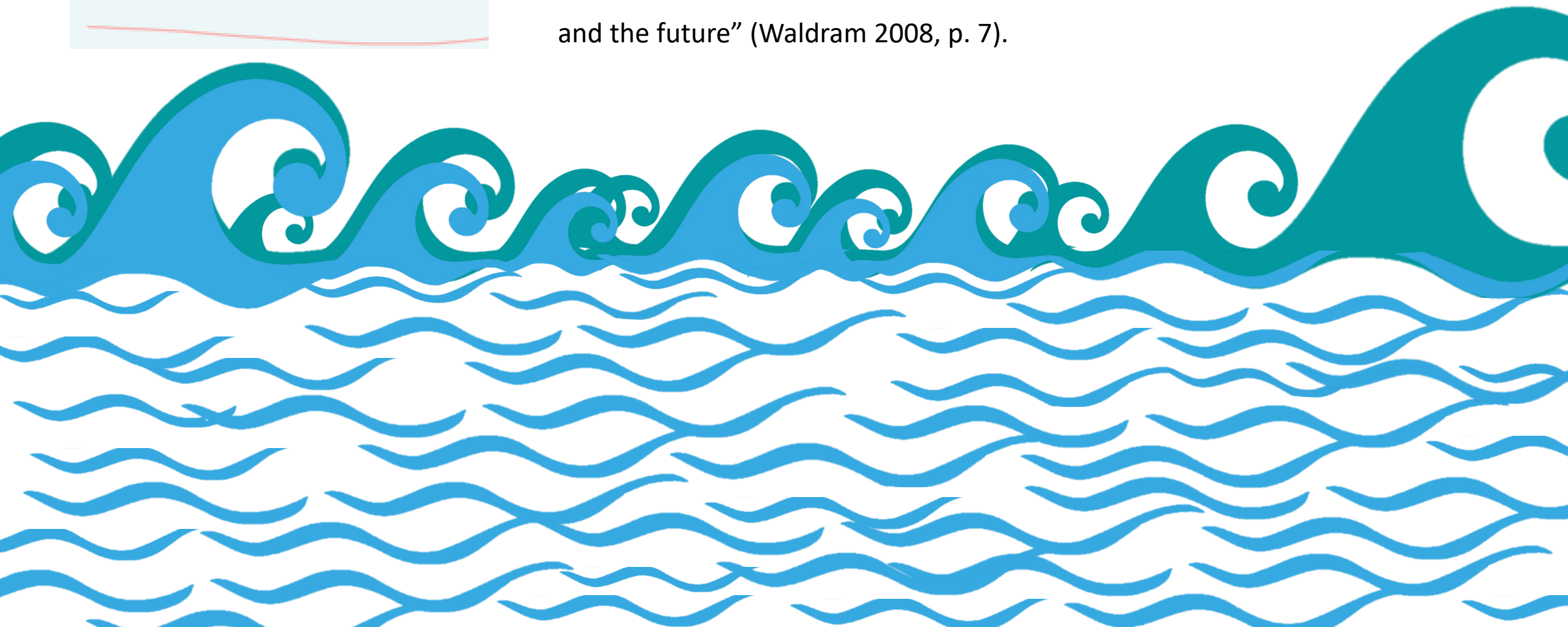
SOCIAL RATHER THAN SOLO
PROCESSES



A weaving circle at the Lismore healing hub Credit: SBS / Kingsley Haxton

IDENTIFYING AND TREATING THE ROOTS OF TRAUMA





IDENTIFYING AND TREATING THE
ROOTS OF TRAUMA

[Healing]“helps individuals understand why they have problems in a manner that allows them to simultaneously see that, while victims of oppression, they retain the necessary agency to change their lives for the better. Healing, then, is ultimately about hope for the individual, the family, the community, and the future” (Waldram 2008, p. 7).

Non-Indigenous peoples and institutions need to do more than acknowledging Indigenous people as ‘stakeholders’, ‘participants’ or (ostensibly) ‘partners’ within and in relation to the dominant status-quo. The fundamental conceptual/material terms of engagement need to be considered deeply and then addressed, in order to ensure such engagements are respectful, meaningful and just. Significantly, we have learnt from many Indigenous peoples that ecological life and political-legal self-determination are inseparable justice matters. That is, social and ecological justice issues need to be considered together. They are not separate elements that occasionally mix but co-constituted socio-natural worlds within which we all live. For non-Indigenous people to not appreciate this is to misunderstand what many Indigenous people are saying, why they are saying it and what is needed in response.

Weir, Sutton & Catt, ‘The Theory/Practice of Disaster Justice: Learning from Indigenous Peoples’ Fire Management’ In *Natural Hazards and Disaster Justice*, 2020, Palgrave Macmillan, p. 301

Summary of key points

- Respectful collaboration means more than 'engaging with' or 'learning from' Indigenous peoples
- Engaging with Indigenous healing practices is crucial in efforts to support Indigenous communities impacted by disasters
- Indigenous healing can enhance recovery of all communities
- The importance of culturally safe physical spaces
- Embedding intercultural collaborative efforts within a justice framework



[full article](#)

Thank you!



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[summary sheet](#)

