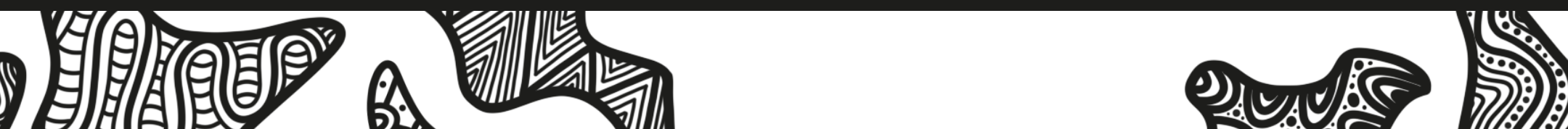




SAFE YARNING CARDS



These yarning cards support a culturally safe and comfortable space for young people and families through activity-based yarning.

There is no right way to use the cards. Questions on each card can be used to prompt conversations about a person's experiences, values, or perspectives. Individuals may also choose a card that speaks to them personally, using the word or artwork to express their thoughts or feelings, and convey what matters to them most. Practitioners and services can also use the cards to explore how individuals would like to be treated, supported, or cared for.

The story behind the cards

These cards were created to embed culture into the yarning process, to make conversations feel meaningful, respectful, and connected to Country and community. They were designed as part of a project seeking to improve cultural safety in mental healthcare for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

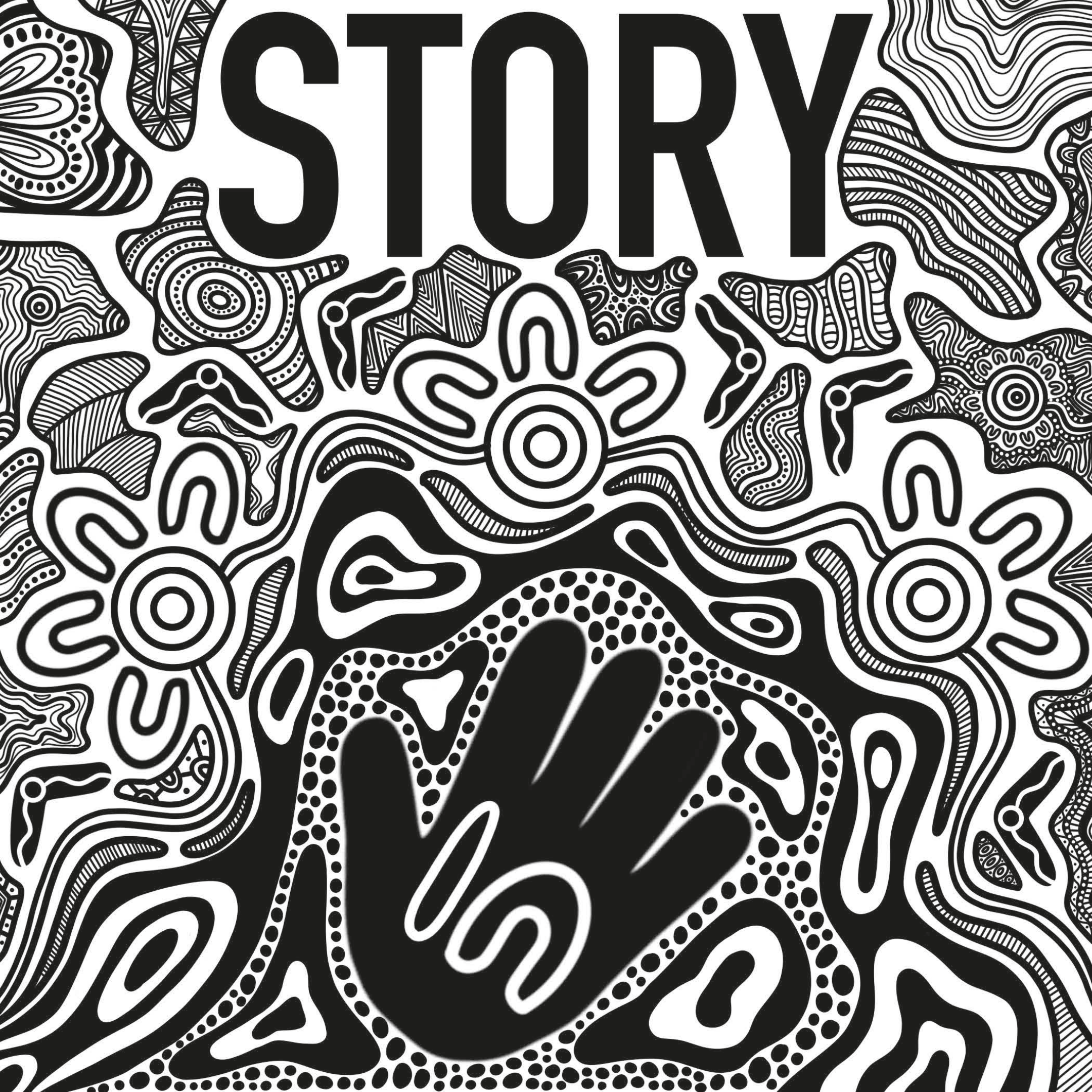
Thomas Betts, an Aboriginal Project Officer at The Kids Research Institute Australia, collaborated with members of the project's Aboriginal Advisory Group and the Moorditj Mandi Mob (Youth Group) to create the cards. Each member selected a word or theme that held personal significance to them and shared a story that explained its importance to themselves and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



You can find both colour and black and white versions of these cards online to download for free by scanning the QR code

Artwork by Thomas Betts

STORY





STORY

Stories are how knowledge is passed down, how identity is shaped, and how connection is maintained across generations. Our story links us to family, culture, and Country. It tells us who we are, where we come from, and how we're connected to everything around us.

While many of us share similar experiences, each of our stories is unique. The colour red symbolises the bloodline that flows through our ancestors and into us, a reminder that we are part of something much bigger than ourselves. Our individual stories form part of a greater collective, carried by our people since time immemorial.

ARTWORK: Thomas Betts
STORY: William Yarran

Questions

- Is there a story that's been passed down to you that stays close to your heart?
- How do you like to share your story—through talking, art, music or another way?
- What's your story—who are you, where do you come from?





COMMUNITY

Community is at the heart of our culture. It's what keeps us strong, grounded, and connected.

Our sense of belonging comes from being part of something bigger than ourselves, where culture, family, and relationships are deeply woven together.

When our communities are supported and thriving, our mob is too.

That's when healing, growth, and opportunity flow.

Community means looking after one another, sharing knowledge, offering support, and standing together through the highs and lows.

Our communities are diverse, with many voices, strengths, and roles. Everyone has something to offer.

When we lead with cultural values and make decisions that put community first, we build unity and create lasting change for the generations to come.

ARTWORK: Thomas Betts

STORY: Kaymus Brierly

Questions

- What do you love most about your community?
- How does your community support mental health and wellbeing?
- What would you like to see change or improve in your community?



COUNTRY



COUNTRY

For Aboriginal people, Country is so much more than just the physical land. It holds our stories, our ancestors, our language, and our lore. It is alive, and it gives life. Country is where our spirit comes from and where it returns. It's a source of deep healing and strength, a place that connects us to who we are, where we belong, and the generations that came before us.

When we speak of Country, we speak of family. We speak of our Elders and ancestors, our cultural practices, and the responsibilities we carry to care for land, water, and sky. Walking barefoot on the earth, feeling the warmth or coolness of the dirt, hearing the sounds of nature, all of this reminds us that we are never alone. Country holds us, teaches us, and guides us. It's a sacred relationship built on respect, care, and love.

ARTWORK: Thomas Betts

STORY: Nan Cathy Bynder

Questions

- What does Country mean to you?
- How do you feel when you're on or away from your Country?
- Are there places on Country that help you feel strong or grounded?

BARRIERS





BARRIERS

No matter how resilient we are, we still face trying times in the form of barriers.

We have all faced times where we've felt alone with our thoughts, fears and worries. Like the sun shining through the darkness of the clouds, we can find help, guidance and healing all around us.

Through our connections to the land, to our kinship networks and to our community, we can fly above the storm to a place where the barriers of rain and thunder cannot touch us.

When we find ourselves up against barriers, we remember our deadly and moorditj strengths. We ask for help, speak up, learn and overcome until we rise above.

ARTWORK: Thomas Betts
STORY: Amber Frankhuizen

Questions

- What gets in the way of you being your best self?
- Have you ever felt judged or misunderstood by a service or person?
- What Animal would you be if you had a choice?

HEALING:





HEALING

Healing is essential for our people — it brings balance to our lives, and to our communities.

True healing goes beyond the physical – it speaks to the heart and spirit.

It means finding peace within ourselves and moving forward from the pain of the past.

That includes the intergenerational trauma caused by events like the Stolen Generations, discriminatory government policies, and the ongoing injustices our people have faced.

Healing is about reclaiming our strength and restoring trust in systems that were once used to harm us.

But healing isn't only about historical wounds — it's also about the personal battles we face every day. Whether it's grief, mental health struggles, or the weight of feeling disconnected, healing reminds us to protect our spirit.

Connecting to culture is a vital part of that journey. Our social and emotional wellbeing is tied to everything around us — and when we heal, we grow. Healing gives us power, pride, and the ability to keep moving forward with strength and hope.

ARTWORK: Thomas Betts

STORY: Nakita Hume

Questions

- What does healing mean to you?
- Are there cultural practices or people that support your healing?
- What helps you feel strong when you're going through tough times?



GROWTH



GROWTH

Growth isn't always easy—it's shaped by life's ups and downs. Every challenge you face and every setback you overcome helps you grow stronger, wiser, and more resilient. Even when it doesn't feel like it, you are growing. Be kind and patient with yourself, especially during the hard moments. In every step of your journey, our ancestors are guiding us. We never walk alone.

In today's world, we are learning to navigate new obstacles, adapt to change, and find ways to stay strong while honouring the traditions, stories, and wisdom passed down to us. By drawing on this guidance, we can create lives filled with joy, meaning, and connection. Real growth often happens when things feel uncertain, and it is in these moments that the courage and resilience of those who came before us live within us, shaping who we are and who we can become.

By setting our own goals, walking our own path, reflecting, adjusting, and seeking support when needed, we continue the story of growth, strength, and connection that spans generations. Keep going, keep learning, and keep growing—your journey is part of something larger, beautiful, and enduring.

ARTWORK: Thomas Betts

STORY: Alison Scott

Questions

- What does growing look like for you right now?
- Who helps you grow and become stronger?
- What's one goal or change you're working towards?

TRUST





TRUST

Trust cannot be assumed, it must be earned. It makes all the difference in feeling safe, respected and understood when you walk into a clinic or book an appointment.

It means not having to explain or defend my culture, not having to fear judgment or ignorance.

For too long, access has been blocked—not just by distance or money, but by systems that weren't built for us, that didn't listen to us. Rebuilding trust takes time.

When I think about true access, I think about being welcomed into a space where my identity is honoured, where my story is heard, and where my health is cared for in a way that respects my connection to land, family, and culture.

Trust is about healing and about being seen—not just as a patient, but as a whole person.

ARTWORK: Thomas Betts

STORY: Shamir Rind

Questions

- Who are the people you feel you can really trust, and why?
- What helps you feel safe enough to open up and share your story?
- How can services or workers show they are trustworthy for you and your community?



SUPPORT



SUPPORT

Culturally, life and nature are entwined. Supporting and caring for nature is as important as caring for ourselves and each other, just as nature supports us.

It's about having people we trust, who listen without judgment and respect our cultural ways of being.

Support helps us stay strong in mind, body, and spirit, especially during tough times.

We all need to feel safe and respected in how we receive help.

It's also important to recognise that support looks different for everyone.

It might mean sitting with us in silence, speaking our language, or simply understanding where we're coming from.

Knowing who we can turn to, and how we want to be supported, is key to building resilience and healing – not just for individuals, but for whole communities.

ARTWORK: Thomas Betts

STORY: Lily Hayward

Questions

- Who's in your corner when you need help?
- What kind of support works best for you?
- How do you let others know when you need support?



REFLECTION



REFLECTION

Reflection is a powerful act for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It's about looking back to understand how we came to be where we are. It means acknowledging our creation stories, our cultural connections, and the journeys of our ancestors.

It also means facing the truths of our history, including the pain and trauma of the Stolen Generations, the impact of government policies, and the injustices that have broken trust between our people and systems meant to serve us.

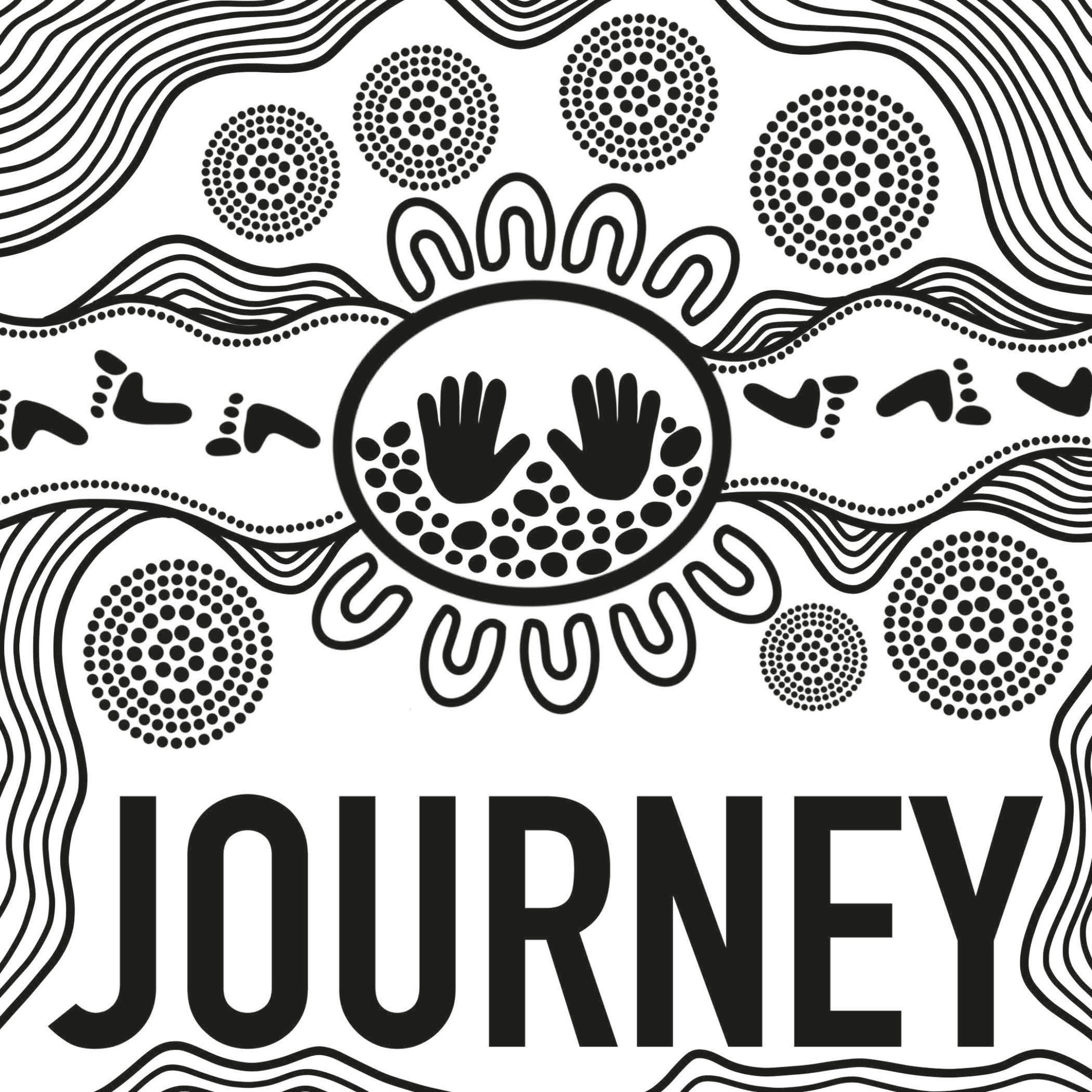
Reflection isn't about staying in the past but learning from it.

By honouring the strength and resilience of our Elders and communities, we carry those lessons forward. Reflection gives us the foundation to heal, grow, and create a future where our voices are heard, our cultures are respected, and our children are safe to be proud of who they are.

ARTWORK: Thomas Betts
STORY: Laniesha Paddon

Questions

- What did you learn about yourself or your story during this yarn?
- How did it feel to talk about these parts of your life and culture?
- What helps you stay strong and keep going when things get tough?



JOURNEY



JOURNEY

Across our lives, we connect with our Country and many different people, both young and old, from many backgrounds. We take pride in sharing ourselves and our experiences, often leaving footprints on the paths we've taken. With each step, we move forward. Sometimes we stay in one place for a while, but our tracks show that we also circle back to the comfort within our networks and community.

For our Elders to move forward, they need to listen to advice from our younger people. For our younger people, they need to listen to the Elders and with their support, the journey will be a fulfilling experience.

ARTWORK: Thomas Betts
STORY: Christopher Ryder

Questions

- Where has your journey taken you so far—spiritually, emotionally or physically?
- Who's been walking with you on your journey?
- What's something you've learned about yourself along the way?





SAFE

Safety means more than just feeling protected. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, being safe is about feeling secure in who you are, where you are, and who you're with.

It means having a strong connection to land, culture, and community. It's being surrounded by people who listen, understand, and care. It's knowing that your basic needs like food, shelter, and hygiene are met, and that your mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing is looked after.

Feeling safe is being loved by your mob. It's growing up in a home built on a strong foundation. It's being able to speak your mind, say 'no', and be accepted for who you are without fear or judgment. It's access to services that support you and environments that keep you grounded and uplifted. The colours green and blue connect us to bush and rivers, which are places of peace, healing, and protection from the elements. These spaces reflect what it means to feel truly safe: calm, cared for, and free to be yourself.

ARTWORK: Thomas Betts
STORY: Elle-Anne McLennan

Questions

- What does feeling safe mean to you?
- Are there people or places that help you feel safe?
- How can we make this space feel safer for you?



FAMILY



FAMILY

Family is everything in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. It's where we find strength, identity, and belonging. Being with family is like taking in a big breath of fresh air.

It grounds us, heals us, and reminds us of who we are. Family isn't just about bloodlines. It includes our extended kin, community, and those we call family through love, respect, and shared experience. It's our family who guide, protect, and walk alongside us through every stage of life.

Family is where culture lives and continues. Through family, we learn the stories of our ancestors, the meaning of respect, and the importance of caring for one another. It's the tough love from our cousins, the wisdom from our Elders, and the silent strength passed down through generations.

Family shows up in times of joy, in times of grief, and in everyday moments that keep us connected.

That love never fades; it endures, just like our people always have. In family, we see the past, present, and future and we carry each other forward, together.

ARTWORK: Thomas Betts

STORY: Tanika Penny and Jessica Taylor

Questions

- Who do you see as family, and what role do they play in your life?
- How does your family support your wellbeing?
- Is there someone in your family you look up to or learn from?