



Feedback and evaluations with community participants, artists, partners, audiences and researchers have consistently demonstrated the profound impact of past CACD initiatives led by FICAA's Creative Producers over an extended period.

Overriding all that sadness there's this joy, there's this hope, because to realise you aren't travelling the journey alone is a magic thing, it's a healing thing. (Participant, Gathering Ground, 2013)

Just to be part of the group is one of the best things that has happened to my life really... (Participant, Gathering Ground, 2013)

I came to Australia in 1956 and I thought I was dead, you know...But when I started with this group ...it was like I was dead and was resurrected. That's true. And I'm alive because of this group. (Participant, Illawarra Multicultural Women's Performing Group, 2005)

I felt closer to the community because I could hear stories they had when they were about my age, so I felt closer to more people when I heard their stories...I only know my family and friends, so I get to meet new people and know their stories. (Participant, Cringila Tales & Trails, 2019)

I am hungry for stories, I was born hungry for stories, so to learn the techniques of getting the stories across is very valuable for me. (Participant, Illawarra Multicultural Women's Performing Group, 2014)

The stories were beautiful, astounding, moving and filled with angst, emotion, tears, joy, and laughter. As audience you were invited into personal worlds in a way that only the best theatre can achieve. Wonderfully crafted where so much care and attention was given to evolve individual stories and empower women to deliver brilliant, delicate and captivating performances, Stories from Our Place was an experience where we heard language and experienced cultures other than our own. And as these cultures are right here in our own community, we were in effect given the opportunity to discover our own community... (Steve Robinson, Musician & Events Coordinator, Wollongong Town Hall, 2020)

Through singing in each other's different languages we really have to get out of ourselves, get involved in the meaning and emotion of the song. And I love to really try to get a response from the audience when we sing! (Participant, Illawarra Multicultural Women's Performing Group, 2011)

Our Working Hands is a song we created with Denise and Therese - it is our true story about how we came here. Some of us came only with suitcase or sewing machine. I feel so emotional because those songs are about our lives... (Participant, Illawarra Multicultural Women's Performing Group, 2011)

As a performer and musician...a highlight was working with the Aboriginal Elders and...the Multicultural Women's Performing Group. This interaction developed into an exciting creative collaboration where I was privileged to work with both groups to develop their stories into song. At the same time, collaborating with an interdisciplinary team of artists, the inter-mixing of skills and art-forms was something I haven't experienced in any other context. (Denise Thomas, Artist, Around the Circle, 2011)

The best thing was that Lucia and Therese helped us to make our stories becoming a real book. They taught us drawing, cutting, and painting. I felt like a real artist...When I saw the final works, I was so happy and so proud of myself. ...that was my most precious experience in Australia. (Participant, Around the Circle, 2009)

Both my practice as an artist/printmaker and my facilitation skills were challenged and enriched by working in this context. Working on the project has given me the confidence of not being overly prescriptive, of allowing solutions to evolve out of processes, especially playful experimentation. (Lucia Parrella, Artist, Around the Circle, 2011)

The team of talented artists brilliantly mix many creative practices – music, dance, weaving, storytelling, performance, and visual arts, together with over 80 women from extraordinarily diverse backgrounds, in such a way that enables them to take the risk, to trust, to work with others in ways that did not seem possible, to perform the stories of their lives together. (Dr. Lynne Keevers, School of Health and Society, University of Wollongong, 2014)

I get nervous because I get to meet new people and I don't know who I'm gonna meet, but then later we start to play a game together and write our stories, I felt much happier. I enjoyed writing the story book because it's something I like to write about and it's something about my life. (Participant, Cringila Tales & Trails, 2019)

We normally see them around, but we've got no idea who they actually are and what their lifestyles are about...when they started telling their stories, we listened so carefully because when they told their story it helped us realise that these people are just like us. (Aboriginal Support Teacher, Gathering Ground, 2014)

I have never before had the opportunity to really make friendships and meaningful conversations with members of our local Indigenous community. Not because of prejudice but because of lack of opportunity. It has really opened my mind and eyes. Deep down we all need to be heard and valued. (Participant, Around the Circle, 2009)

A deep and extensive community engagement process was at the core of Steel Gardens which lent both strength and authenticity to the exhibition and provided an emotional power that affected everyone involved with the project including visitors. (John Monteleone, Program Director, Wollongong Art Gallery, 2014)

...me being an Aboriginal lady, we've never had this opportunity before to combine in with all different cultures...we've learnt off those ladies and those ladies have learnt off us. (Aboriginal Elder, Gathering Ground, 2011)

The creative practices used in this project...teach us to pay attention to each other, to recognise each other in ways that change who and what we become together. They provoke strong emotions that reconfigure ideas about belonging, skill, achievement, shame, risk, friendship, bodies, memories, joy and much else. (Dr. Lynne Keevers, School of Health and Society, University of Wollongong, 2005)

... the girls were actually able to tell stories belonging to the Elders...it was such a significant handover of a story to a younger person to be able to tell the story of one of their Elders." (Denise Willis, Aboriginal Support Teacher, Gathering Ground, 2014)

I grew up in the bush, I spent most of my time in the bush when I was a kid...I went to about eight different schools, mum and dad just travelled around, that's what they did back then... Anything about the bush brings back memories to me,... and when we do this....like I always wanted to do basket weaving, and I finally got to do one...I ended up completing one..., and even art-work, I've never attempted art work before I came in here. (Aboriginal Elder, Gathering Ground, 2012)

It's been one positive accomplishment after another, my depression is completely gone, I've been therapy free, medication free for nearly three years now, and just going from strength to strength." (Participant, Gathering Ground, 2014)

Creatively collaborating with community participants in this culturally diverse community context over many years has challenged and transformed my identity as an artist and my understanding of the potential role of the arts in transforming culture. The playful collaborative creative practices we've developed together not only inspire exciting new multi-disciplinary forms and produce beautiful creative work giving voice to untold stories. They carry the seeds of a more inclusive, diverse, connected and creatively innovative culture in our region, a culture that renews hope in the possibility of a shared future that benefits us all. (Therese Quinn, Artist & CACD Practitioner)