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Using psychotherapeutic arts to decolonise counselling for Indigenous peoples

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Based on an invited Lecture at the 2nd Asia Pacific Rim Counselling Conference held in Hong Kong on 6–8 July 2011, this article documents the benefits of 'artful autoethnography' and advances discussion of the uses of autoethnography using art in formulating, evaluating and synthesising the field of arts psychotherapy to decolonise counselling for Indigenous peoples around the world. The authors consider the development, conduct and report on artful autoethnography as an emerging research practice and how it addresses psychotherapeutic arts practice. We consider the critical issues of identity for Indigenous peoples worldwide. Understanding the relevance of the research method and how artful autoethnography contributes to the wellness of Indigenous peoples worldwide, a premise of the article is that Indigenous communities have used artful practice for healing since time immemorial, and that the act of colonisation of their artworks for physical, emotional, mental and spiritual knowing is the ultimate act of larceny.

Keywords: artful autoethnography; psychotherapy; decolonise; Indigenous; yarn

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Introduction

While mainly focusing on using the creative arts as psychotherapies[1] to decolonise counselling for Indigenous peoples, this article is written as an evocation and, although it has theoretical underpinnings and overlays, it is based on the practice of the authors as researchers and an arts psychotherapist. Davina Woods is a Kuku-Yalanji and Kuku-Djungan woman from the Atherton Tablelands, Queensland, Australia and Tarquam James McKenna and his mother's family are from Tasmania. Tarquam is an ANZATA registered arts psychotherapist and an ACA Counsellor with more than 20 years' experience. Davina is a PhD candidate undertaking her research with Associate Professor McKenna as her supervisor and another colleague, Dr Mark Vicar, as her associate supervisor. The authors both teach at Victoria University in Melbourne.

Originally this presentation was made by the authors at the 2nd Asia Pacific Rim Counselling Conference 2011, in Hong Kong. The article has several goals. Principally it will set out to document the benefits of what we will call 'artful autoethnography', and advance discussion of the uses of autoethnography. The article sets out to address the use of art in formulating, evaluating and synthesising meaning for Indigenous people and undertaking work in the field of arts psychotherapy. The discussion that follows

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will focus on art as a vehicle to decolonise counselling for Indigenous peoples around the world with particular identification with the current Australian context. Secondly we will consider the development, conduct and report on this emerging research practice. The article also sets out to address psychotherapeutic arts practice and the critical issues of identity for Indigenous peoples worldwide. A final outcome of the article is to begin to understand the relevance of the research method and how *artful autoethnography* contributes to the wellness of Indigenous peoples worldwide. A fundamental premise of the article is that Indigenous communities have used artful practice for healing since time immemorial, and that the act of colonisation of their artworks for physical, emotional, mental and spiritual knowing is the ultimate act of larceny.

Davina's doctoral studies adopt 'yarning'[2] as a methodology and her own artful practice to paint, weave, create and write. Yarning with her people and retracing or walking the journey of her family yarn in Northern Queensland as an Indigenous Australian is framed in the field of 'artful autoethnography'. Her thesis will use art, which is paratherapeutic (McKenna, 2006), and images, music and story/yarn are the basis of her work. How Davina's emerging research methods and the matter of decolonising counselling intersect is discussed in the article.

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The World's Indigenous peoples

The United Nation's 2009 publication *State of the world's Indigenous peoples* notes that the world's Indigenous peoples contribute extensively to humanity's cultural diversity, enriching humanity with more than two-thirds of our languages and an astonishing amount of the world's traditional knowledge (Vinding, 2009, p. v), facts that cannot be ignored. There are over 370 million Indigenous peoples in 90 countries, living in all regions of the world. Unfortunately, Indigenous peoples endure, amongst other life challenges, poor health, and are more likely to experience psycho-emotional-related disabilities and a reduced quality of life. Both women and men ultimately die younger than their non-Indigenous counterparts (Vinding, 2009:161).

Indigenous peoples also experience disproportionately higher rates of youth suicide (Vinding, 2009, p. 169). In Indigenous communities, youth suicide takes place in the 'inclusive' context of contemporary discrimination, but the degree of their marginalisation and historical trauma related to colonisation, assimilation and loss of traditional livelihood are believed to be at the core of the decision to end the greatest gift we are given – life.

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, for example, some nation-states implemented policies intended to replicate and effectively destroy Indigenous cultures. Practices such as isolating children from their families, and forcibly striping Indigenous peoples of traditions, languages and religion were mandated by the 'governments' and put into practice by social agencies without question. Although the reasons for youth suicides are complex and difficult to define, such interference with, and destruction of, Indigenous cultural structures and life worlds has caused posttraumatic 'stress', and subsequent generations have generally responded to the great losses through suicide.

Intergenerational stress is known and realistically acknowledged in the literature of Indigenous academics such as Judith Atkinson. Indigenous youth in the twenty-first century face the challenge of striking a balance between their place within their Indigenous community and that within the dominant society of their colonised country. Many feel alienated and disenfranchised from both, resulting in a sense of social isolation. This isolation, compounded by contemporary manifestations of overt and covert discrimination, is a contributing factor in intergenerational stress. The alienating education systems that do not

acknowledge Indigenous knowledge or the shared history of conflict could be surmised to contribute to to the disproportionately high levels of poverty and unemployment for Indiegnous people. It is our contention that isolation, alienation and poverty has contributed to the high rates of suicide experienced by many Indigenous peoples.

Decolonisation in the twenty-first century

Duara, in his 2004 text 'The Decolonisation of Asia and Africa in the twentieth century', states that 'decolonisation refers to the process whereby colonial powers transferred institutional and legal control over territories and dependencies to indigenously (sic) based, formally sovereign nation-states'. It is this non-negotiated transfer of power that interests the authors.

Planted at the end of the First World War, the seed of decolonisation flourished into 'fruit' after the Second World War in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Pacific Islands. Requiring the establishment of a local government to act for all and the colonial power to transfer sovereignty to the new government, the colonial and new governments needed to agree on the geographic extent of new nation-states. The new government required international recognition. The new governments of the legally decolonised nation-states governed *culturally pluralist societies* that incorporated *the Indigenous peoples*, *descendents of Colonisers* who chose to stay, and people born of miscegenation between the Indigenous and Colonising peoples as well as Immigrants who had arrived after colonisation.

The authors think that legal decolonisation was *not applied, socially, politically and economically* to the dominions of Great Britain, which include Australia, Canada and New Zealand, because the Indigenous populations were erroneously considered to be *too small and insignificant.* However, decolonisation in the British dominions can still be implemented, if not legally, at least socially, through 'attitudinal change'. Such paradigm shifts – shifts in attitudes and behaviour – must be forthcoming and were the emphasis of our discussion and presentation at the recent 2nd Asia Pacific Rim Counselling Conference, held in Hong Kong. We propose the urgent need for the paradigm shift to be consciously supported by the descendents of settler-colonisers, who comprise the majority of the dominions' population, and for it to be unequivocally acceptable and accepted by the Indigenous population. This does not include those people who arrived after the 'new' nation states were created – these are immigrants to the dominion. They too need to be taught that Indigenous peoples are not insignificant or invisible within the 'new' dominion. The modification of both overt and covert societal opinions and feelings should occur to ensure a nation-state that recognises and acknowledges the transgressions of its colonial past.

Australia – an imperfect exemplar

The British dominion Australia in 1990 commenced with bipartisan support for what was commonly referred to as the decade of Australian *reconciliation* – focusing on bringing together Indigenous and non-Indigenous members of Australian society. The process ended without government support in the year 2000. However, the Australian populace demonstrated its support for the process with 300,000 people walking across Sydney Harbour Bridge. Around the country as part of National Reconciliation Week, which occurs between 26 May, the date that the Human Rights Equal Opportunity Commission launched the

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Bringing them home report, and 3 June, the date that the High Court of Australia released the Mabo decision on Native Title, thousands more replicated the bridge walk for reconciliation. Having people power but no government support, the organisation *Reconciliation Australia* was set up as an independent, not-for-profit organisation to carry the movement forward.

It could be said that people power was inspired by events such as the 'Redfern Speech'. In 1993, the United Nations International Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples, the then Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating made a speech in Redfern, a suburb of Sydney predominantly populated by Indigenous peoples of Australia. In it he stated

> This is perhaps the point of this Year of the World's Indigenous People: to bring the dispossessed out of the shadows, to recognise that they are part of us, and that we cannot give indigenous (sic) Australians up without giving up many of our own most deeply held values, much of our own identity – and our own humanity.[3]

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Human rights – life rights

On the 26 May 1997, the Human Rights Equal Opportunity Commission appropriately released the report *Bringing them home: National inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families*, which included mandated recommendations to the colonising Australian people. One of the recommendations was that the Commonwealth and State Governments of Australia '*say sorry*' for the shameful and traumatising violations of human rights that the Indigenous peoples of Australia had experienced. It took changes in Commonwealth government leadership and over a decade before the then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd stated on 13 February 2008 that

> The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia's history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future.[4]

The speeches of Keating in 1993 and Rudd in 2008 acknowledged at the Common wealth of Australia level (which is also mandated from State levels of governance) that there is a need for the descendants of the settler-colonisers of the British dominion of Australia to critique the errors of the past and, in so doing, examine the privileges of their heritage. Some writers refer to this as examining 'Whiteness', used here as 'an analytical category rather than a fixed racial descriptor' (Elder, Ellis & Pratt, 2005, p. 209).

Imperialism and colonialism

The foremost scholar of settler colonialism in Australia is Patrick Wolfe, who is a Research Fellow in the History Program at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia and Charles Warren Fellow in United States history at Harvard University. He wrote of the need 'to evoke the multifaceted fullness of imperialism . . . to trace its complex psychosocial operations . . . of race, class and gender . . . sexualities and . . . the psychology of violence' (Wolfe, 2004, p. 115). Wolfe inspired the two authors to consider the notion that it takes one metaphorical 'scratch' below the surface of a British dominion's society to see what imperialism really is. It is a practice of tacit, overt and covert violence and racism that began with the dispossession of the Indigenous peoples from their land: frontier wars included massacres and the removal and enslavement of children and women. Indigenous peoples had known their life-world for 60,000 years (Thorne, 1999, pp. 591–612). To ensuring full dispossession, the colonisers removed large numbers of Indigenous peoples and impounded

them in compounds generally called 'missions', reserves or stations. Australian Indigenous peoples were completely disempowered and the move from being people having an internal locus of control based on self-regulation to an external locus of control based on regulatory behaviour from outside was an intergenerational trauma that many Indigenous families are still suffering from in contemporary times in Australia. The external locus of control is perpetrating and causing dysfunctional familial encounters for communities and individual Indigenous peoples alike.

Dispossession and racism – intersections and demonisation

Land dispossession is a major consequence of colonisation, and both a historic and contemporary cause of trauma for Indigenous peoples. However attempts at genocide, assimilation and culturally invalidating educational agendas are events responsible for the momentous bereavement and psyche impairment, maiming and mutilation. Ruined processes of dispute resolution over land claims and the dominant non-Indigenous groups' resistance to systematically implementing Indigenous requests such as bilingual education are ongoing struggles for Indigenous communities (Hill, Kim, & Williams, 2010, pp. 105–122) that produce ongoing trauma for Indigenous communities and individuals.

The experience of racism within the context of colonisation has created similar damaging negative results across nations and continents. Among Indigenous communities, racism is linked to crucial toxic health consequences (Brulle & Pellow, 2006; Krieger, 2003). Racism and colonisation compromise the psychological well-being of Indigenous peoples.

Researchers of depressive symptoms found that perceived discrimination was strongly associated with depressive symptoms and that engagement in cultural practices buffered some of the negative effects of discrimination (Whitbeck, McMorris, Hoyt, Stubben, & Lafromboise, 2002, pp. 400–418). Considering Western institutional initiatives and expectations for Indigenous persons to 'Whiten', or acculturate, and the level to which participating in cultural practices is directly or subtly discouraged, the health landscape for Indigenous individuals and communities becomes even more grim. Indeed, distress caused by discrimination could make Indigenous individuals further withdraw from their own communities. Coping styles employed by Indigenous peoples in the face of racism include acceptance of the racist comments and behaviours as simply a part of their lot, withdrawal, and avoidance of future contact. Indigenous peoples may also indulge in cognitive reinterpretation of the event. Social support often comes from within the Indigenous person's family and community in the form of deprecating non-Indigenous people and cultural practices. Some Indigenous peoples attempt to prove their worthiness and in that way hope to dissuade racist attacks. All Indigenous peoples attempt to make their children stronger in response to the same fate (Hill et al., 2010, pp. 105–122).

Indigenous ways of being

Dorinda Cox 's 2008 publication, which is based on research undertaken through the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault located within the Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Working with Indigenous survivors of sexual assault*, recommends decolonising counselling and therapists. Cox recommends that women and men who undertake counselling ensure that the power balance is equal between all parties. She also recommends that any evaluation of such service for Indigenous peoples occurs with the Indigenous community fully engaged in the evaluative process.

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Associate Professor Rogelia Pe-Pua is the Head of the School of Social Sciences and International Studies at the University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia. In her publication *From decolonizing psychology to the development of a cross-Indigenous perspective in methodology* (2006), she lists 'Indigenous ways of being' beginning with the concept of 'Indirect communication'. The purpose of indirect communication is about maintaining smooth interpersonal relationships. It illustrates serious thought 'for the feelings of others to avoid the other person losing face or getting embarrassed if directly confronted with negativity, conforming to the norm of humility and modesty by not directly recognising one's own ability and achievements' (Pe-Pua, 2006, pp. 109–137). Along with the principles encompassed within the concept of 'indirect communication' is treating the other person as a fellow human being. Pe-Pua writes of the 'shared identity' of Indigenous peoples based on assessing historical and socio-cultural realities. The authors interpret 'shared identity' as the shared national, group, family and individual histories of colonisation. Understanding the local Indigenous language is another important element of Indigenous ways of being, whether that local language is one of resistance and survival developed post-colonisation, such as one of the variants of Aboriginal English used in Australia, or a language from pre-colonial times.

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Autoethnography

A form of qualitative research and a form of inquiry, autoethnography is by definition 'self-focused' and is becoming a more common qualitative methodology in research. It has its legacies especially the fields of self-study in the arenas of nursing and psychology. This style of 'first person' reflection or 'yarn', as used by the authors, is engaged to explain and explore and to weave the researchers' insights into their own social, cultural or historical legacies through the self-dialogical encounter (Moir-Bussy, 2010), rather than the sort of encounter espoused by Buber (1973) or Grotowski (1991), in artful and spiritual practice. The model engages in autobiographical writing, which is a journey that we propose is art and accentuates an ethnographic interest in Indigenous peoples, but with the condition that art in all its forms has been central to identity and especially so for Indigenous and First Peoples. We are calling this form of 'yarning' artful autoethnography intentionally as it blends the ethnographic interests of the researcher and her communities with life-worlds and 'art making' that are a form of conscious and unconscious reflexive knowing. Artful autoethnography aims to bring together an understanding of the personalised psychosocial identity of an individual alongside or beside the identities of their communities and their historical cultural context. Artful autoethnography as proposed in the article acknowledges the life-world of the researchers through affirming the subjectivity of the researcher's experiences. As a reflexive practice, it draws upon those life-world experiences, having the goal of extending the understanding of the multiplicity of 'being', considered by the researchers.

Why psychotherapy and what relevance is there in arts psychotherapy?

Therapy brings a sense of the 'larger meaning' of the life-world or the sense of meaning we make in life. There is a special quality of meaningfulness that therapies bring to the individual and the community (Po, 2011). Arts psychotherapy is a form of psychotherapy that uses *creative arts*-based practice as a form of 'treatment' to explore the conflicts in one's life. Therapy addresses the causes of conflicts through identification and misidentification with life-world processes that are painful. In arts psychotherapy visual art-making, drama and dance/movement are used to inform physical, mental, social and emotional well-being

for people who are in need of therapy (McNiff, 1992). Its goal is a new level of speculation on what is happening in life.

All arts therapies are traditionally based on theories of psychoanalysis or psychodynamic principles (Gilroy, 2006). Psychoanalysis includes depth analytic, humanistic, behavioural, systemic and integrative approaches and is well researched in the massive range of publications that now address many forms of arts psychotherapies, especially focussing on trauma (Brooke, 2006). Psychodynamic principles of counselling may be used in individual, group and familial circumstances as well as within institutional and organisational contexts (Levenson, Butler, & Beitman, 1997). Arts psychotherapy, however, differs from traditional art-making or performances in that the emphasis is on the 'processes' of creating and the inherent sense of meaning-making as a process, rather than on the end product. Arts psychotherapists can employ both *art as a therapeutic* and to a lesser extent in Australia, as a diagnostic tool. In the 1980s in the USA, especially, arts therapy has been more often used to diagnose mental illness (Oster & Crone, 1987), especially using drawing.

McNiff (1998, p. 41) reminds us that, in the USA especially,

> The unstated goal is the acquisition of approved methods of inquiry, which are reinforced by educational and licensing policy makers who are under no obligation to produce innovative research results.

In Australia by comparison the

> Research instruction has not tended to follow fixed procedural rules of indoctrination as practice, which contradicts the creative purpose of the enterprise.

Art is then a primary vehicle to the unconscious realm of the client and accelerates management of the physical, mental, social and emotional well-being by bringing to consciousness what is not 'known' but has been experienced. Arts psychotherapy is not always an expedient psychotherapy and it can take time to redress loss and psychic pain for the client. Indigenous knowing especially requires that we incorporate what is known as *kairos*, or interpretations of time. The authors contend that we need to use time to seize the right or opportune moment within any program of artful autoethnography. As noted by Carpenter and McKenna (2011),

> Kairos interpretations of time involve moving with the natural rhythms of the day, and allowing an unspecified amount of time to enable activities to draw to a natural conclusion. Knowing the right time to . . . . focus on an activity or shape a discussion requires the facilitator being attuned to each individual.

The approach presented in this model of practice requires a period of chronological or kronos time for the client to slow down and become comfortable to go into and through engagement and encounter life patterns via this reflexive space. Artful autoethnography, while it holds to the values of process and product interacting over varying lengths of time, is both process-focused and product-oriented, and takes into account kairos and kronos time. What is at its core is the quality of relationships, which must be taken into consideration. Ensuring that the person undertaking arts psychotherapy is relaxed and informed about the process of evoking the mark-making or painting and in yarning will encourage the person to go through the motions and put colours on the canvas, for example. Painting colours all over the canvas can be playful and it is this aspect that is not always understood that is paratherapeutic. Playing with colour can help people to release some of their unconscious emotions and make these known *beyond words*. It should be ensured that individuals understand that it is not an aesthetic experience of the work that is crucial – although many

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beautiful art works are made; what is being looked at collaboratively and seen are the levels of new meaning examined for the client and therapist alike.

Research indicates (Schaverien, 1991, 1995) that the quality of relationships is critical for therapy to be ultimately worthwhile.[5] Wedding (2011) in his keynote address at the 2nd Asia Pacific Rim Counselling Conference held at Shue Yan University noted that the practice of counselling psychology around the world has three active ingredients that are essential for a quality encounter, and this is the case for arts psychotherapies. He noted that the factors apparent in all types of psychotherapy and for these authors are the supportive relationship, what he poignantly called 'A Ray of Hope' and the opportunity to open up.

How do women and men become arts psychotherapists?

For those of you who are new to this field it may be of interest to read that around 90% of the registered Arts Psychotherapists in the Australian and New Zealand Arts psychotherapy Association (ANZATA)[6] use the visual arts with the remaining 10% using multimodal arts psychotherapies, and now the other arts modalities are becoming much more familiar.

Arts psychotherapy is based on the belief that the process of engaging creatively in drama, movement or other art-making, within a therapeutic or 'para-therarapeutic' (McKenna, 2006) relationship, supports changes in the client's inner world, and moves them to develop a more integrated sense of self, with increased self-awareness and acceptance. It assists with improving the client's personal growth, brings unconscious material into consciousness and deepens consciousness. For example, processing of traumatic experiences and resolving inner conflicts can occur through arts psychotherapy as it provides a unique opportunity for the use of *non-verbal communication*, allowing clients to express feelings safely so that they cope better with stress, improve their judgment and have healthy relationships.

The meaning made through the *creative response*, *creative product* or *artwork* in each individual session is a private and confidential record showing patterns of feelings, thoughts and behaviours. In this author's models of practice the arts psychotherapist and client work together to understand the creative product of each session, seeing artworks as reflections of the meaning for that person as the client, through their own discovery. The arts psychotherapist, as with all healing professions, provides a safe, non-threatening 'hermetic' space (Schaverien, 1991) and invites the client, who may be an individual or group, to explore their issues using a variety of media. Arts psychotherapy then can encourage clients to express feelings that may be difficult to verbalise, to explore their imagination and creativity with the ultimate aim being the development of healthy coping skills and focus.

Of interest to the authors is the nature of the process of in-group work. Resolving conflict, developing interpersonal skills, managing behaviour through reducing stress and increasing self-esteem support people to achieve insight through arts psychotherapy. It lends itself to the development of decolonised counselling and our hypothesis is that much of the mark-making, music, performative and dance used in arts psychotherapies have a profound historical and cultural practice legacy because of the intimacy and the mode of relationship inherent in the Australian Indigenous ways of knowing.

Healing our spirit worldwide (HOSW) 2010

A workshop facilitated by the authors (McKenna & Woods, 2010) on 're-claimative',[7] restorative and reparative, art at the *Healing our spirit worldwide (HOSW) 2010* in

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Honolulu, Hawaii was our first collaborative endeavour to work with artful autoethnography as a decolonising arts para-therapy with a group. During the workshop many wonderful yarns[8] were shared both of Indigenous peoples' lives and of the traditions of peoples from Hawaii, Canada, the USA, the Philippines and Australia. During the workshop, the participants were encouraged to draw with crayons, felt pens and coloured pencils on calico, to express their Indigeneity and tell their story.

While expressing themselves using artful autoethnography, the Canadian Aboriginal youth shared that their grandmother was a survivor of the residential schools. They elucidated that there had been a challenging process of inner work and much physical travelling to find her group and her real people. Her grandchildren joined her in the journey metaphorically and physically. It is through the young people having their own internal journeys of healing that the intergenerational damage caused by the government's policies can be redressed. Their grandmother was placed in an institution, separating her from family, community and culture, and this was at the core of the loss passed on to her grandchildren. These Canadian Aboriginal youth also spoke of the mental resistance of their people to the government compounds. These compounds, enclaves, reservations or missions are a familiar experience for many of the world's Indigenous peoples. They have resisted by not using the word 'reserve' when describing the home they know as 'The Island'.

During the same HOSW workshop, young women Indigenous to the Philippines spoke of the Spanish invaders throwing the Indigenous healing women, the leaders of the various peoples of the Philippines to the crocodiles. Unknown to the Spanish and ironically for the Indigenous peoples of the Philippines, the Spanish were throwing the women healers to the spiritual grandparents of the people. Another woman shared her own experiences of arts therapy. In the session she spoke of how she had realised through arts therapy that the halibut is a totmeic element of her lineage and familial traditions. She spoke of how the large teeth are actually an expression of herself and that she should not be afraid of its teeth, nor be afraid of her heritage. There was also the sharing of Hawaiian traditions from a Christian man who went back to the deities of Pele and her sister Hi'iaka to express his Indigeneity and the sharing of Hawaiian language from a woman who talked of her grandmother's teachings. Overall the workshop was a tremendous experience of sharing, yarning and re-claiming Indigenous identity through honouring Indigenous knowledge and ways of being.

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Implementing arts psychotherapy

The authors contend that arts psychotherapy when used to encourage personal growth as noted above increases self-understanding and assists in emotional restoration. Indigenous emotional and social well-being is 'contingent on family and kinship relationships and activities, as well as on talking and communication . . . traditional knowledge . . . in short, their cosmology and belief system' (Tatz, 2005, p. xii).

Arts psychotherapists view the creative process as life-enhancing and ultimately therapeutic, and although the arts of painting or drawing are only two of the multimodal arts that are also referred to in the literature as forms of multiliteracy (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000), this term lends itself to the field of arts psychotherapies. The two-dimensional visual arts are for many the first of the arts to come to mind. These art forms, as we all know but forget, are a natural form of literacy – especially the multiplicity of literacy in Indigenous tradition, and it is through the use of these 'multiliteracies' over thousands of generations that Indigenous cosmologies and belief systems have been and continue to be taught to successive generations.

There is need for sensitivity and specific training when working with Indigenous people, in particular. How can these women and men having the best intentions reviw their training and what might one come to expect from a counsellor implementing unconsciously or because of a lack of awareness a form of decolonised arts psychotherapy with Indigenous peoples in Australia, for example? Let us look at some Australian statistics that show the real need for therapists and counsellors to work with real life matters. Indigenous peoples living in New South Wales and Queensland, Australia are four times more likely to be victims of sexual assault than non-Indigenous people. In South Australia sexual assault is seven times more prevalent, and in the Northern Territory of Australia it is five times more likely that Indigenous peoples of Australia will be victims of sexual assault.[9] Survivors of sexual abuse do and have painted body parts, self-portraits, or a happy scenic painting – they always have meaning.[10] The authors contend that Indigenous peoples who have a learned habituated external locus of control will be more inclined to say what they think a 'counsellor wants them to say' during the arts psychotherapy sessions. As arts psychotherapy is a relational process and a process that takes time and respect, change can be and is slow, but it is always at the core of this process.

By now you can seen this is not always a directive form of counselling or therapy. Working with an individual or a group, the arts psychotherapist must be aware of the possible feelings and thoughts of the clients while attending to the core matter of transference and counter-transference. By asking your clients to be aware of their feelings, reminiscences and recollections in a respectful quiet manner, there is not always the need to verbalise – at times there will be an occasion to 'sense' how he or she feels when the painting is in process or when it is 'completed'. The client and therapist alike may review the work and verbalise their feelings and thoughts when ready and audio or visual tapes can be framed as 'journaling', a task that can be either electronically or manually produced. We began this article with a call to understand this way of working as a research method and we are closing with a return to what we call *artful autoethnography* in research. However, like all good research, it is only valuable if it is applied. We hold that artful practice and the methods espoused here have and can continue to contribute to the wellness of Indigenous peoples worldwide while healing the 'eternity' of loss that the act of colonisation brought upon them.

Conclusion

Decolonisation counselling as described above means using an Indigenous perspective to explain Indigenous psychological concepts and much of what has happened for the past 60,000 years in Australia. The arts psychotherapy we write of is about cultural revalidation. Decolonising of counselling through the process of Indigenisation from within as noted in the literature and alluded to here means looking for the Indigenous psychology from within the culture itself. A part of the decolonising of counselling and Indigenisation of psychology and counselling acknowledges the historical and contemporary trauma for Indigenous communities, families and individuals that must be understood by all therapists working with Indigenous peoples. However, it is important to note that, although there is a 'shared identity' that arises from the shared experiences of colonisation 'one size does not fit all Indigenous clients' (Cox, 2008, p. 5). In this, the twenty-first century, a civil society is not a society that assimilates but one that is founded on decolonisation. In the process of decolonising counselling, psychiatrists, psychologists and counsellors should use alternative ways of servicing and working with Indigenous people; one suggestion is using arts psychotherapy.

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Notes on contributors

Tarquam McKenna is an Associate Professor at the Victoria University. He has been active as an arts psychotherapist for 20 years and edits *ANZJAT*. He is past president and an honorary life member of Australian and New Zealand Art Therapy Association and a member of ACA. He is interested in Indigenous stories worldwide, and has published in the area of gender and sexuality. He is a member of the Asia Critical Ensemble, which looks at social justice and the legacies of Paulo Freire in particular, and how colonisation has impacted on multiple lives around the world.

Davina B. Woods, an Indigenous Australian, is a lecturer and PhD candidate in the School of Education at Victoria University. The beginning of the 2011 academic year saw the first offering of a humanities unit written by Davina for the second year BEd students at Victoria University. The unit is titled *Re-thinking Australian studies* and one of its main objects is to contribute to the paradigm shift discussed in the article as attitudinal and behavioural decolonisation.

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Notes

1. The authors use the terms 'psychotherapy', 'therapy' and 'counselling' interchangeably throughout the article.
2. 'Yarn' is used here as a synonym for 'story' and 'yarning' a synonym for 'talking' and/or 'storytelling'.
3. http://www.antar.org.au/issues_and_campaigns/self-determination/paul_keating_redfern_speech (accessed 2 July 2011).
4. http://news.ninemsn.com.au/national/379056/full-text-of-rudds-sorry-speech (accessed 2 July 2011).
5. http://www.soul-expressions-abuse-recovery.com/Art-Psychotherapy-Process.html (accessed 27 June 2011); http://www.soul-expressions-abuse-recovery.com/Art-Psychotherapy-Process.html (accessed 27 June 2011).
6. An ANZATA registered arts therapist must have usually completed a two-year master's level degree that focuses on developing a therapeutic relationship with clear boundaries and goals with clients or patients. There are four approved courses in Australia, New Zealand and Singapore. The choice of name 'art psychotherapy' is interesting in itself. It is regulated around the world by organisations such as BAAT (the British Association of Art Therapists), the Health Professions Council and the AATA (American Art Therapy Association).
7. The word 're-claimative' has been specifically spelt differently to how it is usually presented in dictionaries as the word 'reclamation' is too often equated with building on rubbish. Re-claimative or reclaimative is used in Davina B. Woods's writing as reclaiming and building on Indigenous epistemology and ontology.
8. http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/sheets/rs1/rs1.html (accessed 27 June 2011).
9. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 4510.0, Recorded Crime – Victims, Australia, 2009.
10. http://www.soul-expressions-abuse-recovery.com/Art-Psychotherapy-Process.html (accessed 27 June 2011).

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