

# Yarning up on trauma

Healing ourselves, healing our children  
and families, healing our Communities

Shaun Coade & Sandie de Wolf

# Workshop overview

- Context: What is Berry Street & the Take Two program?
- The yarning up on trauma model
- Attachment & Culture
- Trauma & Culture
- Case presentation using the yarning up on trauma model



# Berry Street

- The largest independent child and family welfare organisation in Victoria.
- Strong commitment to working in partnership with Aboriginal people, communities and organisations.
- Specific Apology for past harm (2006)
- Aboriginal Strategic Plan
- Take Two is a partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency

# Programs & Services

- Residential Care
- Home Based Care
- Youth Services
- Therapeutic Services
- Family Services
- Education
- Community Programs
- Disability Services



# Our Vision

Berry Street believes all Aboriginal children should have a good childhood, growing up in families and Communities where they feel safe, nurtured and have hope for the future



# Our Goals

## **Berry Street Aboriginal Plan**

- Deliver quality culturally sensitive, holistic and empowering services to Aboriginal children & families
- Employ culturally aware & competent staff & carers
- Work in respectful partnerships with Aboriginal organisations & Communities

# Our Goals

- Building our understanding of intergenerational trauma in the lives of Aboriginal children, families & Communities.
- Advocating for better health, education & life outcomes for Aboriginal people.

# What is Take Two?

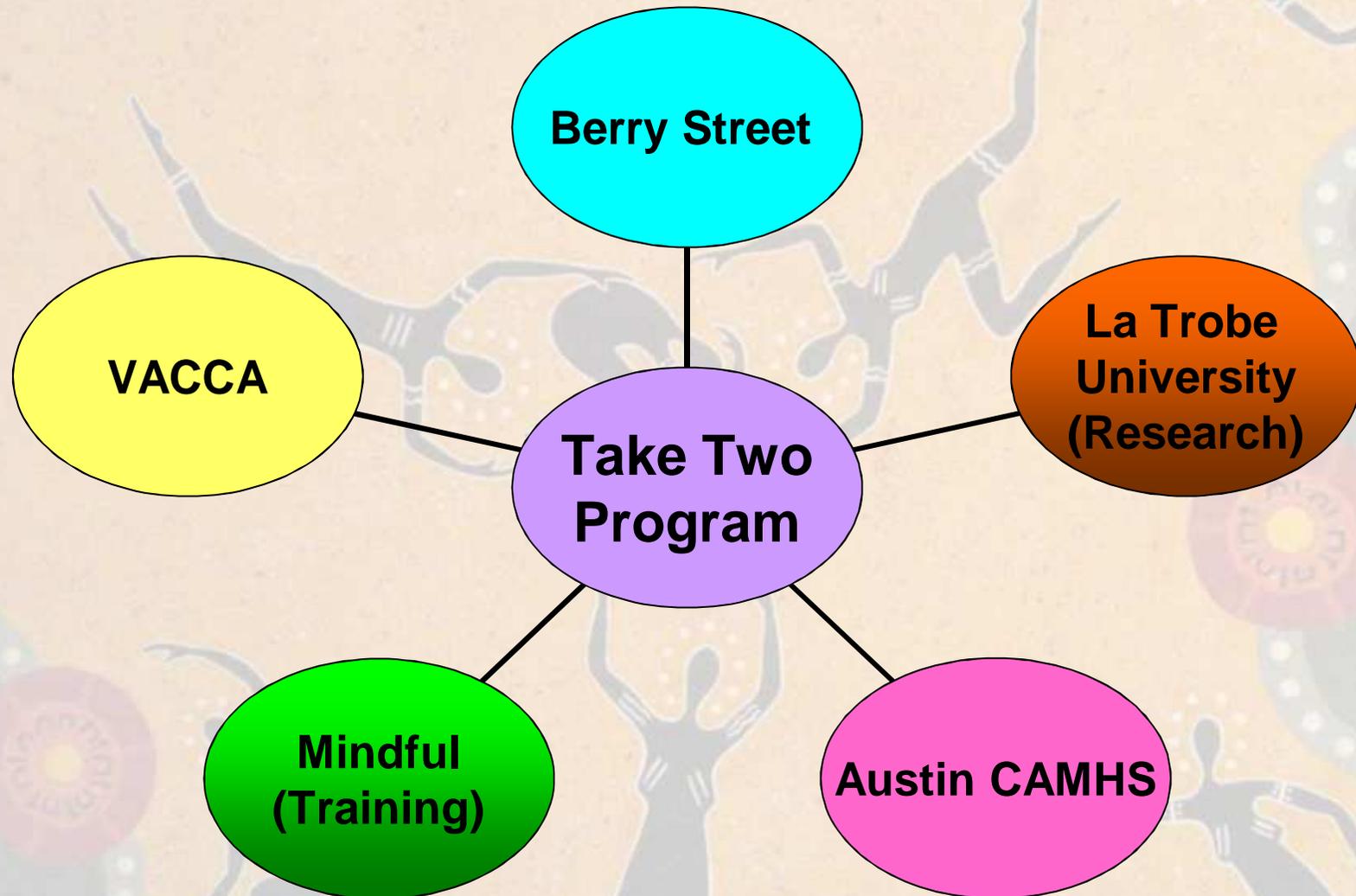
- Take Two is a program of Berry Street.
- It is a state-wide service (Victoria) providing therapeutic services to infants, children & young people who are clients of child protection (DHS)
- 90 Aboriginal children & young people accessed the Take Two program in 2008-09
- Employs a dedicated Aboriginal team providing consultation & clinical services across the state.



# What is Take Two?

- The service is funded by DHS
- All children are aged between 0-18 years
- All children referred have been severely abused or neglected and are at risk of developing or already demonstrate emotional and/or behavioural disturbance.
- The children may be living at home, with relatives, or in out of home care.

# Take Two Partners



# Take Two Locations & YUT training

Mildura



Robinvale



Swan Hill



Echuca

Shepparton



Wangaratta

Horsham



Ballarat

Bendigo

Seymour



Flemington



Melbourne

Secure Welfare

Clayton

Ringwood

Dandenong



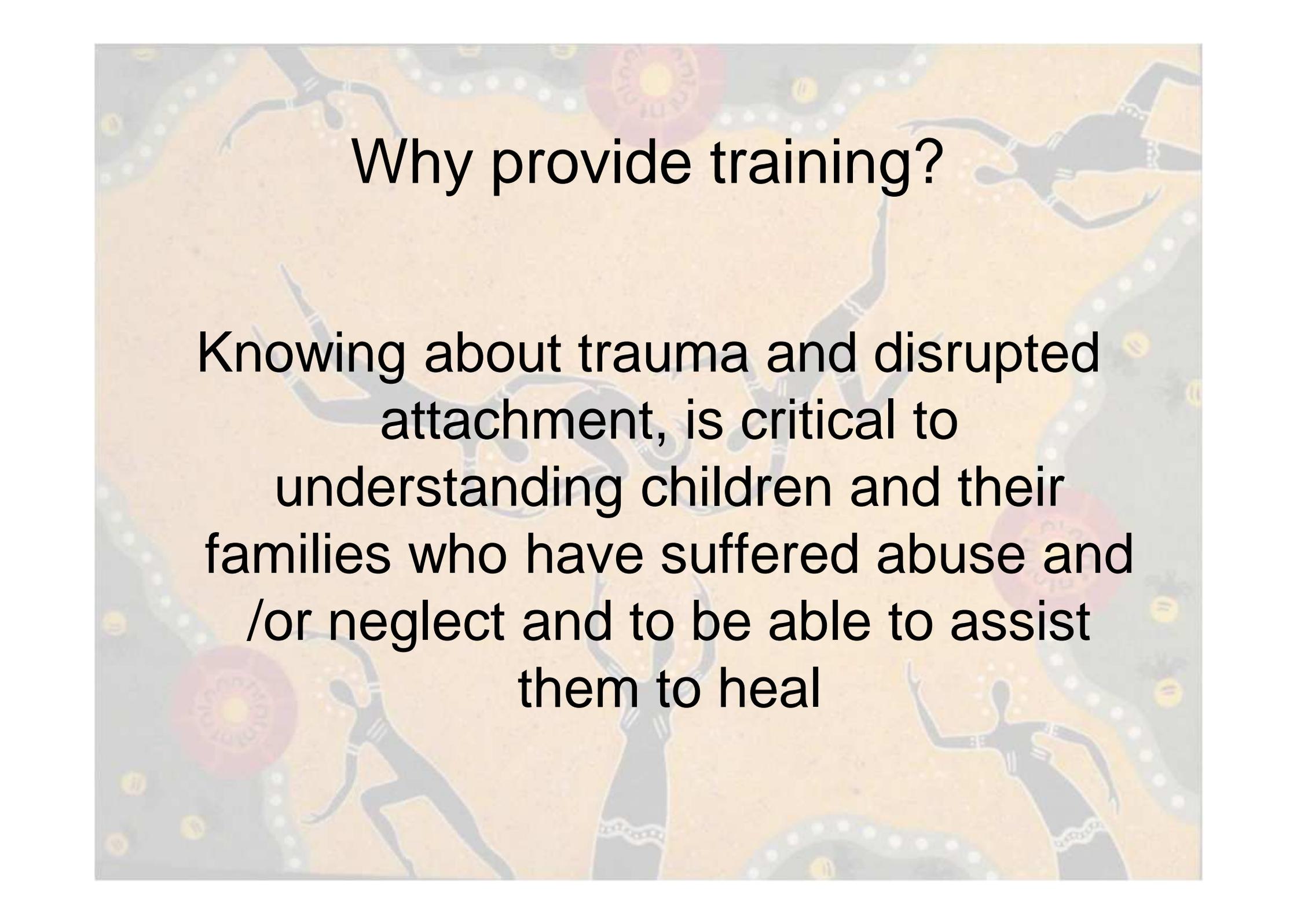
Geelong

Morwell

# Development of YUT training

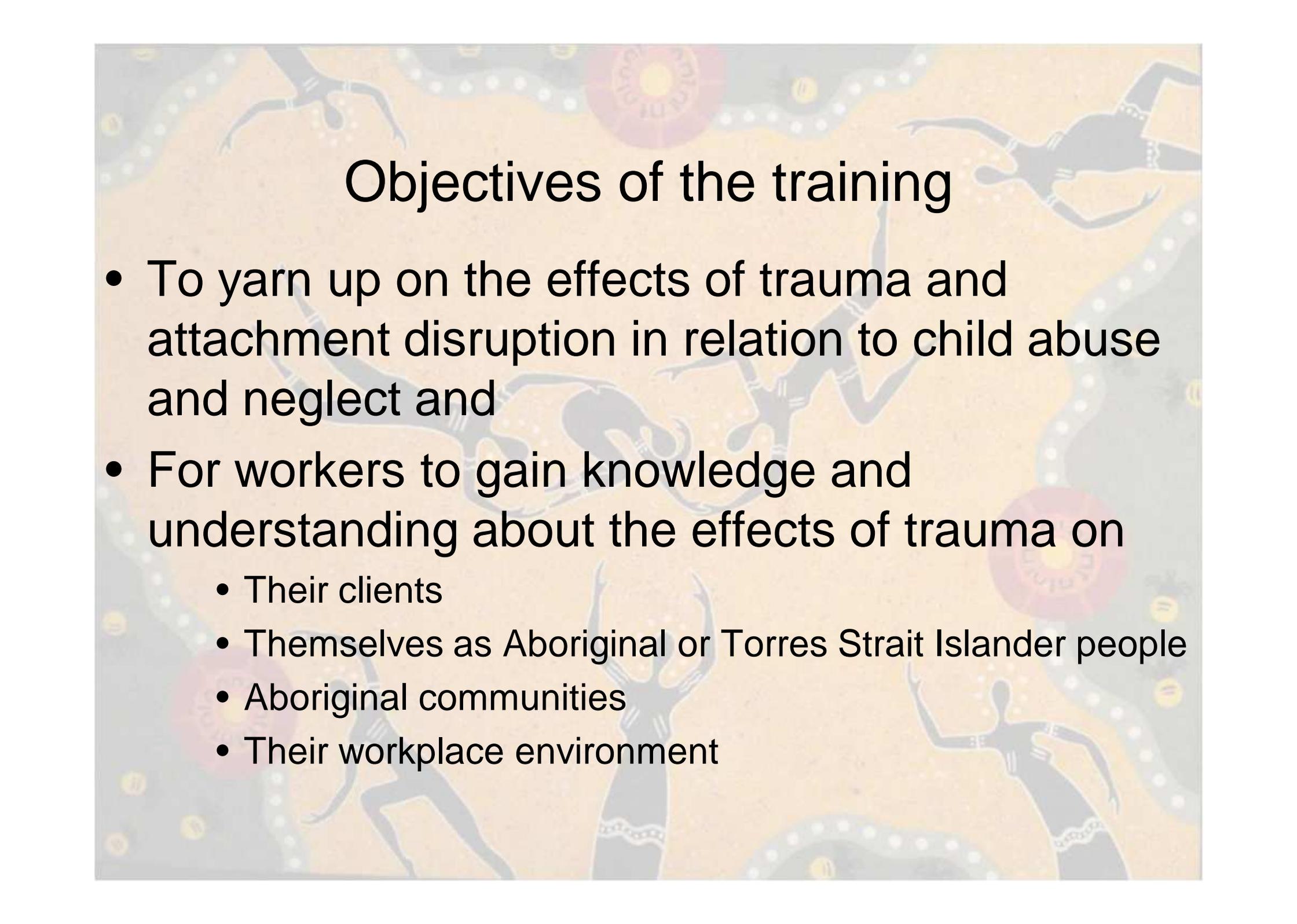
- Initially developed in 2006 by T2 in partnership with VACCA & delivered to Indigenous workers & Communities working with children and families.
- The yarning up resource book was developed in 2008 at the request of Aboriginal staff in Community & closely follows the format of the training

Copies will be provided to workshop participants 😊



# Why provide training?

Knowing about trauma and disrupted attachment, is critical to understanding children and their families who have suffered abuse and /or neglect and to be able to assist them to heal



## Objectives of the training

- To yarn up on the effects of trauma and attachment disruption in relation to child abuse and neglect and
- For workers to gain knowledge and understanding about the effects of trauma on
  - Their clients
  - Themselves as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people
  - Aboriginal communities
  - Their workplace environment

# **An introduction to the Yarning up on trauma model**



# Overview of the YUT model

- YUT is a model of training & Community therapeutic intervention
- Designed to assist ATSI workers recognise and deal with traumas of their own as well as those of the children and families they work with.
- Training is done over 4 days
- Delivered by 2 clinically trained facilitators (1 Aboriginal & other non-Aboriginal)

# Yarning up on trauma training: Course Content

## Session 1

- Exploring different types of trauma
  - Historical / cultural trauma
  - Individual trauma (PTSD)
  - Family trauma
  - Community trauma
- Exploring local Historical / cultural trauma (Lousy little sixpence DVD)
- Understanding trauma and the brain (Bruce Perry DVD)

## Session 2

- Attachment
  - What infants need and what happens when they don't get their needs met
  - Aboriginal child-rearing practices
- Culture & attachment
  - The attachment network
  - Circle of security

# Course Content continued

## Session 3

- Healing our systems
  - The care team approach
  - working with Aboriginal families: case study
- Healing ourselves
  - individual & organisational vicarious trauma
  - Looking after yourself

## Session 4

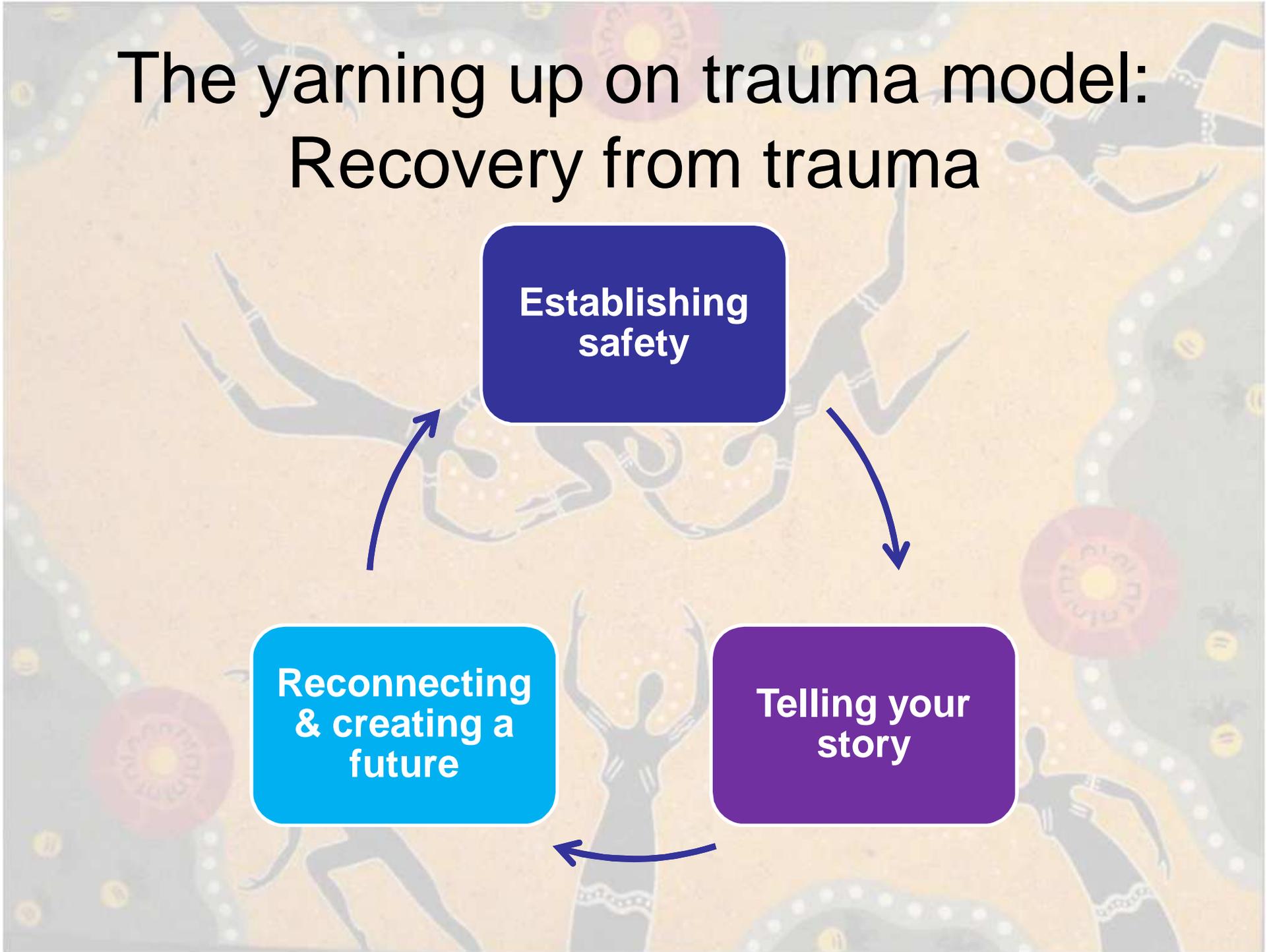
- The healing process
  - Establishing safety
  - Telling your story
  - Reconnecting/creating a future
- Assessment
  - The ATSI tool
- Practical tools in working with traumatised children, families and communities.
  - Culture is healing

# The yarning up on trauma model: Recovery from trauma

**Establishing  
safety**

**Reconnecting  
& creating a  
future**

**Telling your  
story**



# Recovery from trauma

<b>Establishment of safety</b>	<b>Telling your story</b>	<b>Reconnecting &amp; Creating a future</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Creating physical &amp; emotional safety</li><li>•Developing safe &amp; trusting relationships</li><li>•Creating safe Communities</li><li>•Creating safety within the environment- a safe place</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Creating opportunities to explore grief &amp; loss</li><li>•Developing a language to describe thoughts &amp; feelings</li><li>•Developing a narrative about the trauma</li><li>•Sharing the story</li><li>•Remembering/mourning cultural &amp; historical trauma</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reconnecting with others (trauma often isolates people).</li><li>•Reconnecting with culture</li><li>• Individuals/families reconnecting with Community (e.g. healing old wounds)</li><li>•Reconnecting with culture</li><li>•Linking in with Community</li><li>•Creating places to share &amp; celebrate together “strong in culture”.</li></ul>

# Yarning about attachment



# What is attachment?

A westernised view...

*“Attachment* is a general term that describes the state and quality of an individual’s emotional ties to another.

(Becker-Weidman, 2005, p.7)

# Why are attachments important?

A child's early attachment experience influences:

1. the way the child **relates to others**
2. the way the child **feels about themselves**

The child's experience of attachment relationships leads to the development of their ***Internal working model*** (IWM) of relationships.

e.g. If a child experiences early abuse from an adult they will probably see other adults as unsafe.

# Internal Working Model

	<b>Positive IWM</b>	<b>Negative IWM</b>
<b>View of self</b>	I am Lovable I am worthy	I am unlovable I am unworthy
<b>View of the world &amp; relationships</b>	Others are responsive Others are Loving Others are interested in me Others are available to me The world is relatively safe	Others are unavailable Others are neglectful Others are rejecting Others are unresponsive The world is unsafe

# Culture & Attachment

- Attachment theory has largely evolved from a Western, ***individualistic*** social context.
- Applying attachment theory to cultures that have a more ***collectivist*** base, such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities requires CAUTION.

NB. ***Collectivist cultures*** are more likely to think of themselves in terms of their ***connection*** with other people & their Community.

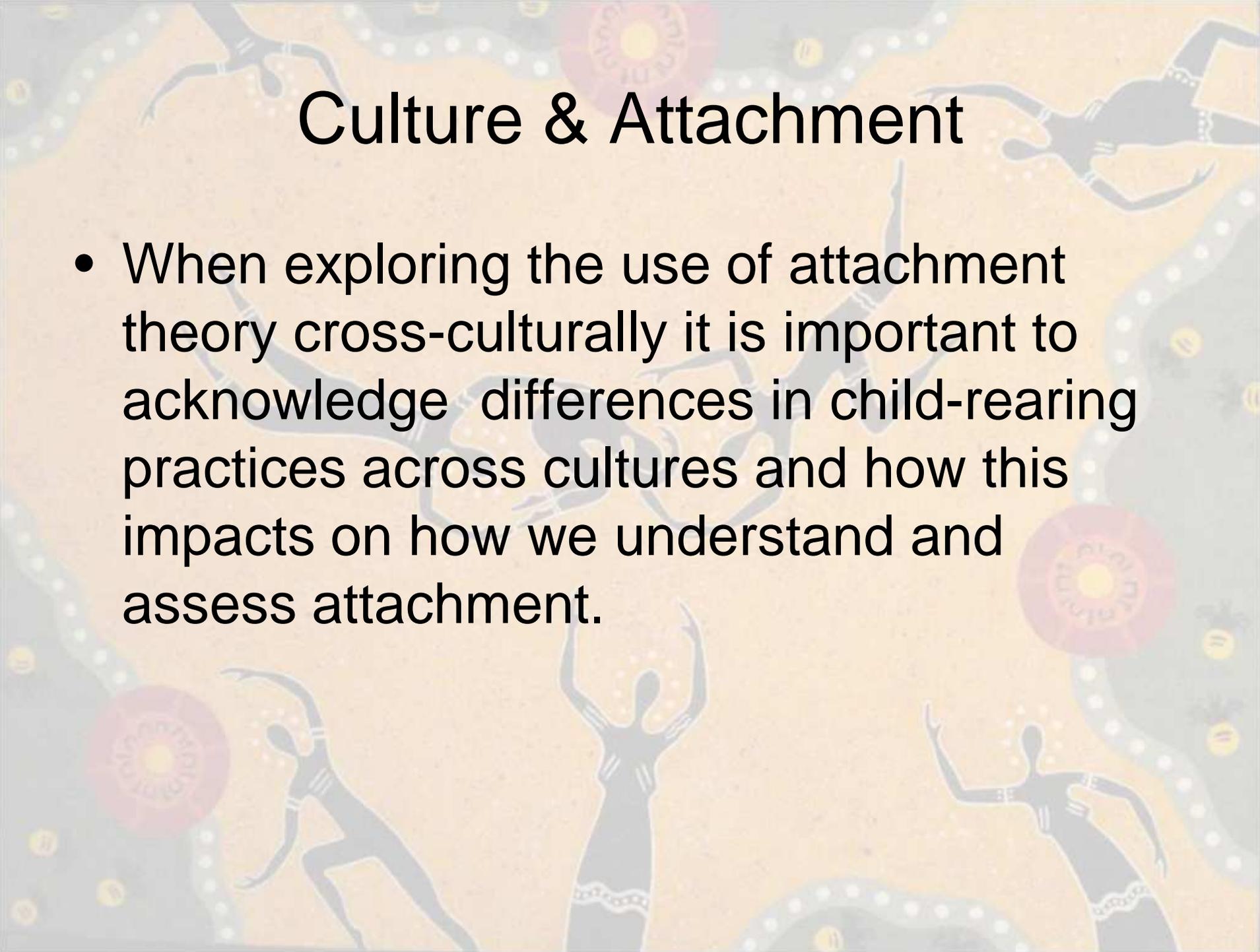
# Culture & Attachment

- Mary Ainsworth first completed studies in Uganda & then with American babies (1963, 1967)
- She found that the ***attachment relationship*** was applicable across cultures but recognised that some ***attachment behaviours differed***, i.e. the American children hugged and kissed whereas the Ganda children clapped when their 'attachment figure' returned.

# The attachment network

- The yarning up on trauma model uses an ***attachment network*** approach.
- In many Aboriginal communities ***child rearing is done by multiple caregivers*** e.g. a child who is cared for by different woman interchangeably such as aunts, grandparents and birth mother.
- ***This network of carers is what provides the child with a 'secure base' rather than one primary carer. This is called an attachment network.***

# Culture & Attachment

The background of the slide is a faded, artistic illustration in a style reminiscent of Indigenous Australian dot painting. It features several stylized human figures in various poses, some with arms raised. Interspersed among the figures are circular motifs, some containing a sun-like symbol with rays, and other abstract shapes. The color palette is muted, consisting of earthy tones like beige, grey, and soft reds.

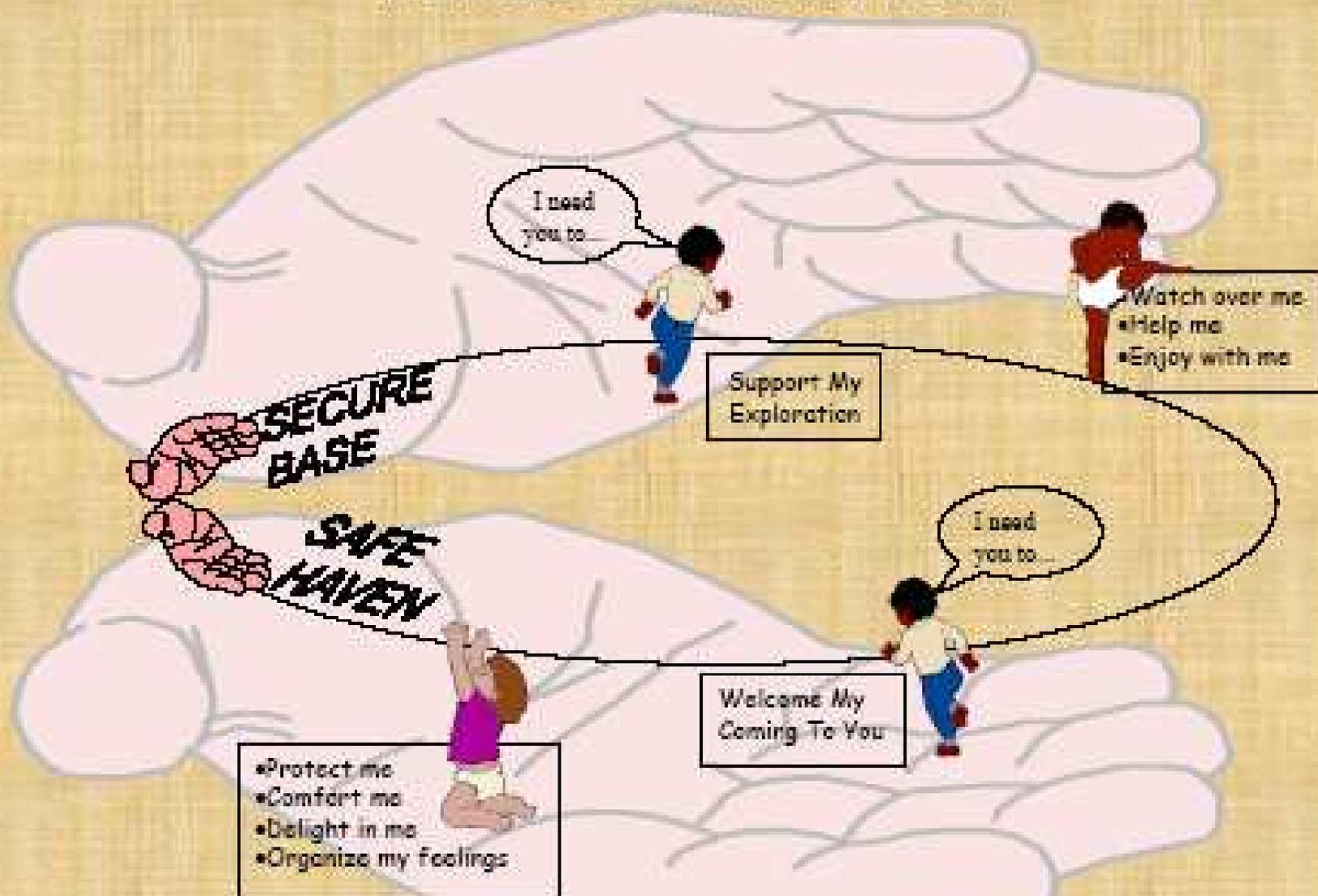
- When exploring the use of attachment theory cross-culturally it is important to acknowledge differences in child-rearing practices across cultures and how this impacts on how we understand and assess attachment.

# Aboriginal child-rearing practice

- While all Indigenous Communities are different, the child care responsibility and financial support of a child in many Indigenous Communities may be ***shared*** by the extended family / Community with different members taking on different roles.
- Therefore, the whole Community plays a role in raising the child as opposed to a 'primary' parent raising the child (the attachment network).

# CIRCLE OF SECURITY

PARENT BEING HELD WHILE HOLDING THE CHILD



Marvin, R., Cooper, G., Hoffman, K., & Powell, B. (2002).

# Culture & Attachment

- In most attachment assessments, **exploration** (going off to explore- *top half of the circle*) and **reunion** (coming home- *bottom half of the circle*) behaviours are watched to determine the attachment pattern.
- BUT In Aboriginal culture exploration and reunion may look very different from many Westernised cultures

# How trauma impacts on attachment

- An adults own attachment history has a significant impact on the development of their child's attachment.
- For many Aboriginal families impacted by the Stolen Generation their experience of being parented has been 'interrupted'.
- Many of these children who were removed did not experience or witness any healthy parent-child interaction.
- This grief/loss impacts greatly on the parent being able to effectively parent their own children.

*"Its hard to give it when you have never had it yourself"*

# How trauma impacts on attachment

- *“most forcibly removed children were denied the experience of being parented or at least cared for by a person to whom they were attached. This is the very experience people rely on to become effective and successful parents themselves”*

(HREOC) 1997 Bringing them home report.

# Culture & Attachment

Assessing attachment across cultures requires CAUTION:

- Be aware of the **limitations** of attachment theory
- Any observations of attachment behaviours need to be discussed with a **cultural consultant**

# Culture & Attachment

- **Cross cultural attachment assessments** needs to take into account the historical, cultural and spiritual contexts
- Be aware that infant/caregiver behaviours may have different meaning across cultures
- Be aware of cultural variance of attachment concepts of *exploration* and *closeness*

# Group Discussion

- What does Attachment mean for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander families?



# Yarning about trauma



**Historical/  
Cultural  
trauma**

i.e. Stolen  
generation

**Community  
Trauma**

i.e. substance abuse,  
violence,  
multiple deaths

**Types of  
Trauma**

**Individual  
Trauma**

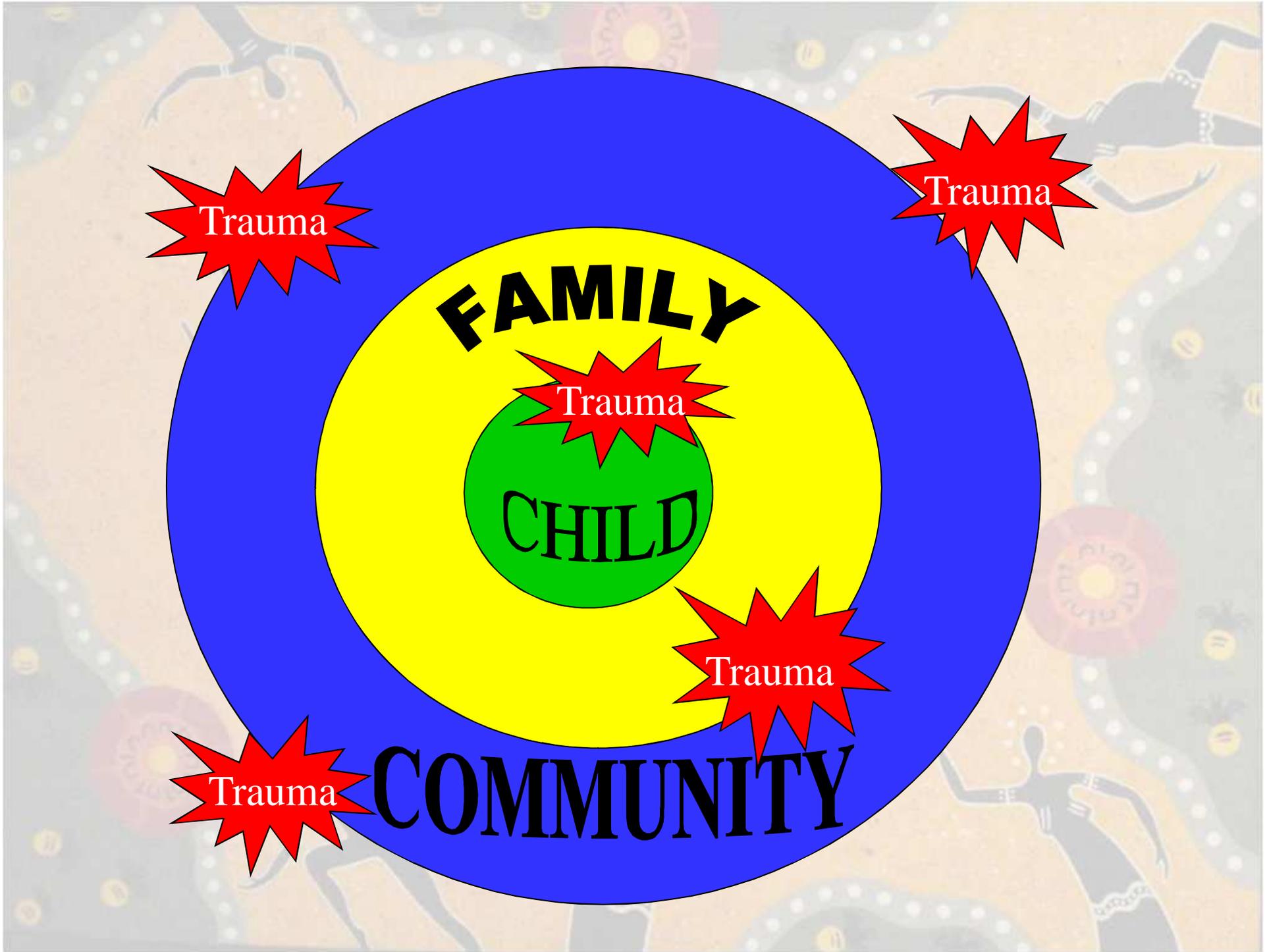
i.e. child abuse &  
Neglect,  
Vicarious trauma  
(complex trauma/  
PTSD)

**Family  
Trauma**

i.e. Transgenerational  
trauma,  
Domestic violence,

# Family & Community trauma

- Trauma impacts on the individuals who experience it, but can also impact on entire families and Communities, compounding the individual effects.
- Trauma that occurs to one person will usually have a ***ripple*** effect and other family members, extended family, friends, colleagues and even acquaintances can suffer from the impact of that trauma.



Trauma

Trauma

Trauma

Trauma

Trauma

**FAMILY**

**CHILD**

**COMMUNITY**

# Family & Community trauma

- Indigenous families and Communities often have a ***collective sense of suffering*** due to current and historical traumas.
- Children living in traumatised communities, may be affected by the pain & ***suffering of the Community.***
- Adults in these traumatised Communities may not always act protectively of children or provide support for recovery due to their own life difficulties.

# Family & Community trauma

- Traumatised Communities *may struggle* with:
- Internal conflicts
- High levels of trauma-related behaviours such as drug and alcohol abuse
- High levels of violence, family and Community
- High levels of child abuse and neglect
- High levels of mental illness
- High levels of incarceration/criminal activity
- High levels of poverty
- Disrupted relationships with the wider Community/society

# Family & Community trauma

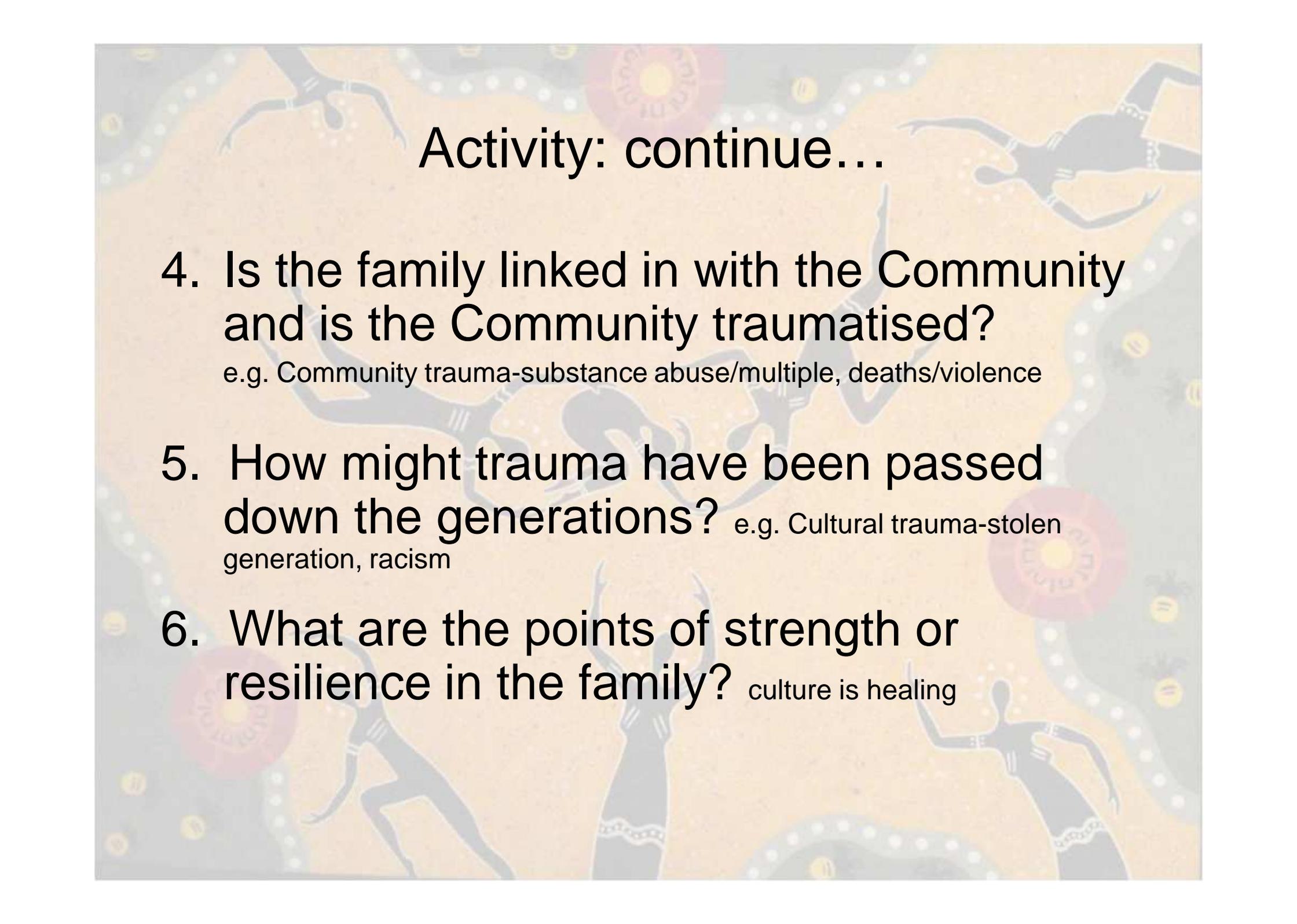
Traumatised Communities may also have *strengths*:

- Connectedness to Culture
- Intensive support for one another
- Humour
- Desire for the next generation to do well
- Courage
- Will to survive
- Adaptability to new environments
- Capacity to straddle two different cultures/worldview.
- Resilience

# Activity: Think of a child you are working with...

1. Why might this child be behaving in the way they are? e.g. any history of abuse/ neglect?
2. What was the child's earlier attachment experience? (e.g. attachment network and was the attachment network traumatised?)
3. What is going on for the mother/father? e.g. any family history of trauma?





## Activity: continue...

4. Is the family linked in with the Community and is the Community traumatised?

e.g. Community trauma-substance abuse/multiple, deaths/violence

5. How might trauma have been passed down the generations? e.g. Cultural trauma-stolen generation, racism

6. What are the points of strength or resilience in the family? culture is healing

# For further Information:

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