

For Women By Women

Sharing stories
of strength,
resilience &
leadership
through art.



Ethnic Communities
Council of Queensland



"[...] our practices of recognition (and so our practices of voice) are limited by the histories of the spaces where we find ourselves: the histories of others' struggles of recognition before us, the history of our own struggle to be recognized by contrast to particular others. Spaces for voice are therefore inherently spaces of power; their link to power does not just derive from institutions such as government seeking to manage them."

Couldry, N. 2010. Why Voice Matters. Culture and Politics after Neoliberalism.

ECCQ organised two workshops that focused on empowering women through storytelling, in recognition that storytelling provides women with a voice and facilitates intercultural connection.

The first workshop was organised during the morning to allow women who were at home during the day to attend and the second workshop was held during the evening, which ensured the participation of women who work during the day.

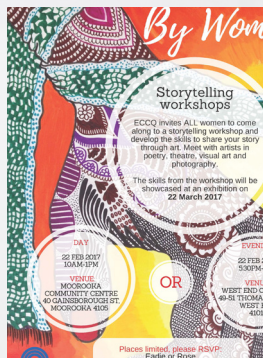
The locations also assisted wider participation, with women travelling to the workshops from different parts of Brisbane and several women attending in either Moorooka or West End because they lived in the local area.

The purpose of these workshops was to empower women in their communities to express and celebrate their role as leaders. ECCQ used experienced facilitators to support the development of the structure, activities and narrative of the workshops, to enable women to share and openly listen to each other's stories.

The facilitors guided the process including some physical activities which assisted active listening. Through the exercise of storytelling, women developed a sense of recognition and validation from their female counterparts. By hearing stories of courage and pride they felt strength in their capacity to overcome struggles and barriers.

New and emerging communities met with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and mainstream women, to share experiences and knowledge. This had a profound impact on all involved. The women then considered ways to express their stories, predominantly through art. It was decided that these stories would be presented at an exhibition the next month which would be open to friends, family and the wider public.

A special thank you to Jen Barkkman and Rose Brown who facilitated the workshops.



Part 1: The Workshops



"I feel that it is really important as a leader to be able to share the story of my community and build understanding of the challenges we face. These workshops were a great way to connect with others and find similarities in our stories."

- Rose Karlo, Chairperson of the African Australian Women's Association



The For Women, By Women workshops were delivered with funding from the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services through the Multicultural Peak Funding for Sector Development Services program



ECCQ held an exhibition at Mu'ooz Restaurant in West End, to showcase the stories that emerged from the workshops.

The exhibition provided a space for women to have a voice and therefore provided a space of power.

Over 100 individuals attended the exhibition, including ECCQ members and stakeholders, individuals from migrant, refugee, mainstream and Indigenous Australian backgrounds.

Twenty women exhibited their stories (some of which are showcased in the following pages) through a wide range of mediums. The exhibition was a celebration of intercultural connection and the contribution of women in Queensland.



Part 2: The Exhibition







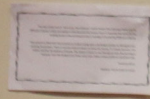
ECCQ

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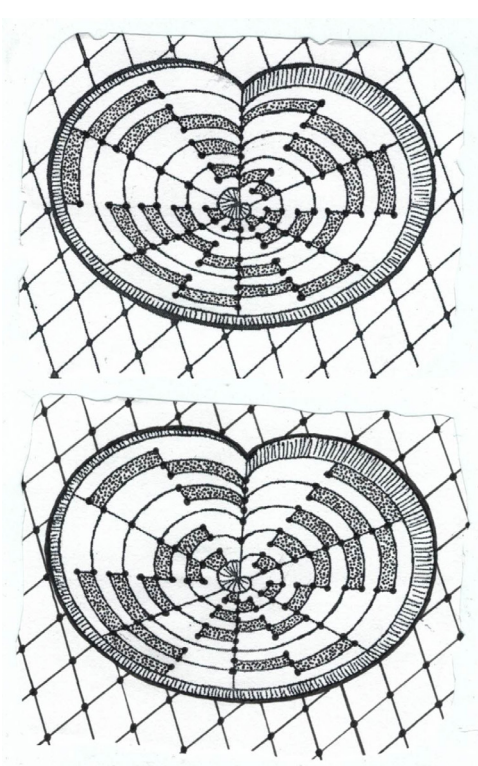
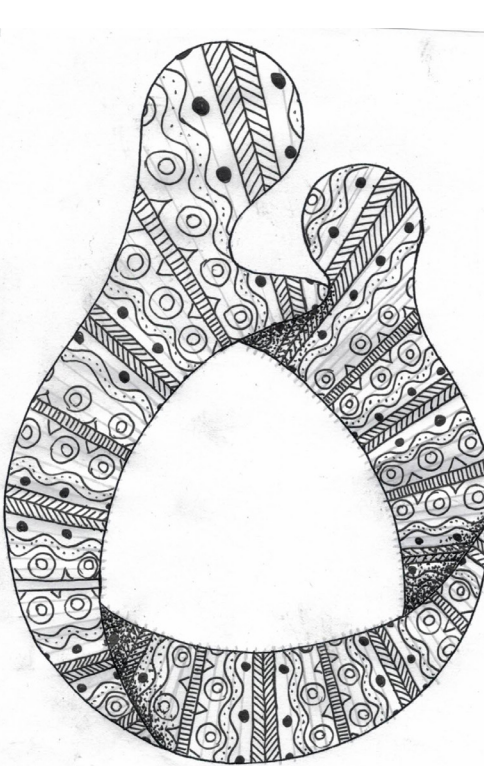


"This artwork is filled with henna patterns (Indian) along with a technique similar to Aboriginal dot-painting (Australian). There is not any cultural reason to draw the henna, it's simply because I am Indian, and like the patterns of henna. The reason I chose to use Aboriginal-style dot painting is because I love the designs and I have never seen these unique patterns anywhere else."

Sumanya

Medium: Acrylic paint on wood





Hope: (Tattoo)

- The Bee encompass so many admirable attributes;
- They are community minded, coordinated and hard working. They even have their own form of healthcare and immunisations
 - They are clever, the hexagon is mathematically proven to be the most efficient shape to store their honey
 - They are happy and communicate through dance
 - They are small, yet crucial for sustaining so much life on this earth

Heart On My Sleeve: (Soon to be Tattoo)

When you have a child, it's like having your heart living outside of your body. These each represent one of my children. The shape is a cardioid, and the filled segments represent a binary number. That number corresponds to the location of each child's birthday (ddmmyy) in the decimals of pi. Because pi has infinitely many decimal places, it contains every possible combination of numbers. We are all in there!

Mother Child Paradox: (Soon to be Tattoo)

My mother has always worn a mother and child pendant, and I always thought of myself as the child. Imagine this as a paper loop, the twist make this loop into a mobius strip, which has only one side. So while at first glance, it seems the child is on a different side to the mother, this is not the case.

This represents the experience of simultaneously being a child to my mother, and a mother to my children.

Gemma

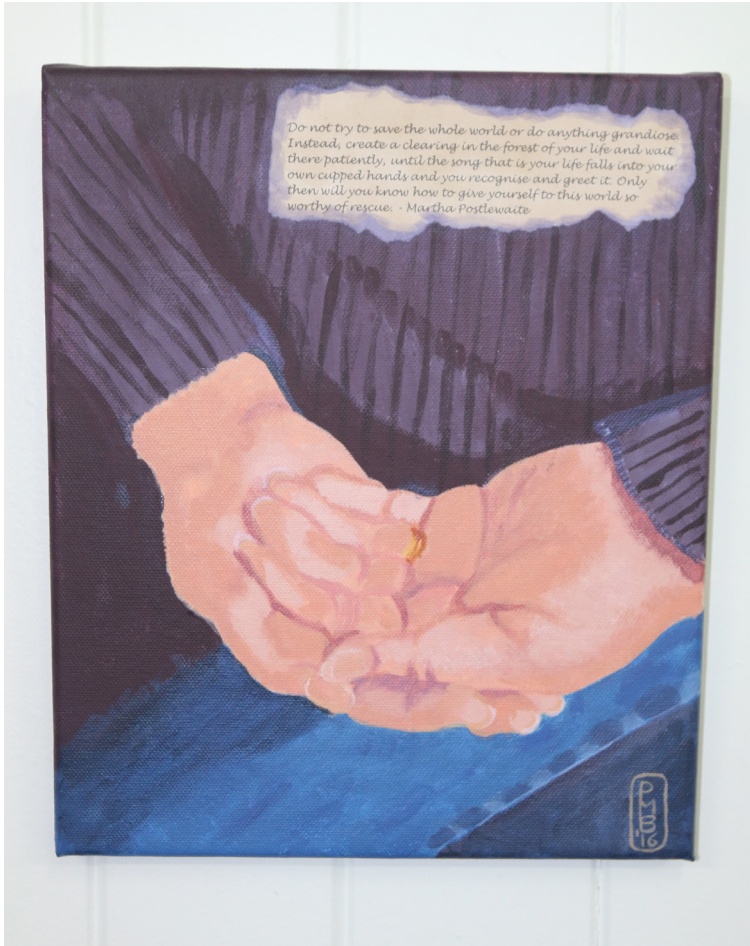
Medium: Photography



"The fish is swimming against
the stream- it's struggling but
it's happy."

Swi

Medium: Colour pencils



Do not try to save the whole world or do anything grandiose. Instead, create a clearing in the forest of your life and wait there patiently, until the song that is your life falls into your own cupped hands and you recognise and greet it. Only then will you know how to give yourself to this world so worthy of rescue. - Martha Postlewaite

– Martha Postlewaite

“My own cupped hands - a response to Martha Postlewaite's poem.”

Pam

Medium: Acrylic on canvas



"Leadership is doing the best you can as a result of support or a situation which derive from confidence, needs and self-growth."

Rose

Medium: Photography



“Her name is Joy and I made her when I needed her. She has flowers in her hair and sings to her own heart”.

Claudia

Medium: Hand made with clay





“Weaving, hand-made baskets, original designs.

Totems inspired by native creatures, many are made by request for grandchildren and friends; original, all individual - not one alike.”

Aunty Donna

Medium: Weaving. Sewing.

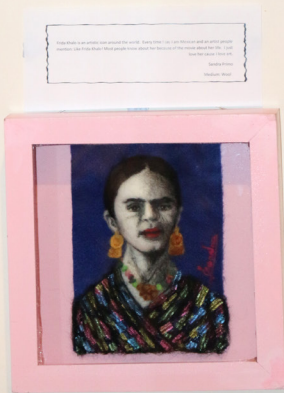


“The “Little People” bunting was made as a community project by MDA clients, volunteers and staff within the Women’s Corner space. Each of the figures was made with specifically purchased new fabric to represent ethnic diversity. Then each sewer was able to “dress” her.

Two small boys also participated, with help dressing the figure in any way they liked from a selection of donated scraps. Not all of the costumes are associated with specific cultural groups but many have special meaning to particular sewers.”

Pamela

Medium: Fabric, stitching



“Frida Khalo is an artistic icon around the world. Every time I say I am Mexican and an artist people mention: Like Frida Khalo! Most people know about her because of the movie about her life. I just love her because I love art. “

Sandra

Medium: Wool



“This is a self-portrait I did when I was 16, my last pair of ballet slippers and a recent self-portrait. These three pieces represent when I first was studying ballet at the Australian Ballet School. My ballet shoes, the ballet component of my career, and last, my inner self-portrait, reflecting the life and experiences lived.”

Roslyn

Medium: Acrylic on canvas



“This is my interpretation of my works and what art means for me. My songs especially “Spirit Runs Free” is about our culture and spiritual connection to land. Not only is it rewarding for me along with that cultural connection of land; music; song and dance handed down through my ancestors. At most times a sound of music just happens before I write it in my head. Along with musical times at home it does have the ability to calm ones thinking. It don't matter how good or bad it sounds “it's what you enjoy” It can be a survival strategy. To be blessed with the “two music and arts untrained is my gift.” - **Dawn Daylight** (pictured singing).

“I knitted this shawl about 20 years ago. There are seven butterflies, seven butterfly eggs, seven caterpillars and seven chrysalises. The butterfly is a symbol of transformation; women go through all these cycles.”

Rose
Medium: Knitting



My work deals with experiences of belonging and identity as a young women in contemporary Australia. Through the three panels, I explore different kinds of relationships, community and loneliness.

Romy

Medium: Paper Collage



Retso material

Retso a Zimbabwean traditional material attached to a shave (spirit) rekuvhima (hunting). This spirit is a family spirit. The hunting referred to is entrepreneurship spirit. It is a worker's spirit. Resto traditionally was worn by hunters on their hunting journey. The material was associated with good luck and used as an encourager for the shave rekuvhima.

After Zimbabwe was colonised and Christianity started growing, Retso material started to be associated with the evil spirits. However, these days, Retso material is hailed and worn as a Zimbabwean identity. I wear it like my country's national flag as it symbolises being Zimbabwean.

Fungi

Medium: material

Dishonour

How can I be dishonoured by my own family
Who owned me in the first place
To be born into a family does not mean that I'm owned by that family
No one owns anyone
We are individuals
We were created us as individuals
How can I be owned by someone

I am part of my family
I make my family complete
This does not mean they own me
I have my own body , mind and soul
How can I be owned by other people

Forcing me into an unwanted marriage means dishonouring to me
The idea of force is enough to make me feel that way
I do not belong to your family
I am my own person
I can think and make wise decisions for myself
I'm responsible for myself

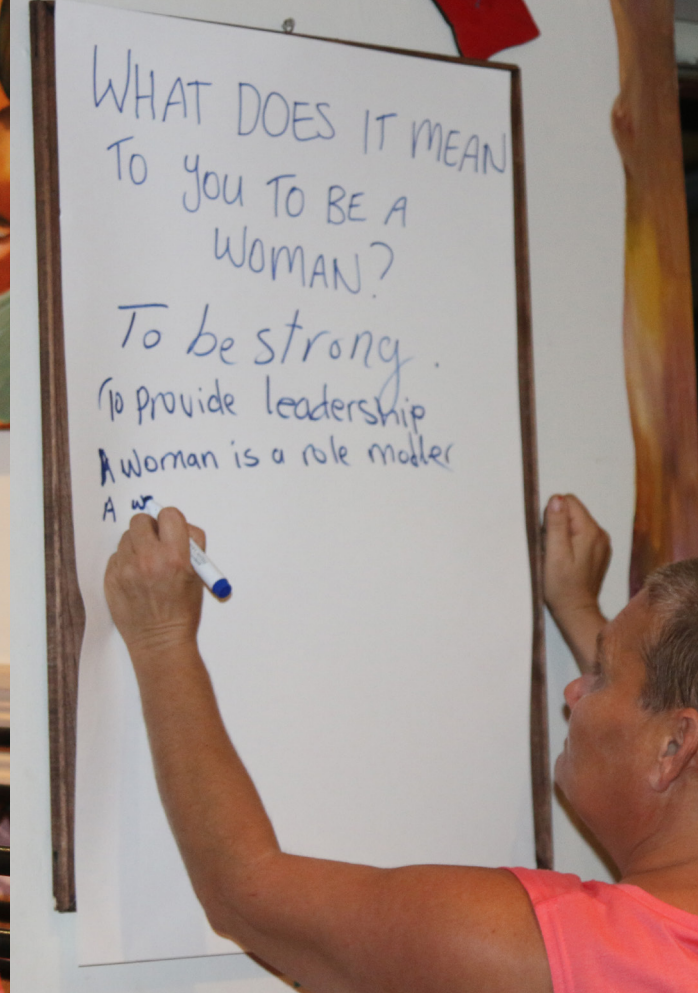
Go to hell my brothers, sisters extended family, mum and dad
Because you are forcing me to get married to a stranger
He is a stranger in appearance
A stranger in character
A stranger in behaviour
A stranger in love
I do not want to be married to a stranger.

Last but not least, I would like to thank
Me, myself and I for making such a stand against you
Because you do not own me
Do not bother telling me that you have dishonoured me

Because your actions speaks louder than words.

Medium: poem

Fungi



*"A highlight of the exhibition night for me was hearing stories of the Indigenous women who showed courage and the ability to overcome adversity. I was inspired."
- participant from new and emerging community*

A special thank you to Sue & Kathy who shared oral stories.



*The exhibition was funded by
the Australian Government
Department of Social Services.
Visit www.dss.gov.au for more
information.*



A special thank you to Saba who hosted the exhibition at her restaurant: Mu'ooz in West End.

To all the women who shared their stories....thank you.

Amina
Anne
Bilge
Charmaine
Claudia
Dawn
Donna
Eadie
Fungi
Gemma C
Gemma P
Grace
Helena
Jen
Joan
Kathy
Luma

Marina
Pam
Pamela
Robina
Romy
Ronda
Rose B
Rose K
Rose L
Roslyn
Sabine
Sandra
Sue
Sumanya
Sunny
Swi
Vijaya



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