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TRANSCRIPT OF RECORDING

Anonymous 930

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**<THE RECORDING HAS COMMENCED**

**INTERVIEWER:** Could you start by telling me your name, please?

5 **ANONYMOUS 930:** Sure, so it's

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

10 **ANONYMOUS 930:** And my mob's Palawa mob from northern Tasmania, a place called Smithton. And I'm, I've clearly making an anonymous submission to Yoorrook Commission.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah. So what do you want to share today?

15 **ANONYMOUS 930:** So I guess I just want to share my family's story -

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

20 **ANONYMOUS 930:** And part of the reason why I want it to be an anonymous submission is that there's aspects of the story that are not my story alone, and they're other family member's story. So I think it's a little bit unfair to go on the record and share their aspects of the story without their permission, consent or indeed- even just that it coming from my perspective, they might have a different perspective. So it's sort of- I feel a little bit uncomfortable going on the record, sharing that story. And  
25 then sort of having that sort of knot tension there. But it's if they if they had a different aspect or a different perspective, then it would be unfair if it was on that permanent record. And it's sort of, that was you know, that was they didn't have a right of reply, for want of a better word.

30 **INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** So but yeah, I'm here to share my story from my perspective and growing up.

35 **INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** And I'll start by saying this, obviously I'm a fair skinned Aboriginal person. And from a young age I was obviously aware of my aboriginality and it was something that was shared with me as a young person, as a child- that, you  
40 know, your Nana is Aboriginal descent, and it was shared with me through various stories. So one of the stories that was shared with me was when my mum was a little girl, she went- they were driving off to see Uncle Charlie, who was an Aboriginal person. A blackfella, and clearly a blackfella, like was identifiable as an Aboriginal person where my Nana had relatively fair skinned- olive skin and could function.

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She wasn't necessarily recognisable as Aboriginal in, in that community society. But obviously visiting a relative and one of the things that she was- they were told in the

car as they were driving there, now, if you don't want to tell anyone about Uncle Charlie, you don't have to. Uncle Charlie's a little bit different. And, you know, that sort of thing. And my mum reflects on that story and was talking about that aspect of that- Uncle Charlie had gout in his knees and he had difficulty moving around and those sorts of things. And as a little girl, she simply assumed what Nan was referring to was that Uncle Charlie's gout. And for me, that sort of speaks to the innocence of young people, the innocence of children and how racism's something that's learnt and not- is not inherent in this as, as a child, you know, there's a level of innocence there that takes place in that experience. It also deeply concerns me, that's something that I take as a really important part of my identity. And even as a child and a young person, I was really proud of that aspect of who I was, of coming from.

I didn't know back then that, you know, 65, you know, 45,000 years of history. I was just really proud of the fact that I was- hey, I'm Aboriginal. This is, you know, this is deadly. This is something that's really cool. Like, this is something that's really great. So it was really interesting that I had that sort of experience going, that something that's- even as a child, I was really proud of, that my nana had such a very, very different connection and experience with. And to back up a little bit further, so my great grandfather, Uncle [REDACTED], served in the First World War. I believe it was after that time that he moved to Victoria and started a family. He had a bicycle accident when my nan was 13, and she ended up in the homes.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** So she also had a funny experience in terms of growing up in that community, and obviously was disconnected from her relatives, her broader- her broader family. And I think that sort of goes into some of the aspects around the importance of family and kinship, but also deeply scarred her and traumatised her, that experience of growing up in the homes scarred her. And I think with conversations with my mum, she talks about how that impacted on her ability to be a parent and show affection, and- you know, and I think what I'm trying to describe is intergenerational trauma that she, she experienced. And one of the stories that I heard when I was growing up about my nan was she was- so it was interesting. She was a strict woman, she was a hard woman. But, (indistinct 00:05:53). So she had two daughters, my Auntie [REDACTED] and my mum [REDACTED].

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Obviously we'll redact those names. But she shared a story about where my aunty was caught wearing makeup. A very innocent thing to do- or something like that, it might have been that or something- something very innocent. They were young girls at the time. And because of that, she said that's it, you're going to go live in the homes. We're sending you to the homes. So they made her go through the façade of packing all of her things, and my mum tells the story that both of them were sobbing and crying and going through that sort of experience and packing all the things away and that sort of thing, and putting everything away,

which is a terrible, terrible, sad story. But what do you do, you know? But I think that's an indication of how sometimes it travels through the generations.

**INTERVIEWER:** Absolutely.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** So, you know, put you back by the door, that sort of thing. And then an hour later, all right, I changed my mind. You can stay, you know, but you've learnt your lesson, those sorts of things. Terrible thing to do to someone -

10 **INTERVIEWER:** To a child.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah, yeah. But it's interesting because I know- and this is sort of a- it's interesting because, and again, talking about intergenerational trauma, my older brother was naughty, you know? Not over the top naughty but doing different things, you know, that sort of thing. And it was interesting that what eventually happened is it's like- that's it, you're going to boarding school. So he was sort of, kept on stuffing up at school. And her reaction was, that's it, I'm sending you off to boarding school. And for me, like I was like, oh dear, you know, he's going off to boarding school. Now, that's not the same as being sent off to the homes by any means, but it's sort of paralleling that sort of aspect of, you know, you learn from your experience as a child. And sort of, quite often you become the parent or the person that you had beforehand, that sort of aspect of, you know, happening through the generations and you sort of repeating itself.

25 **INTERVIEWER:** Yeah -

**ANONYMOUS 930:** And I thought that was a- it was only as an adult that I was sort of reflected on that going, oh my God, those are the sort of those parallel stories -

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**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah -

**ANONYMOUS 930:** And that how that happens sort of thing.

35 **INTERVIEWER:** How old was your brother?

**ANONYMOUS 930:** He was a lot. He was older, so he was like 12, 13, 14. So it was definitely he was in secondary school at that stage.

40 **INTERVIEWER:** And how old were you at that time?

**ANONYMOUS 930:** I was younger, so I was probably grade 5 or 6. No, no, it must have been grade four or something like that. But I remember the brochures for Scotch College or something like that going -

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**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah -

**ANONYMOUS 930:** There's no way they could have afford to send him to boarding school. But it was, it's interesting that that sort of happened, and I didn't- it wasn't as, it wasn't traumatising, like my mother's experience in terms of, because it wasn't so dramatic. But it was like, oh, my brother's going away. Like, you know, he's going to  
5 be sent away.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** So and that, sort of having that sort of experience, you know,  
10 it was, it's sort of you go, oh, okay. So that's how intergenerational trauma sometimes work. And it sort of goes through that. I'm sure- I don't have kids myself.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** And I'm sure my siblings that do have kids won't go down that  
15 path. But I think it's an example of, you know, how that sometimes plays out in that space. And I think a lot of families experience that, you know, particularly for people that- relatives that have experienced significant trauma in that space, how sometimes that trauma can be, you know, passed on through the generations in various ways.  
20 And that's just one small example of it.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah, absolutely. And I think, you know, there's not enough  
talked about, particularly around mob- around the effects of the neuroplasticity,  
neuroscience, epigenetics -  
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**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah -

**INTERVIEWER:** That comes into, excuse me, a lot of the outcomes that we're  
dealing with from the impacts of colonisation, you know -  
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**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah -

**INTERVIEWER:** Whether it be children out of home care -

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah -  
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**INTERVIEWER:** Or drug and alcohol use or, you know, incarceration rates -

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah -  
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**INTERVIEWER:** All of that stems from the brain stem first forming, which is, you  
know -

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah -  
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**INTERVIEWER:** Epigenetics really. So if our, our parents didn't have those tools.  
You know, it's a very fortunate- now you're obviously working in this space, and I'm

sure you're having a lot more understanding of, you know, like just how trauma works with mob.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

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**INTERVIEWER:** But it's also confronting to deal with as well, isn't it?

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah, yeah.

10 **INTERVIEWER:** When you connect those dots and- oh, that's why mum did that.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

15 **INTERVIEWER:** But it's also all a part of that healing journey, but bittersweet because, you know, the grief that comes up with that as well isn't easy.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah -

20 **INTERVIEWER:** And even though you knew she was doing the best she could.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah. And I grew up really middle class, you know, and did it doing all right. But it's sort of interesting that like it's, that sort of- yeah, it's still there like that sort of how it passes through and stuff sort of thing. Yeah. So yeah. So that was one aspect of the story that I was really keen to share. I guess the other aspect of  
25 that- it's a reoccurring theme that often comes up and it's about that idea of people being disconnected from their sense of aboriginality or disconnected. And I really dislike that term to some extent. I know some people say I'm a disconnected Aboriginal person. I think culture is something that's really dynamic. I don't identify or feel disconnected from my culture. I embrace my culture and I see it still  
30 manifesting, like some of the pillars which I see as Aboriginal culture still manifesting in my life. Yes, there's aspects of not having language and not having aspects of connection to traditional ceremony, and not having aspects, and not being- going back to Tasmania and visiting mob there, or really knowing mob there or those sort of aspects to it. But I know I've got a deep sense of connection and importance  
35 around family, and family is really important to me. And I see that as a part of absolutely of mob, you know?

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah, Absolutely.

40 **ANONYMOUS 930:** That idea of family being a really important part of it. I look for opportunities to learn culture and share culture. I look for opportunities to make sure my nieces and nephews have that opportunity too. So things like, you know, giving a possum skin when- no, that's all right. Giving a possum skin when they're  
45 born- giving, they each get a possum skin, all. You know, when my nephew turned 12, I gave him a didgeridoo that we made together, you know? So there's that aspect of those sorts of things, too. So, you know, I bristle sometimes when people say, we've lost- we've lost our culture or our culture's been decimated and those sorts of

things. Yeah, it's colonisation, it's really harmed culture, but it hasn't broken it, you know? So, yeah.

5 **INTERVIEWER:** And I think the fact that you're standing today.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

10 **INTERVIEWER:** Or anyone who says that, you know, it's a really big reminder that yes, those things just tried to happen. You know, those things did happen. And they happened to our ancestors.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

15 **INTERVIEWER:** And I don't know if you've ever read this, heard a quote saying they tried to bury us, but they didn't know we were seeds. And I think that's such a beautiful quote -.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah -

20 **INTERVIEWER:** Because realistically, you and I shouldn't be here having this conversation.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

25 **INTERVIEWER:** These followers shouldn't be outside.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah -

30 **INTERVIEWER:** We are all connected. And the fact that you are running, you know, you're running this place of- that's a gathering place, a place for mob to come to connect -

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah -

35 **INTERVIEWER:** And knowing and seeing, you know, some of the community members that were here today, knowing how safe that they felt just because you were here -

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah -

40 **INTERVIEWER:** You were there in that room.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah -

45 **INTERVIEWER:** And that's a credit to you and all the work that you've done, not just intrinsically, but, you know, with your family history. And it sounds like you certainly have been, you know, that cycle breaker, I think -

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

5 **INTERVIEWER:** Sometimes the cycle breakers are chosen by, I think, our old people.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

10 **INTERVIEWER:** And it sounds like, you know, you're going to be the next Unc in the future, because you've got all this information and you've got this resource that- there's not going to be anyone using that language -

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah -

15 **INTERVIEWER:** And, you know, we're disconnected because- they're going to be talking about their culture.

20 **ANONYMOUS 930:** And look, I know other people use that language, and that's their feeling, that's their sense. And I don't want to sort of say, well, that person's wrong like that. But I sort of just want to slightly push back and say, sort of, this is my perspective and sort of say, you know it's- yeah, it's, you know, even in mob that sort of say it. I still see culture in you. I still see strength in you. I still see connection in you. So, you know, it's just my view. It's the incorrect language to use sort of thing. So, but their language is their language and that's their story too. So they need  
25 to own that story as well. So, but yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** And how long have you been here, for the coordinator here -

30 **ANONYMOUS 930:** So I started in [REDACTED].

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

35 **ANONYMOUS 930:** And just sort of seeing this, you know, coming out of Covid, obviously it was like, okay, you know, fresh start. Let's begin from the start, basically.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

40 **ANONYMOUS 930:** So it was just a sort of, you know, rebuilding and bringing in mob and, you know, building programmes and bits and pieces. So yeah, it's been nice seeing the place grow.

**INTERVIEWER:** I bet. How big is the like- what's your team?

45 **ANONYMOUS 930:** So we've got myself and another coordinator. We've just had Trainee join us through-, so doing a one year traineeship.



**INTERVIEWER:** Terrific.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** And we've got boss of the First Nations team.

5 **INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** One of the things that we say. So initially, it was just myself and the team, the coordinators, the team lead or coordinators role. We call it different- different organisations call it different names. So it was just the two of us.  
10 So we have seen some growth with my colleague coming on board and also the trainee.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

15 **ANONYMOUS 930:** But when we're doing our planning playing days. You know, one of the things that we're sort of talking about is, you know, what does each of the departments want to- like, split up from your teams.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah -

20 **ANONYMOUS 930:** And we'll do this activity where it's about what you want to see in the future. And it was interesting that all three of us were all- we all want more people. If we've got more people, more in staff, we can do more. We don't need more money and we don't need flash facilities. It's nice that we've got this facility, but the  
25 more mob that we can employ, the more work that we can do in that space. So I think it's interesting that we all had that same perspective. And you know, that's part of it. It's about having the people on board that you can connect and build with mob- than a sort of, you know, have those connections and grow, basically.

30 **INTERVIEWER:** Absolutely, so but it's I guess it's just sort of sending across the message that we want community, you are a community.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

35 **INTERVIEWER:** Within the community. And we want community to be in community.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

40 **INTERVIEWER:** Right?

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

45 **INTERVIEWER:** And so like, so how you're talking about, you know, like when you're like- your journeying, you know, your cultural journey. So what helps you be culturally strong in the work that you do? Like how do you ground yourself and take care of your spirit?

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Well, I think one of the things that's like, so- I think being in the role has allowed me like being- working in the Aboriginal space has allowed me to connect with community more, connect with culture on a regular basis. So I'm  
5 really blessed, you know, by having the opportunity to work in this space, because it sort of- it's allowed me to grow in that aspect. And that's why- you know, and there's hard days sometimes too, where you're like, you know, you just, you know, stuff goes on and those sorts of things. But yeah, work and community work that I've done  
10 over the years- and I've been working in this space for around about 20 years or so, it has allowed me- that it has made those connections and that growth, and it's been an important part of me growing as an Aboriginal man, I think too. So, yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah. And so have you always- what to be working in previously?  
15

**ANONYMOUS 930:** So I started off as a youth worker.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** In local government. And early on it was like, all right, what are your areas of interests? Those sorts of things. And they're like, oh, you're Aboriginal. All right, you've got the Aboriginal portfolio.  
20

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** So yeah, I started off working with Aboriginal young people.  
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**INTERVIEWER:** So that must have been a rewarding job.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah -  
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**INTERVIEWER:** Very big -

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah, yeah -  
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**INTERVIEWER:** Statewide I imagine, how much of Melbourne were you covering?

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Oh, so we were just covering the local government area at the time. So just that local government area.  
40

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** So I was doing that for a number of years, and then I had a  
45 bright idea. I was like, hey, there's this other role which has a different portfolio roles, Sport and rec. If I was to move sideways into that role, that means that another Aboriginal person would have to come into the team and we'll have, you know, two.

So I did that, I moved sideways and we would often team up together and do the- so we would do the Aboriginal programs together sort of thing. And I did a bit of sport and rec stuff, so I did that for a bit and then sort of started climbing the ladder in terms of getting into leadership roles. Mid-pandemic, sort of thing, was leading a  
5 team of 15 people.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Was not community facing, and it hadn't been community  
10 facing for maybe 5 or 6, I don't know, it was a while. And I was, I had always been interested in gathering places as a concept. So 20 years earlier, or 25 years earlier actually now, I visited a gathering place art studio and an art cooperative, and it was just all mob there, and I was like, oh my God, this thing is- so it was sort of like the first time I'd sort of visited our gathering place.

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**INTERVIEWER:** Did it feel- did you feel that home feeling?

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah, like it was like, God, this is awesome. This is like, this  
20 is, you know, look at all community coming together and those sorts of things, and this is it. Now that lasted to-, three years until it was closed down. It was very focused on art cooperative, and it was sort of where I started to become aware of gathering places as a concept. And my experience being and hearing stories from older mob, was that back in the day when you were at Gertrude Street and, you know, in Fitzroy, mob was really, really connected and everyone knew everyone, and  
25 that's where you went if you want to see mob. But since people sort of moved out into the burbs through gentrification- so that sort of sense of isolation that people have, and I was like, all right, I think gathering places are the solution to that. So lockdown sort of came, you know, it tested all of this sort of thing. We went through that process where we're like, all right, what do we want to do? And it's sort of like,  
30 you know what? This is an opportunity to reset.

And so a role was advertised and I was like community facing. And it'd be getting  
back to working with community. I was like, you know what? I'll go for it. I'll bring  
35 an application sort of thing. I was successful in that application, and yeah, got the job. And it's reaffirmed to me- yes. Because there was a nagging feeling, you know, because I'm still involved with back in my community, and in advocating for Gathering Place. So looking at building that, there was always that feeling of, all right, we build this wonderful infrastructure, but what happens if, you know, will it actually meet the need. Will it really do what it's meant to do?

40

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** And it's reaffirmed to me the importance of the gathering  
45 places and saying, yes indeed they are, a sense where community can come together. It's a place of healing. It's a place where people can celebrate and connect with culture.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** It's a place where, you know, you can create that sense of community.

5

**INTERVIEWER:** Absolutely.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** And yeah, and it's not just, you know, it's not just the cell, like, you know. It's, I'm relieved because there was a part of stress going, all right, we're almost starting from scratch in terms of building up programs after that long period of lockdown. Being new to this part of the community, being over this side of town.

10

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** And not having the same connections. It's been a really interesting experience, sort of building up the place and getting it activated and seeing people come through.

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**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah. but does it, does it give you a sense of like drive and confirmation though, knowing that you've done it here. And so your vision in terms of what you were trying to implement, years ago.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** Absolutely.

**INTERVIEWER:** Like, it can be done.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah. And like, we've been involved in literally 20 years of advocacy in our community trying to get a gathering place happening. It's been a hard slog for a long period of time, and it's been back and forth around, you know-, as well, There have been times where we were given commitments for the gathering place to be built only to be told it was off the agenda, And it was devastating having an online meeting with the director of community services at the time, where it was basically saying, sorry folks, and the Aboriginal staff were all joined together. So we have like these online meetings and.

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35

**INTERVIEWER:** (indistinct 00:25:26) in there.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah. So we had a lot of- Aboriginal staff across the organisation back in the day. And we're online, and it was like, all right, sorry, the gathering place is not going to happen, that sort of thing. And we were pretty furious.

40

**INTERVIEWER:** Absolutely.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** So it was only through pushing back and getting them on board to support it, that it became policy and was back on. So, you know, and that's going to be an important part of their legacy to those leaders as they move on to the next chapter of their life-

45

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah -

5 **ANONYMOUS 930:** That they were able to course correct, in my opinion, and  
make it policy and build- it's being built as we speak, the gathering place. So I think  
it's you know, something they should be really, really proud of. And I think it's-  
there's no reason why gathering place can't see the same successes that we've seen  
here, and many of the other gathering places across the state. So I think, you know, I  
think they're going to do some really great work in the future.

10

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

15 **INTERVIEWER:** Wow.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** So that's touching on a bit about the importance of, yeah,  
gathering places too -

20 **INTERVIEWER:** Yeah, yeah. So what does that mean? So I just wanted a question.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

25 **INTERVIEWER:** What does it mean for you when you see mobs standing around  
outside the fireplace? You know, like, how does it -

30 **ANONYMOUS 930:** When we have a big community event and we have- or just a  
men's program or something like that. It's, for me, I take a lot of joy in seeing that  
they're healing, you know? The healing that that men have, that people get to  
experience through that. The strength that people draw from having that sense of  
community when they come out for a mob dinner or something like that. The, you  
know, we call it protective factors when you've got those community connections  
with each other and things like, the community supporting each other. So that I take  
a lot of pride and just enjoyment in seeing those sorts of things happen and seeing  
35 that there. That aspect of a gathering place.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

40 **ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah. And because I think it's- I really do think it's important  
in people's lives that they have that opportunity to sort of connect. Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** Absolutely.

45 **ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** Absolutely. I think it'd be incredible. And as someone, you know,  
like, whose- my country's all up North.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

5 **INTERVIEWER:** When I first moved to Melbourne, you know, like I was so isolated. I moved here four weeks before Covid.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

10 **INTERVIEWER:** But all I wanted to do was be around blackfellas.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

15 **INTERVIEWER:** You know? And I didn't know anyone or anywhere until maybe, like, I think I was here for about a year.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** And I found out about [REDACTED].

20 **ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** Which was, you know, close. I'm in Lalor.

25 **ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** And it was just such an incredible concept because back home in [REDACTED] I don't have things like that, like they don't have places- and [REDACTED] is like the most multicultural hub in the country. And this was like- I'd read that somewhere years ago. Because you've got the, you know, you've got all the Torres Strait Islands, you've got all the Aboriginal communities, you know, Papua New Guinea. And it was it's- [REDACTED] is where a lot of people will be sent if they get segregated from community or if they're being shunned from community.

35 **ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** And so [REDACTED] was that place. So there were so many mob who, you know, who still are, who are disconnected. There's no places that they can go any- anywhere throughout this place.

40 **ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** And this would be beneficial, a place like this would be beneficial.

45 **ANONYMOUS 930:** And I would say that too. And I sort of glossed over- that part of our, we see ourselves as an inclusive, welcoming and safe space. So we put a lot of effort into making sure that no one has that sense of exclusion, or not feeling

welcome in this space. And that's important for mob that come from different parts, or have moved down here and aren't connected with the community. It's that, drawing those people in so they can connect. Like that's a really important point that you sort of picked up on, and I hadn't considered. So yeah.

5

**INTERVIEWER:** It's just such an incredible place and just even that, you know, being out there this morning -

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

10

**INTERVIEWER:** And seeing everyone come together like that, I think it's just so powerful, and just that reminder of that, you know, even though I'm here and I don't have any family in Melbourne.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah -

**INTERVIEWER:** I can come to places like this and feel connected.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah, one of the other things I just want to share too, and I brought in a prop.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** What- I'll just show it, and if you want take a photo of it if you like.

**INTERVIEWER:** Wow.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** So this- my mum used to work at a Primary School. The Primary School is one of the oldest primary schools. It was one of the- one of the oldest primary schools at the time in the state. It was, like very old. It had been opened up many, many years. So I'm thinking this is probably in the early 90s that this was this was in their library resources. So she was a librarian at the primary school, and mums had often tried to look- she can't find the year. We were trying to

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**INTERVIEWER:** Wow.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah. So mum- so when she was made the librarian teacher there, it was a very, very small primary school. She was going through all the resources, and this was obviously a poster that sat with a number of other posters. So actual people dancing, Aboriginal people doing this Aboriginal- and this one was called City Dwellers.

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**INTERVIEWER:** Wow.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** And mum brought that home, it was like she (indistinct 00:31:28) was essentially going, what the fuck is this? Oh my God, this is outrageous. And so it's been removed from the collection, basically. But she brought it home and she was like- and I remember sitting down with her and basically her  
5 showing it to me and going, this is why your nan felt so embarrassed about her Aboriginality and sort of using as a prop to sort of me them a lesson around why she was so shy and embarrassed about sharing that aspect of her.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.  
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**ANONYMOUS 930:** And I think I- it's interesting. I've sort of hung onto it, like mum said you can take it if you like, sort of thing when I moved out of home, that sort of thing.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.  
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**ANONYMOUS 930:** And I've hung on to it all the time, but I know why, you know, I'm 44 years old and you know -

**INTERVIEWER:** But it's crazy, though, like, just on how normalised exploiting mob were in so many different ways, whether they were, like, let's put them in a house and call them, you know, (indistinct 00:32:28).  
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**ANONYMOUS 930:** It's layered with racism.  
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**INTERVIEWER:** So many undertones.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** Even like they've obviously made a kid stand there, you know.  
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**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** Like, look at the kids looking at the person taking the photo.  
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**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** Have you googled this to see if you can find it there?

**ANONYMOUS 930:** No, not at all.  
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**INTERVIEWER:** I reckon we could google that. You might be able to find -

**ANONYMOUS 930:** The year of, yeah -  
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**INTERVIEWER:** but this, the (indistinct 00:32:57) to show. And the fact that this would have been used for teachers -



**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah, it was- it was a teaching aid. So it was essentially you'd send it out to the classroom, the four sets of posters that would be of that series. Yeah, I've never, that's very original, I never noticed that there.

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**INTERVIEWER:** And this one was about obviously, Aboriginal people can be city dwellers too.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

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**INTERVIEWER:** Wow.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah, so having that conversation with her around that, because that sort of plays into the idea of how racism was institutionalised in our schools. I had my own experience in grade three and I remember it distinctly. Being told that there's no Aboriginal people from Tasmania, they were all wiped out. There was, you know, 500 men that walked across the island and, you know, got rid of them. And I was like, oh, okay. That's odd. Like, that's not what I understood. And the teacher being very sincere in it and going oh, it's, you know, sad part of our history and those sorts of things. But that's a falsehood, you know? And that's, you know, that was taught as fact.

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**INTERVIEWER:** Absolutely.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** So that idea of the importance of curriculum being corrected as part of truth telling and the work that Yoorrook's doing, about making sure that we have the right curriculum and we're changing the way schools see it, and teachers are adequately trained in how to deliver the curriculum, such an important part. So yeah\_

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**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** I just want to share that.

**INTERVIEWER:** Thank you for sharing that. That's such a powerful image.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** Wow. That's amazing that your mum's held onto that, does she have more from that collection?

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** No so she took that- deliberately removes it from the school because it's like, that is effing racist and took it home. And it only stuck with me because I distinctly- and I was very young at the time, that story around, you know, and trying to grasp the idea of that's, you know, why it played into her psyche around her embarrassment, around something that, you know, I was very proud of.

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**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah, Yeah.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** And I think but I would say this, you know. Growing up, you know, sharing with friends, oh, I'm Aboriginal, that sort of thing. You get to that age, you're at around seven, year seven, year eight, year nine. And then sort of the racial slurs start to come out from people. And it's like you get a nickname of boonga-

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah -

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Sort of thing yeah. Oh, okay. Maybe this isn't something so much to be proud of, you know? And that's, you know, the experience of a lot of Aboriginal people, that they- particularly in secondary school, experiencing that sort of racism too, sort of chips away -

**INTERVIEWER:** It does -

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** At your, at your sense of identity and that. But having strength in your connection to culture is a protective factor in that sort of thing.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah, yeah.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** Like having, you know, being proud of who you are and where you come from and, you know?

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** Is a shield to that racism, I think, too, so.

**INTERVIEWER:** Absolutely, I think but it also like, you know, when you were a kid experiencing that like that would have been a lot for you to navigate as a kid as well, especially when you said that, you know, like knowing that racism is something that's taught at home and sort of trickles down.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah, that would have been quite a lot to deal with as a young kid.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah, yeah. It was very interesting and sort of- its later on, I think your processes as an adult, but still, I'm still frustrated but sympathetic. Like, I'm still angry, like- she passed away when I was probably 19 ish or something, but it was really good towards the end. She spent a lot of- she had to live with us. So it was really interesting spending more time with her and getting to know her a lot better and sort of having that connection.

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**INTERVIEWER:** She was storytelling a little bit more?

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah, yeah. And just, you know, just naturally spending time. So it was a time I really valued in the lead up to her passing sort of thing.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** But still knowing that that was off limits.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** And also her time in the homes was off limits. It was something that was just never- wasn't allowed. It was off limits. You just couldn't talk about it sort of thing. So there's a, I still have a level of anger and disappointment that she had that sense of identity. But also I do have a level of sympathy too that, you know, it was part of the pressures that she was experiencing from society and those sorts of things, too. So I think there's that aspect and, you know, like I, you know. Yeah, so I give her- yeah, I try and empathise with what her experience was and why she was the way that she was.

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**INTERVIEWER:** And I guess she was just trying to keep you all safe at the end of the day, which is devastating.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah, yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** Really, because I guess if mob weren't being exploited, they would have been solid, right?

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah, yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** And it's just- yeah, that would have been a beautiful gift to be able to have that time with her.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah, yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** Before she passed.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** Absolutely. yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** But yeah that's horrific, that. Send that in to like, a show.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** But yeah I'll definitely check it out. You should be able to (indistinct 00:38:18). They'll be a collection.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah. I'm going to look that up.

**INTERVIEWER:** 1974, that's crazy. So we would only just be flora and fauna, like that's not long after that act came in. So we were being classed as humans then.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

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**INTERVIEWER:** It's quite ironic under the environmental series.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah, yeah.

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**INTERVIEWER:** But -

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah, interesting.

**INTERVIEWER:** And so, what's I guess with your role as a coordinator, you do get lots of community members coming here and they need that support and they want that cultural connection as well.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

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**INTERVIEWER:** That must be very rewarding for you.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** It is.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** And I think touching on something that's one thing. And it's something that we as a community are going to have to navigate too. Around a lot more, a lot more people are recently coming into, discovering their Aboriginal heritage and then as adults and a lot later in life, and then starting to try and navigate what that means for them. So more and more, we're seeing fellas come into, you know- and I say, fellas, because I'm quite often involved in men's groups, but there's community coming into it, going very, very early on in their journey and going, all right, well, I'm trying to work out what this means for me. I'm, you know, I'm a year old man, and I've just discovered that I've got Aboriginal heritage. And what does that mean? And I want to connect with community. I want to understand the culture and I want to do that. And I think part of the friction in the community is that, you know, communities are small and you sort of know everyone and those sorts of things. You know who, who in the zoo.

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The friction will be around. How accepting those- and those members of the community and how that works. But also, you know, making sure- it's tricky, you know? There's certain cultural protocols, yeah? And if you don't know, you don't know. So how to navigate those- what those cultural protocols and having respect for elders and having respect for those members of the community and who have come before. If you don't know that, then you know you're going to be a little bit ignorant to that fact. So there's a part of it. It's about supporting some of those community

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members that are coming in to their identity. They're like- not teach, but sort of share the knowledge and sort of let them find their way in that space.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** But also to how the community sort of accepts those members in, and in what way. It's, you know, because they've had a very different life experience, as we all have had different life experiences. As a fair skinned person, I've had, uncle, you know- the people I call uncles and see as uncles that I'm not related to, but, you know, they've spent time with and live with me and that sort of thing. And they talk about their experience of being followed around JB Hi-Fi and that sort of thing. I don't have that experience, you know? So and other people that are sort of just discovering their Aboriginality late in life don't have the same experience I had. Or had the same opportunities I have had to embrace my culture and sort of grow up and grow up in the community and sort of learn some of those cultural protocols and how it works and who's who in the zoo, that sort of thing. I think that's going to be a challenge as people start to become more aware through, you know, just through researching themselves and those sorts of things, and then what does that mean, sort of thing? And how do we, as a broader community, embrace and accept those people? You know, because I do like to think we're inclusive, but I also see that friction at times that takes place.

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**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah. It's such a- it's such a fine line, isn't it?

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** Like in terms of that inclusive, but also navigating -

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah -

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**INTERVIEWER:** What we know very well happens, you know?

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah, yeah.

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**INTERVIEWER:** But I just I just wanted to say, I just want you to know that, like, I appreciate you sharing your story so much, but also- yes, you may have fair skin, but please know, just like my skin, your skin also tells a different story of strength and resilience. And again, the fact that- and I say this because I have four kids, all of my kids are- I call them different, four different shades of deadly.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** They have all different skin colours. But I say to them like, yes, my skin is different to yours, but yours tells a powerful story in a different way. It tells a story that again, they tried to wipe us out.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** We're still here. Yeah. And in the fact that, you know, if we were living under those past policies today, the resilience and the strength that comes, you know, behind all of that is so powerful. And I think there's so much strength in that, embracing that, you know? Like, yes, we all come in different shades of deadly, but it doesn't mean that we're any less than mob.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** And it's so powerful, you know?

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Totally agree -

**INTERVIEWER:** We need to come together and have those yarns about that, because I don't, you know, I don't know what your experience is like. I don't know what it's like to have to constantly explain or feel like I need to explain my identity to someone. But I know what it's like to be followed around, you know, a supermarket with a whole trolley full of -

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** That kind of stuff. But it's so important that we have these conversations because all of our experiences may be different, but we're still on the same journey. And I think, you know, we're all just walking each other home, really, aren't we?

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yes.

**INTERVIEWER:** Just trying to find ourselves and just walking home together.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** But- I'd say like I once, you know, I've been called out in the past sort of thing, and that lateral violence sort of thing. And it's like, all right, we want to see your proof of aboriginality sort of thing.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah -

**ANONYMOUS 930:** All right. And I very much, I feel strong as an Aboriginal man that- it's not water off a duck's back. But I've got that sense of, you know, I know who I am inside.

**INTERVIEWER:** Absolutely.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** I don't care what you think about, you know, making judgements about (indistinct 00:44:52) -

**INTERVIEWER:** Yes, absolutely -

**ANONYMOUS 930:** You know, I'm- i know where I come from. I'm strong in my culture. I'm strong.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yes.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** And in working with mob. And, you know, I'm here for the right reasons, so you know -

**INTERVIEWER:** Absolutely.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** I don't care what you think, so.

**INTERVIEWER:** Absolutely. And that's so important. I say that to my kids as well. It's like, you know who you come from.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** And if they have anything to say, like, show them your mum. You know, like, tell them to come over. I'm happy to have them come over. I'll cook them, you know, some island food, and we can have a conversation about this. But it's- I just think you're doing such an incredible job, [REDACTED]. And the fact that there's a space for a mob to come.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

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**INTERVIEWER:** And, you know, with your lived experience as well, it just means that it's going to be done in the most culturally safe, trauma informed way.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

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**INTERVIEWER:** That we know that our mob need those services.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Absolutely.

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**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah. What other services, what other services?

**ANONYMOUS 930:** So, I mean, often I see ourselves as a gateway to other Aboriginal services. So I see ourselves as a place of wellbeing and connection. So we do men's programs, women's programs. We've got a youth group. So VACCA runs a youth group out of here, do a food share program on a Friday morning. We do a monthly mob dinner on a Friday night, so once a month that happens. And so we'll get anywhere from 60 to 90 people coming out for that.

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**INTERVIEWER:** That's crazy, a month, wow.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah, yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** That's great.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

5 **INTERVIEWER:** And that's consistent? Like you'll get that -

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah, so it dips off in winter, picks up in summer.

**INTERVIEWER:** That's so amazing though.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah. So that's one of our bigger programs. Foodshare, we're sort of servicing about 90 families.

**INTERVIEWER:** Wow.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** 90 families a week.

**INTERVIEWER:** Do you do kids, like kids groups or?

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah, so we don't- so that's where we partner with a lot of other organisations. So VACCA does the youth and children's program. We've also got mums and bubs. So we do one on mums and bubs on a Wednesday here.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** VACCA does one on a Friday- on a Monday here.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** We've got an elder's group who's. And that's really growing. So that's about 15 elders that come together -

**INTERVIEWER:** Wow.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** Women's only at the moment, it's just -

**INTERVIEWER:** That's so special in itself -

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah, yeah.

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**INTERVIEWER:** Like, what are the chances of getting 15 elders together?

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah, but they're really specific. We want this to be women. So I was chatting with an Uncle, and because they go in fortnightly, it's like, all right, let's get a men's elders group together.

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**INTERVIEWER:** Amazing. (indistinct 00:47:20) having that.



**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah. So we'll do that on the other Monday. We've got VAHS does a men's group out of the space during the day. And on the alternative fortnight, they do a men's, First Nations men's working in community services yarning circle.

5 So guys that work with mob come together and just have a yarn about what's going on in the workplace, those sorts of things. So Ngwala Willumbong, who's one of the D&A service. They do a lot of information sessions and they were making some inquiries about some dates and times. So we try and balance- we can't do- we'd love to be running all the programs ourselves, but it's a great opportunity to have our

10 partner organisations come in and do some of those things. Foodshare is probably one of those areas where we have a real big touch point with a lot of community members, and that's where we can do some of the work around referring on to specialist services. We often have services come in, so on the food share mornings where people are coming to pick up their packages, we'll have Services Australia that

15 will come and do consultations. So if you've got questions about your Centrelink payments and things like that, their Sheriff's office comes in. So if you've got questions about fines, Aboriginal housing, come in. So if you're trying to navigate the housing and those sorts of things. So Dardi come in, so and if, you know, questions about, you know, men's health or those sorts. So try and have those

20 services in the space that can do some of that work as well.

**INTERVIEWER:** That's terrific.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

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**INTERVIEWER:** How are those mainstream services I guess adapted to, you know, coming into like an Aboriginal space and how they've been received.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** So often it's the Aboriginal liaison officers that we engage with specifically. So it's still mob so you know, we are- yeah. Like so often it's

30 seamlessly.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** So, you know, and you know, yeah. They're great, you know, they sometimes spend an hour just consulting with people over that time and just make it work, you know?

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**INTERVIEWER:** That's so helpful though, because there's nothing worse than being, you know, if you don't have the resources and you need to, whether it be reporting, or you need to fix up some things -

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** Like it's a one stop shop.

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**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** That's fantastic.

5 **ANONYMOUS 930:** Spending an hour on the phone- like waiting on call waiting and those sorts of things.

**INTERVIEWER:** No, but yeah, but this- this seems like a one stop shop.

10 **ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** Like in terms of community getting the resources and support they need.

15 **ANONYMOUS 930:** And that's what we hope to do. Hopefully we've got the knowledge to go, oh that's going on for you. You should be down at VAHS, or First People's Health and Wellbeing, or you should you should know- Orange Door is where you need to go to, to get into, you know, from a domestic violence situation. So yeah, hopefully we've got that knowledge and access to resources where we can be that conduit for community to get into the services they need. We've got really  
20 strong relationships still with Community Health Services .

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

25 **ANONYMOUS 930:** Being local community health services and of course, the other you know, Dardi Munwurro and the other community, the Aboriginal community controlled organisations in the area too. So yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** So it sounds like you've done some terrific work.

30 **ANONYMOUS 930:** We're getting there, you know? There's still always more to do. But like I said, it truly is a pleasure. And I love working in the Aboriginal community. You know, I you know, it- you know, like I said, I don't turn up to work every day going, oh, you know, I'm ready to go. It's, you know, great. Like, there are challenges that take place, and sometimes you sigh when you see a phone call and  
35 see who it is and you go, oh dear.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

40 **ANONYMOUS 930:** But it is, it is overwhelmingly an honour to work in the Aboriginal community and do the work that we do, and I take pleasure in that.

**INTERVIEWER:** Absolutely. No, it's incredible. And I think it's so wonderful that we get to be a part of the change that you want to see for our future generations.

45 **ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** As hard as it can be -

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

5 **INTERVIEWER:** You know, without acknowledging it is hard, it's hard- vicarious trauma wise.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

10 **INTERVIEWER:** Lateral violence wise. But just, you know, existing between worlds as a blackfella is hard.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah.

15 **INTERVIEWER:** Challenging. So, but it sounds like you've done an incredible job.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** I do appreciate you saying that. And it really is a model for others to replicate, and can be replicated, so.

20 **INTERVIEWER:** Like Australia wide.

**ANONYMOUS 930:** Yeah, yeah. So yeah, watch this space.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

25 **ANONYMOUS 930:** Okay.

**INTERVIEWER:** Thank you for your time, [REDACTED].

30 **ANONYMOUS 930:** Thank you.

**<THE RECORDING CONCLUDED**

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