THE COMMONALITIES OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES LAY NOT IN OUR POOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS, BUT IN THE STRENGTHS OF OUR HISTORIES AND THE PROMISES OF OUR FUTURES.

Between 2008 and 2012 I had the amazing privilege of meeting with many elders, health service providers, workers, researchers, scholars and other experts in Indigenous social and emotional wellbeing across Australia and Turtle Island and listening to their stories. I watched the sun rise and set over their lands. What began as postdoctoral research to examine how mental health and wellbeing is understood by Indigenous peoples from Aotearoa, Australia and Turtle Island, and the significance of culture in these understandings, became a journey of discovery that could never have been foretold. Through shared storytelling that began by learning to retell my own story, a much richer appreciation of Indigenous wellbeing evolved.

The research exposed barriers that inhibit Indigenous health and wellbeing and generated findings about successful approaches to healing through examination of Indigenous knowledge and healing practices. More than that though, it brought us together – Indigenous Peoples of Aotearoa, Australia and Turtle Island – and allowed us to talk freely, and in our words, about the racism we internalise and the lateral violence we witness in those we love, perhaps resulting from our multi-layered losses; of language, of place, and of hope in those relations we lose to suicide. Although we may not have used the same words to describe our similar experiences, we were able to speak of the impacts of the intergenerational trauma we have borne, about where our silence comes from, and of the importance of giving ourselves voice and of being heard. Most importantly though, we were able to savour our knowledge of the utmost significance of our relationships with one another, of the truth of our creations and of our sovereignty, and we were able to bathe in our cultural resilience.

This poster uses quotes and photographs from the research to tell the beautiful story of our collective strengths; those smeothered in Indigenous potential.