

Narrator: The National Association for the Visual Arts is the peak body protecting and promoting the professional interests of the Australian Visual Arts. NAVA in conversation is a series exploring the issues and challenges of working in the sector. We speak with artists, curators, and administrators to gain insight into the experiences of contemporary practice, and seek to propose ideas for change, progress and resilience in both local and global contexts.

Esther: It is the first proper morning of CIAF after a huge opening last night. I'm really lucky to get to chat for a bit with Janina Harding, the art fair director, because it's obviously a huge big deal at the moment. Janina, how are you doing?

Janina Harding: Oh, it's great to be here, um. You know, I can't wait to see ... The, the crowds are just slowly coming in through the gate. There's lots to do already. People can get their breakfast, go and sit down and do a weaving workshop.

It's traditional weaving from Keranda. And there's some lovely ... You can learn how to make, uh, a paper lei.

Esther: What's a paper lei?

Janina Harding: A crepe paper lei.

Esther: Oh, a lei.

Janina Harding: Yeah (laughs).

Esther: Oh. That sounds like the kind of risque should be doing this morning. Oh my goodness!

Janina Harding: (laughs).

Esther: I like that.

Janina Harding: Yeah.

Esther: Do you think that art fairs in general are actually learning more from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art, in terms of, you know, we used to go to art fest and you would see art. This was actually a chance to not just talk to artists, but hopefully use your hands as well.

Janina Harding: Yeah, you get to, um, sit down with the artist, actually learn about culture. Learn how, learn about their practice. And you get to actually make art in real time, with them, which is just fabulous, and take it home.

Esther: I came in this morning, and I was chatting with a couple of artists. I was chatting with an elderly couple who travel around just learning more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art, which is fantastic. But then I was

also listening to, um, uh, a couple of artists who's talking about their work, you know, with a microphone. People just sort of wondering in and out.

And I wonder how, like, it must be ... It must be really difficult to sort of ... There's, you know ... You, you, you talk about your work with someone kind of nearby. You talk about your work when you're making together. Um, I wonder if it's overwhelming for artist to have so many people here, because there really are a lot of people.

Janina Harding: (laughs) Yeah, a lot of these artists come from very small communities well, a lot of these artists come from very small communities.

Esther: Yes.

Janina Harding: Um, from the Cape and then the Torres Strait, so ... I think some of them are used to the crowds, because they're in CIAF, you know, so many times. I mean, this is our 9th year. Um, so they are used to, um, talking in public. But many it's ... Maybe it's their first time, but, um, they get a lot of, um, support from their ... from their fellow artists.

Esther: Yeah.

Janina Harding: And I guess, from our ... From just being, you know, amongst the community and feeling proud of their ... Who they are or in, um, just sharing their culture.

Esther: And so you were saying it's the 9th one, the 10th one next year. There was so much talk last night about how, you know, this one's amazing. Next one's gonna be huge and, and what it's meant, not just culturally but also as was said a lot last night in terms of tourism for, for, for Cairns.

I mean, aside from the sort of dollars of that impact, how do you think it's changed the way that Cairns sees itself culturally as a centre, as a magnet, as a leader?

Janina Harding: Yeah, I think a lot of, um, regional ... I guess a lot of cities, uh, you know, again, and you have to say, um, regional cities like Cairns. I mean a lot of capital cities, all ... They all pride themselves on, you know, the culture is bought. So I think we've got a very progressive, um, council, regional council.

Esther: Yeah, great.

Janina Harding: Um, and the community here, you know, the, the general community, the wider community, a very, um ... I think they're just used to CIAF now. Um, and we've ... We've kind of opened it up. Not just here at the, at the terminal, the Cairns. Whereas a lot of time we ... There's other venues across the city that, um, a part of CIAF.

So there's this whole partnership going on in, um, in other places. So, you know, and so lot of it's word of mouth in a small town like this. Um, yeah, so that's how the message get spread (laughs), um. Oh, you know, a bit of media ... you know, goes a long way as well.

Esther: Oh, yeah.

Janina Harding: Yeah. So I think it's really exciting for Cairns to actually have an event like this. Hmm.

Esther: Oh, hugely, hugely. We're, we're gonna go to a talk after this and I'm, I'm itching to hear, um, from a whole bunch of different artists. But tell me about ... It's, it's fantastic that, that CIAF has you at the helm, but what, what has led you to here?

Janina Harding: (laughs) I wanted a bit of sunshine (laughs).

Esther: (laughs).

Janina Harding: Oh, well, being born and bred in Melbourne, I'd come to CIAF actually from, from this, uh, from the very beginning. I've been coming to ... Yeah, to, to the fair. Um, and then somebody approached me during a Melbourne Festival event, and, um, he was actually the chair of, of CIAF at the time.

Esther: Ah.

Janina Harding: And he said, "Oh, we can't. Can you help me out? We can't seem to find an artistic director for CIAF. Why don't you apply for it." And I'm like, "But I've already got a job." And then, I don't know, we just talked about it for a little while longer, and, um, eventually I threw my hat in, in the ring and, um, here I am (laughs).

Esther: We need friends like that

Janina Harding: Yeah.

Esther: Sometimes we don't sort of see how, you know, what we've done fits into different context and being an artistic director, I mean, there's ... There's, there's relationships, and there's, like, kind of having it that sense of, of, of the whole and there's working with artists as well, and it's interesting that, um, and this would just ... You know, that I think make increasingly more sense in a contemporary art context, but obviously makes a lot of sense in, uh, a first nation's context. But that sense of where art form boundaries begin and end.

Janina Harding: Mmm.

Esther: Is not necessarily, you know, uh, uh, the ... Uh, a clear cut thing, and I just see it's so expansive here.

Janina Harding: Yeah. Um, and I guess it's ... It's all ... The, the base is culture.

Esther: Yeah.

Janina Harding: That's what brings people together that that's what makes the art. I mean if without that, there would be no art. Because that's all part and parcel of who we are. Um, is our culture. So ... and it- Uh, and the thing about the artist is they, they're really comfortable in finding new ways to create.

So, they like to do a bit- You know, they ... They experiment with other mediums and stuff like that, which is fantastic. Um, just earlier this year, we went ... It was March I think. I took a group of, um, Aurukun artists, who people might know.

They, they, they ... They're famous for the coo dogs. They're like the rock stars of the coo.

Esther: (laughs).

Janina Harding: Um, the camp dogs. And, we took them camping, like, that haven't ... A lot of the time, and ... living- You're living in a community, you don't have the means to get out and, um, go on country.

Esther: Yeah.

Janina Harding: So we had enough money to ... a part of this project, and we rent some workshops for them. And part of that was, um, to actually document and teach them how to take photographs. So (laughs), you know, and there's an exhibition at the, at the Tanks Arts Centre on now ... Yeah.

Esther: Ah. Ah, I should go and see that.

Janina Harding: Yeah, you'll have to go and see it (laughs).

Esther: Oh, that's nice thing, from, like, from a practice point of view as well, because you saw that you would use a range of tools, as a ... as a, as a maker, as an artist, then you're given something else. I'd be fascinated to know kind of, you know, next year, a year after I have that effects, um, how they see their own work.

If you're not, if you're not being used to, you know, um, a camera as being your tool as an artist.

Janina Harding: That's right. So they ... Yeah, and they got to keep the cameras. I mean, they're those little digital cameras.

Esther: Mmm.

Janina Harding: And so they, they've ... The arts center sort of holds them for them, but they already told them they want them ... They want to go and experiment and

walk around Aurukun or wherever they're ... There's the local swimming hall and whatever, they can take the camera and take some ... Just keep that practice up.

I mean they were given a short, short tips on how to, um, little course, on how to, you know, the composition and all that kind of stuff.

Esther: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Janina Harding: You know. (laughs) Taking, uh, a, a decent photograph.

Esther: And that sense of, like, that thing ...

Janina Harding: (laughs).

Esther: Uh, a fixed perspective, you know, as opposed to ...

Janina Harding: Yeah.

Esther: What, what you'd be looking at, you know, more broadly and in just being in, in ... in a particular place that you've known for such, such a long time.

Janina Harding: Yeah. Yeah, and they really got to appreciate, um, the finer things, like, you know, taking a photograph of a leaf or, or a flower and that kind of stuff. So they really got into it. Which was a beautiful thing to see.

Esther: And I saw Naomi Hobson's and award winning photography, the worry without a weapon.

Janina Harding: Mmm.

Esther: And any by, uh, the work of, uh, Arabat's and that was where the, the elder couple I was mentioning earlier ... They were talking about traveling around regional Victoria, and just ... uh, seeing places like that, where people lived, and but now fewer and fewer of them. And so, they kind of stopped and, and said, uh, that this brought back memories for them.

And how important that was. But also how strange it was then to see it, you know, sort of, uh, you know, a gallery exhibition context. Like, it's, it's, you know ... Um, but what, what the framing of art does to our perspective and, um, and I guess, you know, the different ... different cultural objects. Like, it's, it, it's surprising. But it also ... It resonates with us. And it teaches things.

Janina Harding: Yeah, that's right. Um, and that's the beauty of, of CIAF, is that, it's, it's ... It is basically a platform for, um, for artists to come and share. Share their culture. Um, and it ... It gives people taste of what's really out there.

Esther: Yeah.

Janina Harding: I mean, you don't necessarily have to ... If you haven't got the means to go to Cape York or the Torres Strait, you can come to CIAF and actually meet the artists, you know. Find out where they're from. Um, there's maps everywhere ... To give you (laughing) an indication of where they are.

Esther: (laughs) Of where they are. It's ... Yeah, you need to know.

Janina Harding: Yeah. Where they're actually based.

Esther: Yeah, yeah.

Janina Harding: Because it's a big country ...

Esther: That was ...

Janina Harding: Far North Queensland, like, the cape is, is huge. And there's so many different languages. There's so many different, um, cultures, you know, they'd be ... you've got the central- You've got the West. You've got the Central, and you've got the, the East. Um, and then you've got the tip, which is, um, mixed with Torres Strait as well.

So, you know, places like Bamaga and then you've got ... Of course, you've got the Torres Strait, and even that's different again. Because you've got, you know, the Central Islands and you've got the, the Eastern Islands and the Western Islands (laughs). So, yeah.

Esther: Uh, amazing. All right. Let's go and meet some more artists, Janina. Thanks so much. This is busy time.

Janina Harding: My-

Esther: For taking the time out to chat.

Janina Harding: My pleasure, Esther.

Esther: (laughs). I am here at the Griffith University, Queensland, College of the Arts. Bachelor of Contemporary Australian Indigenous Arts stand. I was just chatting with Aidan when Bianca came along as well, and I just thought, "How fantastic to get to chat with both of you." Bianca, you have just curated?

Bianca Beetson: Yes. I've just curated the Myall Creek Massacre Exhibition down at NERAM, um, which is in Armadale if anyone knows.

Esther: Yes. Tell us about that show.

Bianca Beetson: Um, the exhibition was really about ... It was ... That- It was a two-year project, really. So it started over the artist in residencies with ... With five of the artists traveling back and forth, we did two different residencies. Um, working on the site and working with communities.

So the first residency was so much about touching base. Um, dealing with learning. Yeah, meeting members of the community, and doing that sort of consultation. And building those relationships, so that when the artist went back to Brisbane they were able to continue contact. And then the second one was really about coming in and working on our ideas, collecting ocrs, um, working on site.

I mean I know Judy Watson did huge amounts of work out on the site, out there. You know, rubbing charcoal and, and dirt into a canvas that ended up in the exhibition. And kind of doing video works and that, that the camera really were a major part of the show as well. And so, the, the exhibition was really about, much about, um ... acknowledging, celebrating, and, and kind of mourning, um, Aboriginal massacres.

And particularly, you know, the history of Myall Creek. But they shows are called "Myall Creek and Beyond". And so, the idea of beyond was really important, because we wanted to make that conversation broader than just, um, you know, this is ... It didn't just happen here. It happened right across Australia. So you've got others, like July Goff in the exhibition, who are talking about massacres in, in Tasmania of course.

So then there was also, um, you know, our ... Other artist, more contemporary artists like Robert Andrew and Warraba Whetherall. They were also talking about the conversation in a broader context, looking at ideas of a hidden histories, and Aboriginal control and surveillance, and, and kind of, you know, the, the way that Aboriginal people are actually currently still treated and looked after.

Looking at deaths in custody is as an issue that's ongoing as a form of massacre, you know, that sort of hidden and, and unknown. So ... Yeah, so there was ... The artists in the show were, were Warraba Whetherall, um, Robert Andrew, Laurie Nelson, Judy Watson, Fiona Foley, um ... Julie Goff. Carol McGregor, who did this amazing possum-skin cloak working with the descendants of the survivors of the massacre as well as some of the descendants of the perpetrators.

So it was a really important process for healing and, and reconciliation in that particular, um, work, and then there was a local artist, Collin Isaacs, who is a, um, he's the artist that kind of really made all the artwork that's actually out of the ... uh, memorial site. So he's kind of known as the Myall Creek artist by the local community he's from Inverell.

Esther: What an extraordinary gathering of artists is that. And that possum-skin cloak sounds like ...

Bianca Beetson: Yeah.

Esther: It would be just the most emotionally tumultuous but incredibly important work.

Bianca Beetson: Yeah.

Esther: To put it, yeah.

Bianca Beetson: Oh, I mean, absolutely, and I mean in the community were just so proud of the work. Oh, the other thing too. There was another community project by Qualia Knox and, uh, Tim Laha and David Laha, and it was a music project. They went out in schools and talked about the massacre in schools and, and ... They created this music piece that was, um, response to the students' responses and kind of, you know, so it was this, this song ...

This, this very beautiful song and they performed it at the opening, and they performed it at the opening of the symposium as well. So it was kind of good to get out, and of course it's on YouTube. So you can kind of look at it, and, and that's another kind of element, because I ... You know, we thought it was really important to really bring community together.

Start talking about it and in positive ways as well. And, and, you know, go in about healing and, and this year the, um, number of people that turn up to the memorial was, was huge. It's gone from three ... It went from about 300 to about 1,200.

Esther: Amazing.

Bianca Beetson: So that was a huge, big, lot ... A lot of people on the 4th day, because it was a four-day program, and so on the 4th day there was a lot of people there all celebrating mourning, you know. Paying their respects. It was quite phenomenal.

Esther: And that public memorialization is so important as we move to Fiona Foley recently about obviously her work in public space, and that great frustration that you can be invited as an artist to develop work that is about local story, and memory and local trauma.

Bianca Beetson: Yeah.

Esther: And then suddenly find that the processes sort of, you know, kind of changed that, and suddenly you're telling a different story, because you're not encouraged to draw out the truth. I mean, that's ... I guess that's one of the great, um, um, it's what ... It's what the gallery space makes possible.

Bianca Beetson: Yes.

Esther: That we can turn those truth.

Bianca Beetson: And sort of the end of ... You know, it ... and, and that was a big part of the whole, um, curatorial sort of thinking with me was, I wanted the artist that were going to do it in really, really powerful ways. But also not trigger trauma. Because, you know, that's the other thing we kind of have to think about is, is this ... These are hard stories. They're difficult stories.

But art also has this beautiful way of being able to kind of transcend the horror and the grief and ... But, you know, it can really hit people really, really hard. I mean there was some really important people at the opening that just sort of came up and went, "Wow, you know, this is ... Just." Yeah, it was just ... It was a bit of a roller coaster of emotion as well.

So, you know, you had these ... Yeah, the hard-hitting stuff of Fiona Foley's work, and then you kind of ... She had this, this almost, 10 metre long trough full of ash, 28 pairs shoes and nine hoods that represented the, um, the perpetrators. And so it was really, really powerful, you know, the work.

Very simple, but, you know, and that's the thing I love about Fiona's work. She can just do it so well and just ... precise. It's just boom she just delivers. And she was at, you know, absolutely wonderful to with, because she just walked in. And this is what I'm doing. Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, and I'm like, "Wow." You know.

And I said, "Yeah, I knew you would deliver." Um, so, you know, those sorts of things were just, you know, you there was this, this powerful and then there was this softer reflective spaces as well. So, you know, and Laurie Nelson's work was really, um, quite aggressive and in your face, but, you know, that was kind of the way he wanted to go. He just wanted ...

Again, kept it simple of this, the chopping block with, uh, this massive big cleaver.

Esther: Yeah, our conversation began earlier ...

Bianca Beetson: Yes.

Esther: When I was sharing with Aidan. And then I was astounded to learn that he was your son.

Aidan: Yeah (laughs).

Esther: Because yeah, some kind of fountain of youth. I'm just ... I'm, I'm startled.

Aidan: (laughs).

Esther: And Aidan was telling me about just kind of formally starting out as an artist, I guess you would have had, um, you know, given your upbringing and given that strong engagement to culture and, and the re-engagement with family stories. Um, uh, practicing cultures being part of your life. But now you're formally engaged.

Aidan: Yeah.

Esther: In a course. Tell me about that. It sounds quite unique.

Aidan: Well, it's ... on ... Like, honestly so far it's just been and a great experience, just in general. Um, like, I've grown up around, uh, like, in ... The, uh, arts world and stuff. Thanks to my mum (laughs). And I, like, I've grown up, like, interested in it, and ...

At first I wasn't actually, um, planning to even go to uni. But last second, I sort of ... This is like, "What's the point in not doing it?" And I came into, um, the CIAA course, and ... So far it's just been a great experience in general, because it ... It's not just an arts course. It's, like, the entire, um, CIAA group. We're all like a family, I feel.

Esther: Wow.

Aidan: Well, um, we're all going through the same experiences in, like, reconnecting with our family. Learning about our origins, and ... it's just ... It's honestly just such an important experience I feel. It, um, like ...

Esther: I think education.

Aidan: Ah, yeah.

Esther: Of course can be transformative, and it can be done well, and it can be done in a way that, you know, that doesn't, um, I guess uphold the kinds of practices that are most valuable and most giving, you know. There's ... a history of colonisation ...

Aidan: Yeah.

Esther: Today about different kinds of education that, um, formalize I guess, um, or that train us into a certain mode of being. And in past few decades, but more and more recently, um, and in ... In more recent times, um, education, uh ... Education providers are listening to elders and to community. But also I've been saying this many different ways, to learn.

Aidan: Yeah. Definitely. Um, which is, like, talking about, like, it ... There's just been more conversation as well.

Esther: Mmm.

Aidan: Um, recently I've felt. Um, like going through schooling, there was ... like, that really one sided point of view that was, um, always taught. But also going through schooling I saw the change in that as well. Like, um, for example, learning, like, learning in primary school. There was, it was, like, colonization, and, you know, just ...

Like, one-sided. Ah, you know, they handed over the land.

Esther: Yeah, that's right.

Aidan: Like (laughs) ...

Esther: Just one day.

Aidan: Yeah, it was just, like, oh, they ... They come. They came over (laughing) and handed over the land, and then ...

Esther: (laughs).

Aidan: Uh, but then, um, going through high school and his- Like, doing history in high school. Um, it was a lot more ... truthful and it actually sort of explained it, uh, what actually happened a lot more. And I feel like that was just ... It, it was ... It was really valuable for me personally.

Like, because ... I wasn't expecting to see that at all.

Esther: Yeah.

Aidan: I've, I've heard stories of other schools and stuff, you know, still even in high school level history. Um, hiding, (laughing) you know, what actually happened. Happens still.

Esther: It's funny, yeah.

Aidan: But ...

Esther: It's kind of, like, you know, I think education at all levels ...

Aidan: Yeah.

Esther: Especially for younger kids. You would trust kids to understand that there's more than one way of seeing things.

Aidan: Yeah.

Bianca Beetson: He used to get frustrated even year five, with them telling ... about the truth, you know. And I mean, this child grew up with people like, you know, Richard Valent, Vernon Ah Kee and stuff, you know. And, and so, of course, he was gonna know the truth, wasn't he? (laughs) You know. (laughs).

Aidan: And a bit more when you're talking about Richard Bells (laughs).

Esther: Oh. When you hit that man with phenomenon, we ... I had a great joy in getting to record a nice, long podcast conversation with him. Just when I started this job actually

Bianca Beetson: Right.

Esther: He was the, the, the, the first conversation that I got to, um, record. And you sort of ... You turn on this device, and sort of there's kind of a formality that kicks in, which is, like, "Yeah, we should fucking change this." This is what needs to happen. And when I think about, like, where education was going

now, but also I guess the way that curatorial practice, um ... I guess is about instilling different kinds of thinking, you know, as we enter space.

Bianca Beetson: Mm-hmm

Esther: Why have the subjects been chosen? What is the story? But also, what's it gonna mean when you engage in that space? Um, and we started talking early about these images of, of Aidan supplement all there. Uh, and we talked about different points of art forms that have sort of practices that, that you're now taking on. Of course, that changes our thinking as well.

Thanks for talking to me. I can see that there are other people that want to talk to you. Thanks, you two.

Male: Thank you.

Esther: (silence).

Lalania Tusa: Um, so my name's Lalania Tusa, and I'm from the Kuku Yalanji Tribe in Mosman, Far North Queensland.

Janice Walker: My name is Jennice Walker, the mother of Lalania. And I am a traditional elder in the, um, Kuku Yalanji Tribe in Mosman also.

Esther: So I am here with Janice and Lalania, and we're in the market stall. I guess, part of CIAF. CIAF is huge. They're, um, there is so much to look at, and I've just been ... My eye has been drawn by the colors of work, the deep colors of the, of crafting and also the feathers, uh, in the earrings that Lalania has crafted. So tell me about those. Are these feathers that you have found? Um, because they're just stunning.

Lalania Tusa: They're beautiful, aren't they? Yes. So the feathers I have a few Torres Strait Island pigeon feathers that, um, family members have collected for me. Um, and also turkey feathers. And peacock feathers, and then your plain bird feathers. So the pigeons, and all the different types of birds. Yeah, they're beautiful.

I came up with the idea, um, of then painting Aboriginal dot work and Aboriginal designs onto some of those, so that's why you see a few with some and a few with that. And then mixing the colours together. And because they're light as well on your ears, you don't even know that they're there, which is really good. Yeah.

Esther: I tend to wear as people know, some very large heavy earrings.

Lalania Tusa: Yes.

Esther: And these are fairly light (laughing) by comparison, but, but Janice, tell me about how, um, I guess, um, the things that you made with your daughter or

together or apart over the years. Um, how has that affected, like, or influenced the ... The work that you both brought here today.

Janice Walker: Um, I just think that, um, we bring a variety first up... I think the works, but I'm a sewer. I love sewing, and so I've sewn the dolls and dressed up the dolls today. And, um ... And I love, um, experience ...

Esther: Um, beautiful. Lalanía just brought one over.

Janice Walker: Yeah. So I like experie- Uh, um, experimenting with my sewing. And I thought, "Well, why not dress up dolls for Kaya?" And Lalanía paints them up. So ... so that was my thing for CIAF. But I guess, um, with Lalanía's paintings around here, on the rainforest, she has done a lot of rainforest paintings. She asked me, uh, about stories from the rainforest, and I guess I just give her some ideas, you know.

Because, um, growing up in the rainforest, um, uh, um, and she's ... She's really good. She takes on most of what I, what I tell her and put it down in art form.

Esther: So you've mostly told, uh, stories as a sewer, but how else have you told stories? To each other, but also depending on countries?

Janice Walker: Well ... um. It's an every day, all day I guess.

Esther: Yeah.

Janice Walker: Where, um, I have grandchildren at home, so Lalanía's children, uh, listening all the time learning the language, and, um, I want to instil as much as I can while I'm ... I don't live with Lalanía. But whilst I'm down here, because my grandchildren are here, I like to, to pass on a lot of, a lot of, um, uh, stories I guess in the culture, while I'm here.

And then they come and visit me up there, so I teach them a lot about up there too, so, so, um, there's ... There's a lot to learn about the Aboriginal culture. It, it's just ... so big, I guess. That you'll never ever ... The kids will never learn everything about it, you know.

Esther: But that's the most dazzling thing, isn't it? When you feel like, and you know, and you were raised with that strong sense that there is more to your culture than you will ever know. I just think that's so expensive, and so important for young minds.

Janice Walker: Mmm.

Esther: For all of us, obviously.

Lalanía Tusa: That's right.

Esther: What, what age are your kids?

Lalania Tusa: Uh, so my boys are 11, 16, 17, and 18. Yes, they're a bit of a handful at the moment being teenagers.

Esther: (laughs) Wow.

Lalania Tusa: But they're-

Esther: One, one of that age would be (laughs).

Lalania Tusa: Yeah, it's enough with that three, the last three years have been a challenge. I can tell you that.

Esther: Oh my goodness. And they all speak language?

Lalania Tusa: Yes, so they, um ...

Esther: What is their language.

Lalania Tusa: So we speak Kuku Yalanji. So bits and pieces of it with our history, a lot of it, you know, is passed on orally. So we missed out on a lot of it because of the history of, of our area, nova country I guess. But, um, mum still teaches the boys and yeah, she's really- Mum speaks her language. Um, the language of Kuku Yalanji, really well.

And underst- So we understand it more. I guess me and my sons than speaking it as well. But going back also to, um, the sewing. Um, with mum, she's very good seamstress, and when she, um, as part of Australian history with the stolen generation, so mum was taken away from her family, um, and put into the girl's dormitory in Daintree. Um, from her mother and father.

Because of, um, the color of her skin, and all of, um, being under the act and an exemption of the history. But then she was sent to towns well after that until the age of 16 to live with a white matron, Sister Mavek, that she still has contact with. And the ... Um, I guess the most important thing that mum's taught me through that experience is that, um, Sister Mavek taught her how to sew.

And, um, taught her how to go to work and how to, um, really guided her through her teenage years. Um, to, you know, do, um, jobs as ironing and jumping on a bike and going to school, and then going to after school job. And then she's now, um, used that, um, experience that a lot of people could take, um, the other way, you know, to being taken away from your family. I couldn't imagine my sons being taken away from me.

And they're all different shades of color of their skin, um, because of that reason. But, um, so I think it ... The resilience that mum has shown us throughout, um, our lives of taking the good out of expe- bad experiences, and turning it into something good and her sewing skills, you know. She's

got that, uh, Sister Mavek as well to thank for, you know, and, and the work ethic came on.

Is that, is that some ...

Janice Walker: Yeah.

Lalania Tusa: Yeah.

Janice Walker: Yeah, I think what I, I, I have personally taken, um, what good, you know, the good from the bad experiences is always good that comes out of it, you know. So I don't focus on the bad.

Lalania Tusa: That's right.

Janice Walker: And, uh, I don't want to hand that down, either, to, uh ... my, uh, grandchildren or children. Um, and the other thing is I want them ... I wanted to instill in the most important thing and I do it all the time, that I instill in them that they traditional owners from the Kuku Yalanji. You don't wait till you're old to become a traditional owner.

Lalania Tusa: Yeah, yeah.

Janice Walker: So they already know that territory. You know, their country. That's what we say, their country and their lands, and so, and, and even that they might go, um, to, to other schools, I always tell them, "When you get out, you say who you are, where you're from."

Lalania Tusa: Yeah.

Janice Walker: Because that's their identity. And so, they won't get lost, lost in, in ... in the world. No matter where they go in the world, they will know that they are traditional owners of the Kuku Yalanji.

Esther: It's such an honor to hear you say all of this, because that's, um, the way that, um ... The way that that happened in your childhood you've drawn on that resilience.

Janice Walker: Mmm.

Esther: You've mend those stories into the good, into your stories, and then now the way that you taught your children and grandchildren, you're creating, um, such a dearly important strength. Um, so very, very good to speak to you. It's been very, very wonderful to talk to you.

Janice Walker: Thank you.

Narrator: Head to our website, visualarts.net.au for more information on NAVA's advocacy and campaigns for improving the working environment for Australian artists and arts organizations.

