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Twining – River reed – umbilical cord
Writing on paper with ink – Kelp – language

It is important to ask what items provoked a creative art response and intuitional response, but also, it is exceptionally important to ask the question “why did these objects draw such a response from me as a pakana woman?”

As I transcribe my story here, takes me back to school; the wooden desk and a memory; “I am a good little girl”.

Today, I write by candlelight at home, on a wooden table with pen and ink, but with a proud white feather attached to my pen. Many of the old paintings representing our people show our Ancestors’ love for feathers, in particular white feathers.

I can remember when I first lived around the corner from our putalina Oyster Cove Aboriginal land site. I had only just re-connected with my Birth Mother and family and was starting to find more about my IDENTITY and connections, while I had also returned to complete my schooling at Elizabeth College with a focus on art.

I can recall a photo of a young Aboriginal girl in a red dress which I knew nothing of.

When I was at school, I learned that all Aboriginal people were extinct, and the last Aborigine was Truganini.

This was confronting and confusing to me, rebellious at fifteen years of age and trying to uncover my Aboriginal IDENTITY.

I photocopied a picture of the girl in the red dress, and later learnt of her connections and story to Oyster Cove, it was Mathinna.

I still have the photocopied picture that Bock painted from 1842 in black and white, framed, I covered the sides with shells to say, “I know your culture was stolen from you, but I will gather these shells for you”. This picture has always sat on my art table for the duration of my deeper connections to our palawa country of the South-East.

In later years I started working at ATSIC and an image of Mathinna decorated the walls. I would just stand there and gaze with wonder as I felt a deep connection through her image to our people's stories.

I think on one occasion a community staff member saw me and stopped to offer their knowledges about Mathinna, understanding my journey of just beginning to connect with my family, people and culture.

"If only the writing was on the wall"

The expression *"the writing is on the wall"* is used whenever an inevitable result or imminent danger has become apparent. There are synonyms, antonyms, idiomatic expressions, and related words for writing-on-the-wall, like: fate, ominous, indication, omen, fair warning, hunch, sign-of-the-times, portent, and foretaste.

To be aware that something bad will happen soon...

No one told Mathinna that her family was going to be rounded up and removed from their homelands, but *"the writing was on the wall"*.

Today, this connection of mine with Mathinna continues, just as the song lines of our people, we are forever connected through deep time.

'taypani Our Objects In Collections' and in particular artefacts archived and withheld from our people outside of Australia, bring me to share my connection and Ancestral blood memories to such objects.

My Intuitional response as a pakana First Nations Tasmanian Aboriginal Woman; is of a maternalistic sensitive approach growing from long-time and deep intergenerational trauma and loss which has impacted my journey and the journey of my families and Community – Our People, the Original people of these lands.

Resilience and Intergenerational Strength are pertinent to our survival and the survival of our culture, the oldest surviving culture of the world.

The story of Mathinna and the representation of her much-loved doll is a connection for all people. Taking them back to their early childhood, to a much-loved teddy, doll, or comforting object.

Do you have these memories? A beloved toy or doll that was dear to you? What did this feel like? Did you perhaps lose your doll or comforting toy? Take a moment to reflect on your stories and your childhood memories...

Early childhood memories may carry a sense of purpose, belonging, **IDENTITY**, and the responsibilities for a toy or object of comfort may be very much a part of them.

Mathinna was given a perception of belonging through a doll gifted by Mary Franklin. She developed an attachment to that doll and clung tightly onto it after her removal from her mother, father, Community, through her dispossession of Country, Culture, and her **IDENTITY**.

For myself it takes me back to the time I lost my comforting bear and the anguish that I experienced as a young child surviving (unknown at the time) the trauma of intergenerational family blood memories, of loss and displacement.

Gore Street hospital...

It is difficult to comprehend the era I was born into – “I was conceived on Killiecrankie Mountain and born under kunanyi nipaluna Hobart”.

In sharing this, I look at the journey from and beginning of separation of an Aboriginal Mother and child. To old colonial buildings, policies of the Aboriginal Protection Act, and the Gore Street Hospital that was surrounded by brick fences; armed bridges of sharp broken bottle glass, mirroring the wounding history of the country it sits upon.

The Gore Street hospital was an arm of the Obstetric Division to the Hobart General Hospital in 1938. Births, Adoptions, forced adoptions, state-wards and other ‘children in care’, were placed temporarily on its children’s psychiatric wards.

I was born here into my own skin, as baby Lavinia Maynard.

I spent three months in a room with many babies, with little or no connection or stimulation, visited by different nurses daily.

This place is built on the same country that holds our stories and grief, close to the female factory, historically known for high child mortality rates.

The same land and the same waterway where our beautiful Trukanini, Nununi woman from lunawuni, was buried in 1876. Then two years later, her remains were exhumed by surgeons of the Royal Society as colonial trophies, this action was masked under the guise of anthropological specimens that would further science.

Over the years I have walked through this country and followed makumina, the old tracks, and always felt an unease.

Our families and community are deeply affected today by existing colonial legislations of the past that we still have a lack of control over. Such as the 'culturally safe' holding or 'keeping places' of our significant cultural artefacts, determined by invaders or representatives of the Crown of England.

The disconnection from the many, many, meaningful artefacts that are locked away out of mind or out of sight or held in foreign lands and separated from families and country guardianship. Feels like a continual decline to one's sense of self-identity as a First Nations person.

If I can explain it in a medical term, it feels like a slow deterioration of blood cells that support a human's healthy immune system, and many times over, it feels as if an organ has been ripped away from the body.

"But this is supposed to be, okay?"

"Our family and ancestral connections stolen, this is supposed to be, okay?"

"We must still find the strength to live on despite this."

"The strength to maintain our IDENTITY."

We have shown we are incredibly resilient to these foreign injustices and injuries on our lore.

Our spirits are STRONG.

A long horrific timeline of colonial disruption exists from the implementation of the various Aboriginal Protection Acts; forced adoptions, wards of the states, physical and mental disability assessments, welfare dependence, separation, displacement, and stolen generations.

Growing up adopted, I was raised with strong British traditions and new colony Australian nationalism, by my mother and father alongside my brother and sister, and later by our grandparents who came from East Sussex to live with us. Living in a quiet working-class suburb, education was a unique and an important focus of my adopted family, supporting not only my journey today but also my daughter's future.

Both my Nanna and Grandad migrated to Australia after WW2. Sewing with the use of a pin cushion and many other intricate needle work skills, are some of the knowledges gained from Nanna, that I appreciate.

Twenty-three years into my life I reconnected with my birth mother and grandmother, my palawa pakana people. They both grew up and went to school on Cape Barren Island. Slowly and heavily, I learned the deep and damaging impacts of invasion that they had navigated together as family, culture, and country. Survival from the impacts of colonial segregation and the Aboriginal Protection Act.

Each year my palawa pakana mother and father, travelled by boat to Big Dog Island or many of the bird islands in the Bass Strait, to go 'birden' which is Mutton Birding. Continued for over 6,600 years, 'birden' represents our family and cultural strength, as we maintain this practising of cultural tradition on the islands to this day.

There are many strong similarities to Mathinna's story of the yearning and wanting to return to her mother, country, and family, like an umbilical cord of connection that mirror my own journey as a palawa pakana First Nations child and woman of the stolen generation. It is for this reason Mathinna's doll resonates with me as an object of deep symbology.

When I look at and contemplate Mathinna's doll, I am reminded of an institutionalised feeling of loss, a sense of not fitting in with either the family that raised you or your blood family. Emotions of detachment, confusion and

numbness resurface as I am reminded, I too was stolen and forced to experience a displacement from my culture, my people, and my homelands.

Whilst undertaking the creation of my work for *taypani* I was involved in a project called *Kindred* where a healing was held at the old orphanage where Mathinna and my family have spent time.

During *Kindred*, I acknowledged Mathinna, her doll and pin cushion, by bringing along my own childhood doll Betzy, to be part of the workshop. She was wrapped in Kangaroo skins and ochre. Reconnecting with Betzy, I am further reminded, that like many of the remains of our old people, Mathinna's doll is still forcibly held on British soil.

Betzy is over 100 years old, but "where did she come from?" I have asked myself this question since early childhood, and is she British?

Photo of Betzy



The story of how I obtained her, goes back to the time my grandparents first arrived from East Sussex England, to start a small farm in the Old Ravenswood area of North Launceston. The sun was warm and generous on the day Betzy appeared. Grandad was outside turning over the soil in preparation for a new crop of vegetables. As he was turning it, there was a hard round object, but not a rock. Brushing away the clumps of damp soil he found the head of an old doll and he gifted that doll to me.

It is through strong Ancestral memories, and my journey of experiences as a stolen child, that I express a deep connection to Mathinna, her doll and the pin cushion. My work endeavours to speak of the yearning and sorrow our people have for the return of Mathinna's artefacts to her mother country.

Our palawa pakana people, the Original and Traditional owners of this land, never ceded sovereignty. The country we are connected to and walk on today, holds us and has always held us, stable as the pin cushion holds its pins, despite any disturbance to our culture, disrespect of our belief systems and lores, we will always be held safe in our hearts by our country.

Through the eyes of a strong pakana truwulway woman, I am sharing our stories truthfully; the impact of how our people feel and have felt forcibly torn between two cultures, and what actions we want as First Nations people, the Mothers, Fathers, Grandmothers, and Grandfathers of Country, wanting their children bound by an umbilical cord of country, culture and lore, to our significant artefacts – for these artefacts and remains to return home to lutruwita.

Gradually my families, like two living mountains, have become moulded together. My story and identity becomes stronger with each day that I continue to live, breathe and express myself, and the messages of my ancestors through art, literacy and the power of storytelling.