



[Watch Barry's film.](#)

## **We are One People.**

*"When the dust settles on our lives, all we get to keep and take with us is our dignity, our integrity and the love and respect we share with people."*

Tom Powell, Founder, Red Dust Healing.

**Father of four, Barry, embodies resilience and strength. Growing up in a tough environment, making mistakes and struggling as a young father, he had to look inside himself to make the right choices for himself and his family. Today, thanks to the Red Dust Healing program, he's a changed man – an inspirational father to his four girls and a leader in his community.**

Barry, a Gamilaroi man originally from western NSW, remembers his early years as a time of enormous hardship. He didn't have a stable home or support network and was mostly brought up by his grandparents.

"My mother went through a tough period in her life. I sort of moved around a lot as a young boy," Barry says. "I had a lot of bad periods and I then lost my younger brother in a car accident."

He became a father in his late teens and was suddenly faced with responsibilities he wasn't ready for. He started drinking heavily, behaviour that he'd witnessed previously.

"I became an alcoholic from about 17 unknowingly, binge-drinking on weekends when I wasn't working," Barry says. "I was still holding onto some of that stuff of being abandoned, losing brothers and sisters, grief and loss. I was masking that all with alcohol, instead of dealing with it."

When his relationship broke down, he became a single father and for 15 years, he brought up three of his daughters on his own.

"I had to make some changes – not for me, but for my daughters," Barry said. "I just thought to myself, why keep doing this? That ripple effect will travel, it will flow on to my girls and my grandchildren."

The death rate of Indigenous Australians between 35 and 44 is up to four and a half times higher than that of the wider population\*. Additionally, loss of culture, personal trauma, and the ongoing stresses of disadvantage, racism, and exclusion contribute to a heightened risk of mental health problems and substance misuse.

Thankfully, Barry and others like him, were able to take part in Red Dust Healing – a cultural healing program, which encourages participants to examine their own personal hurt and allows them to heal from within. This addresses family and personal relationships, and what may have been lifelong patterns of violence, abuse and neglect.

# Barry, Australia

A 2018 evaluation of the program demonstrated that it improved participants ability to express deep seated emotions, to make better choices and consequently changes in their lives. The program increased skills to bring about conflict resolution in the family and community settings and that participants had a stronger sense of cultural and spiritual identity.

“I don’t think I’d be where I am today without the program,” said Barry. “It’s taught me to deal with my problems and addictions. I can’t change what I’ve lived through, I can just make myself a better person today.”

Red Dust Healing has won numerous national awards in mental health and human rights, helping over 15,000 people like Barry across Australia. For Barry, it changed his life and helped him to recognise his hurt and anger stemming primarily from rejection and grief. It provided a safe space to talk and connect with others who’ve supported each other in their healing journey. The program has also helped Barry connect back with his culture, language and stories.

“It’s a cultural healing program written from an indigenous perspective, but it is for everyone no matter what your background is,” said Founder, Tom Powell. “It gives people tools to better

understand their lives and to deal with some of the hurt, and some of the rejection.”

Today, Barry facilitates Red Dust Healing workshops and is a mental health professional at a regional hospital. By reconnecting with his culture and finding his purpose, he is now a role model for his daughters and others in his community.

**Red Dust is basically everything to me. It empowers me, gives me tools for everyday problems and coping mechanisms. It has also had a positive ripple effect. With me changing, I can change my children’s lives, and my grandchildren’s and so on.**

**Barry**

“Thank you to those who support Caritas Australia and Red Dust Healing.”

Sources: \* Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2015.



Tom holds a Red Dust Healing tools card near his home town of Narromine, Australia.

# Barry, Australia

## 1. Read and discuss/write your responses:

- Identify the key challenges Barry and his community face?
- How did Barry's life improve?
- Explain how Caritas Australia and their partner Red Dust Healing supported Barry and other participants in this program.
- What have been the flow on effects for Barry's family and his community?
- What are two facts you learnt about poverty and injustice faced by First Australians from Barry's story?
- Why is mental health important for a cohesive and peaceful society?
- What are the historical impacts of colonisation on First Australians?

## 2. Dreaming Dot Paintings

Students create their own dot painting depicting an original story from their Dreaming. Students should feel free to have their own style rather than copying others.

In this photo below, Barry's daughter, Isabella, is painting her own version of the rainbow serpent Dreaming. The 6 figures represent mountains, this is Isabella's interpretation. The rainbow serpent is curling through these obstacles trying to get to the highest point getting away after swallowing these 2 individuals. When they opened the stomach of the rainbow serpent 2 rainbow parrots fly out.



Find out more about Aboriginal Dot Painting as an art form:

<https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/arts/are-dot-paintings-traditional-aboriginal-art>

*Curriculum: Visual Arts : Year 7 & 8 ACAVAM118, Year 9 & 10 ACAVAM125.*

# Barry, Australia

## 3. Personal Growth

In the Red Dust Healing program, Uncle Tom uses the image of tree to help people reflect on their lives. He works with people over a few days to reflect deeply on things that have happened in the past and how they can change their futures.

Use the symbol of a tree to think reflect on your own life. This isn't the same way that Uncle Tom uses the tree symbol, but the concept of a tree can be helpful to organise your thoughts. The tree is an important symbol in the Red Dust Healing program. Trees remind us about growth.

Draw a tree to help you think about your own gifts, talents and how the spirit works through you.

For example:

On the roots, draw/write things that are given to us to help us grow. These could be people (role models, people who inspire you), relationships, tools, qualities.

On the trunk draw/write something that you like about yourself and that makes you unique. For example 'I am a loyal friend.'

On the branches draw or write fruits - your talents and strengths.

Branches can also be related to the choices we make. Often we see saplings under a tree, and these could be like our little brothers and sisters. And like the tree, it's important for us to give back to others.

Consider that all the students in your class, make up a 'forest'. Humans, like trees in nature, are inter-related. Relationships with God, self, and others are important and need to be balanced to help us grow. How can we look after the individual trees in a forest when they need strengthening and support? How can we provide good nutrients for other people around us?

Think about current climate change phenomena, such as drought. For example, consider how the lack of water in a drought affects all trees in an area.

What affects the health of all the 'trees' in the 'class forest'. For example, what happens to the people in your class/community when there is a 'drought of kindness' on social media?

What happens when a tree receives too much sun and not enough water? What happens to people when they do not have balance in their lives, for example to much screen time and not enough time outside in nature?

## Barry, Australia

Engage with the [Country Study Thinglink](#) and do some of your own research to find out the information below. Suggestions for reliable sources are included on the Thinglink and below.

<p>Predict life expectancy in the for First Australians. Find out the correct answer. Does this surprise you? Why/Why not <a href="https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/life-expectancy-death/deaths/contents/life-expectancy">https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/life-expectancy-death/deaths/contents/life-expectancy</a></p>	<p>Prediction:</p>	<p><a href="https://www.caritas.org.au/learn/countries/australia">https://www.caritas.org.au/learn/countries/australia</a></p>	
	<p>Actual:</p>	<p><a href="https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/education/face-facts-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples">https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/education/face-facts-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/statistical-overview-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples-australia">https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/statistical-overview-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples-australia</a></p>	
		<p>What are the official languages?</p>	
		<p>How many Indigenous countries are there in Australia?</p>	
<p>What is the population of the First Australians? What is the population of Australia? <a href="https://ourworldindata.org/world-population-growth">https://ourworldindata.org/world-population-growth</a></p>	<p>First Australians:  Australia</p>	<p>How does this compare to the poverty rate of non-Indigenous Australians? List some of the possible factors for this gap.</p>	
<p>What is the poverty rate in the first Australian population? <a href="https://data.worldbank.org/http://hdr.undp.org/en/data">https://data.worldbank.org/http://hdr.undp.org/en/data</a></p>			
<p>List three major factor/s affecting poverty and wellbeing (E.g. access to clean water, sanitation, education)</p>			
<p>Summarise Caritas Australia's support to improve wellbeing</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>		<p>Select two relevant Sustainable Development Goals.</p> <p>Why did you select these? <a href="http://www.globalgoals.org">www.globalgoals.org</a></p>	

## Barry, Australia

**“When the dust settles on our lives, all we get to keep and take with us is our dignity, our integrity and the love and respect we share with people.”**

Tom Powell, Founder, Red Dust Healing.

Reflection questions:

- How does this quote related to Barry’s story?
- How does this quote relate to your own life?
- What other texts (quotations, stories, songs, poems, films) come to mind?

## ACT

How might you raise awareness in response to what you read and thought about in Barry’s story?

What are you compelled to do? It might be a personal, group or community action. Write your thoughts and plan below.

# Barry, Australia

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION THEMES

**Year 7 & 8: Initiation and belonging:** Speculate on how discrimination and subsequent empowerment may have impacted on Barry's sense of identity.

**Year 9 & 10: Catholic Social Teachings/ Human Dignity** Watch '[CST in 3 minutes](#)' animation. Select one principle and explain how it is illustrated in Barry's story.

## PRAY

**Complete this prayer in your own words:**

God of grace. Thank you for the strength and courage to grow in love.

## TAKE AWAY AND SHARE

**One thing that surprised/challenged or stood out for me in this story, that I will share with others:**