

Meet Barry, Australia



Can you think of a time when you have felt very sad, or you have lost something or someone who was very special to you? Hopefully you received the love and support you needed to get through this difficult time.

This is a story about Barry – a strong, resilient and committed father of four. Barry is a Gamilaroi man, originally from western NSW. Today Barry facilitates workshops with Caritas Australia-supported program, Red Dust Healing, and works as a mental health professional at a regional hospital. Connected to his culture and at peace within himself, Barry is a role model for his daughters and others in his community. But this peace has been hard-won for Barry.

Barry 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."

This trauma and loss had a big impact on Barry's life as he grew up. He became a father at a young age and struggled in this new role. Barry admits to making mistakes and not always setting a good example for his daughters.

Sadly, Barry's story is not uncommon amongst Indigenous Australians who have experienced loss of culture, personal trauma, and ongoing disadvantage, racism and exclusion. Mental health and other related problems are common.

Thankfully, Barry and others like him, have been able to take part in Red Dust Healing – a cultural healing

program, which encourages participants to reflect on their own personal hurt and begin to heal from within. Family and personal relationships are addressed, alongside unhelpful patterns of behaviour that have developed over a long period of time to help "cope" with the difficulties of life.

"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. I can't change what I've lived through, I can just make myself a better person today." Red Dust Healing has 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 and others to reconnect with their 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."

Red Dust Healing is basically everything to me. It empowers me and gives me tools for everyday problems. 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," says Barry.

BARRY, AUSTRALIA

Learning Tasks

1. Read and discuss

- What are some of the challenges Barry faced in his life?
- What changed to make things better for Barry?
- How did Caritas Australia contribute?
- How is Barry contributing to his community?
- The Catholic Social Teaching principle of Human Dignity is about how all people are special and created in the image of God. How is human dignity shown in this story?

2. Dreaming Dot Painting

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: Cross Curriculum Priority: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, Visual Art Year 5 and 6: ACAVAM114, ACAVAM115.

3. Our own personal growth

Trees remind us about growth. Use the symbol of a tree to 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.

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 a special person. For example 'I am a good friend.'

On the branches, add fruits- your talents and strengths. This is also how the Spirit works in us. 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.

Student trees can be collected and displayed, as a 'class forest'. Discuss with students

- How can we look after the individual trees in the forest when they need strengthening and support? How can we provide good nutrients for other people around us?

Teacher note: You could relate this discussion to 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'? What happens 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 too much screen time and not enough time outside in nature?

Curriculum: Health and Pe Year 5 & 6: ACPPS051, ACPPS056.

4. RE LINK: Living the mission of Jesus Discuss: How has Barry turned his life around with the help of the 'Red Dust Healing Program'? Does any part of the Red Dust Healing program remind you of any of the Bible stories of Jesus' work?