

Keynote Address | Working in the Playroom - Aboriginal & Western Ways

This presentation explores Aboriginal ways of healing through the Strong Spirit Model, grounded in Aboriginal philosophies of connection, belonging and strong Spirit. The model understands health and wellbeing as holistic and relational, anchored in connection to Ancestors, Culture and Country as essential to child development and healing. The presentation discusses how this approach is expressed in the playroom through practices that honour Ancestors, support connection to self and nurture a child's Spirit. This approach integrates Aboriginal and Western ways of working to support a child's social and emotional wellbeing in culturally safe and developmentally meaningful ways in the playroom.

Presenter: Janine Cattanach



Janine is an Aboriginal social worker, a clinical play therapist, and is certified in the Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics (NMT). Janine integrates this neurodevelopmental approach with Aboriginal healing ways and evidence-based Western therapeutic practices to foster resilience, cultural identity and emotional wellbeing for children and families.

As the founder of Yilimu House, Janine has established a culturally safe and trauma-informed play therapy practice that provides a gentle and creative space for children to heal, connect and grow their stories and Spirits strong. Her clinical work focuses on helping children who have experienced complex trauma to regulate, relate and recover. Working alongside families and educators to weave Cultural Therapeutic Webs: intentional, everyday moments of safety and connection that surround a child and strengthen healing in community.

In addition to clinical practice, Janine leads The Cultural Consultancy Group, offering organisations and practitioners the skills, tools and cultural frameworks needed to engage respectfully and effectively with Aboriginal people and communities. She is passionate about creating bridges between Aboriginal and Western ways of knowing and healing, empowering communities to grow strong Spirit and belonging.

Janine's approach is grounded in cultural knowledge, neurodevelopment science, and trauma-informed practice and is committed to amplifying Aboriginal voices and healing stories within therapeutic spaces.

Presenters Professional Affiliations

Bachelor of Social Work, Master of Child Play Therapy, Certified in Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics

Director of The Cultural Consultancy Group and Play therapist at Yilimu House

