

## Developing and Revitalizing Rural Communities Through Arts and Creativity

Research report by the Cultural Development Network, Australia and Creative City Network, Canada

This presentation is a brief summary of a research paper that explores the contribution of the arts and creativity to the development and revitalization of rural and remote communities in Australia. It includes three case studies of artistic responses to regeneration of rural communities after bushfire:

- a government initiated bushfire memorial, ACT, 2003-2006  
[www.arts.act.gov.au/pages/images/Bushfire%20Memorial%20Comm%20Consult%20](http://www.arts.act.gov.au/pages/images/Bushfire%20Memorial%20Comm%20Consult%20)
- *Re-Gener-8* project, St Marys Tasmania, 2007, a community bushfire recovery initiative including art exhibitions, music, a mural painting, and book compiled by the community containing stories, interviews, poems, images, humour, and hints from community and various organizations' experiences during the fires.  
<http://fcms.its.utas.edu.au/healthsci/ruralhealth/newsdetail.asp?INewsEventId=2702>
- 'Fire Up' community performance project, Fish Creek, Victoria, 2008,  
[http://kinesismagazine.com.au/dance/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=64&Itemid=1](http://kinesismagazine.com.au/dance/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=64&Itemid=1)

The instigators led these responses because of their belief in the power of arts and ritual to bring people together with a positive and common goal, to contribute to community's reformation after the fires. These beliefs are supported by evidence for the contribution of arts to successful healing and recovery from trauma. Coulter (2008) documents outcomes of art therapy addressing trauma including safe expression of anger, and release from traumatic visual images and explicit memories. Dance movement therapist Amber Gray is internationally recognized for her work assisting recovery from different kinds of traumas through arts activities including drumming and ritual movement (Gray, 2005). Visual artist Anne Riggs' (2008) research examines the contribution of visual art-making to participants' capacity to recover from grief and loss resulting from trauma.

### Some references and arts and trauma recovery

Coulter, A. (2008). 'Came back – Didn't come home': Returning from a war zone. In M. Liebmann, *Art therapy and anger*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Gray, A. (2002). Rituals of healing encountered among street children in Haiti. *Stresspoints, the newsletter for the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies*, pp. 8-9. Related LINK: [ISTSS.org](http://ISTSS.org)

Gray, A.E. (2004). 'Web of connection,' 'Bouncing for columbine,' and 'The river of sticks.' In R. Carman, *Helping kids heal: 75 activities to help children recover from trauma and loss*. The Bureau for At Risk Youth.

Riggs, A. (2008). The creative space: Art In the shadow of trauma, grief and loss. Paper presented at the "Persons Intimacy and Love" Conference in Salzburg, Austria.  
[http://web.mac.com/annergiggs/iWeb/Anne%20Riggs/Papers%20/A4C8E904-217A-44A2-9293-266789D7D3DB\\_files/The%20Creative%20Space-1.pdf](http://web.mac.com/annergiggs/iWeb/Anne%20Riggs/Papers%20/A4C8E904-217A-44A2-9293-266789D7D3DB_files/The%20Creative%20Space-1.pdf)

**The full research report is available from**

<http://creativecommons.ca/images/stories/PDFs/CCNCRResearch/RuralResearch/rural-communities-arts-2009.pdf>

**The chapter about Australia rural communities is available from:**

<http://www.culturaldevelopment.net/publications.htm>

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