

Book review

Traditional healers help close the gap

Traditional healers of Central Australia: ngangkari.

Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council Aboriginal Corporation, compilers. Broome, Western Australia: Magabala Books, 2013 (272 pp, \$49.95). ISBN 9781921248825.

IN 2009, THE ROYAL Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists awarded the Mark Sheldon Prize for Indigenous mental health to ngangkari (traditional healers) Andy Tjilari and Rupert Langkatjukur Peter. The two were further honoured in 2011 by the World Council for Psychotherapy with the Sigmund Freud Award (bestowed by the City of Vienna, Austria). The awards recognised their distinguished contributions in mental health to the Aboriginal communities of Central Australia. *Traditional healers of Central Australia* celebrates the important work done by these and other ngangkari. It is a rich compilation of stories told by the ngangkari themselves along with artwork and photographs of Central Australia.

The tales told by a number of male and female ngangkari reflect their life and cultural experience with respect to their careers as traditional healers within their

Aboriginal family and community. The book includes a general discussion of the work of the ngangkari as well as specifics on how they approach topics such as grief, death and dying, substance abuse, mental illness, and the way they work with conventional health services. The services the ngangkari offer to these communities are often conducted in coordination with formal clinical mental health service provision.

This beautiful and insightful work will give the interested reader a window into a cultural experience of healing that is a continuing vital element of the health of the Aboriginal communities in Central Australia. In the ongoing efforts to Closing the Gap, this book is a reminder that solutions to health may be assisted through the wisdom of local people and communities in coordination with the "evidence" that is so prominent in the discussions about health service delivery today.

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