

Ya'Djin



Project Overview

YA'DJIN (meaning 'speak') is a transformative, First Nations-led project bringing together performance, community workshops and healing through the arts. It is delivered by The First Creatives in partnership with Ya'djin Women's Collective and Breaking Silent Codes.

The project began with Ya'djin Spirit Women, a full-length dance-theatre work developed in 2023–24 by The First Creatives. Inspired by the stories of Kabi Kabi/Kuku Yalanji Aunty Sharyn Malone, Gooreng Gooreng/Kabi Kabi Aunty Chantay Link and the matriarchal stories of Grandmothers, the production premiered to sold-out audiences.

In this touring development, the work evolves by incorporating interviews with two First Nations women in each location who share a deep bond. Their voices shape each performance, making every presentation unique to its place and community. Chantay Link travels with the project to provide cultural leadership and continuity.

YA'DJIN also includes a storytelling and documentation component. On-Country yarning sessions are recorded and developed into short documentary films and podcast episodes, ensuring women's voices live beyond the stage as an enduring cultural record.

Each presentation is preceded by community workshops led by Ya'djin Women's Collective with local domestic and family violence services, creating culturally safe spaces for connection, storytelling and healing.

YA'DJIN offers a multi-layered approach to cultural reclamation — amplifying First Nations women's voices in live performance while preserving stories through film and audio for ongoing community impact.



Partner Organisations

The First Creatives - Lead Artists/Ya'Djin Spirit Women

A dynamic First Nations-led performing arts company committed to passing down cultural and contemporary creative practices to the next generation. They are dedicated to transforming the performing arts landscape by fostering a grassroots, community-led approach that empowers First Nations people to tell their stories. The company's first full length work, Ya'Djin Spirit Women, has performed for sold out audiences across two different arts festivals (BEMAC and Backbone) in Magandjin/Brisbane in 2024.



Ya'Djin Women's Collective - Project Partner

A sisterhood of strong, courageous First Nations women who are empowered and informed survivors and advocates of sexual and domestic and/or family violence, based in Magadjin Brisbane. The Collective, which was birthed from local grassroots survivors holding safe-spaces in their communities; has since grown to become equal partners with BRISSC, developing groups in three locations and becoming the leading informers and advocates of DFV and SA for First Nations women within Magandjin, Brisbane.



Breaking Silent Codes South Pacific - Network Partner

A movement that emerged from a 2018 forum where Aboriginal, Torres Strait, and Pacific Islander women gathered to address the silences surrounding sexual assault and family violence in their communities. It aims to break the cultural, spiritual, and societal barriers that silence these critical issues and empower First Nations women across Australia and the Pacific to reclaim their voices and advocate for their wellbeing.



WCAA (The Women's Community Aid association QLD) / BRISSC (Brisbane Rape and Incest Survivors Support Centre) -

Established in 1973 and is a community-based, not-for-profit organisation in Brisbane that provides support to women 15+ (including transgender & cisgender women) survivors of sexual violence. Our services include phone support, individual counselling, advocacy, community education and training.



Key Artist Profiles - The First Creatives

Allirah Fisher - Artistic Director - is a proud Ewamain, Cobble-Cobble, Birri and South-Sea Islander Woman. Born and raised in the outer suburbs of Meanjin, has always had strong values for social justice, healing and creativity. Allirah has worked within the Indigenous health, community development and creative arts spaces as a social worker, artist and facilitator, being informed by elders and community members throughout. Allirah has a strong passion for empowering First Nations communities to break the cycle of intergenerational trauma and move into a place of healing, our way.

Erika Jayne Goldsmith - Creative Producer - is a Magandjin-based performing artist, producer and cultural community development practitioner. As a dance artist she has trained and worked across multiple cultural and contemporary dance forms, including working with international street dance studio - YCV, Bollywood dance company - Dance Masala, Flamenco fusion company - Mestiza and in 2017 founding Bring A Plate Inclusive Dance Company. Key artistic achievements include the production of two multidisciplinary cultural diplomacy works funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, involving artists from Timor-Leste, Indonesia, Bangladesh and Sudan.

Maddy Fisher - Lead Choreographer - is a proud First Nations artists from Ewamian, Birri, Cobble-Cobble and south-sea Islander ancestry. She has a trained professionally in both gymnastics and dance, in various different styles. Graduating from the Aboriginal Centre of Performing Arts with development and secondment opportunities with Bangarra Dance Company from 2014-2016. She has a strong passion for Indigenous-Contemporary fusion styles which inspires her to create movement that shares stories of country, connection and culture.



Cultural Advisor Profiles - Ya'Djin Womens Collective

Aunty Chantay Link is a proud Gooreng Gooreng and Kabi Kabi woman and Australian South Sea Islander who grew up in Magandjin/Brisbane — a proud Brisbane Blak. She is deeply passionate about women and families living free from violence and about strengthening safe, culturally grounded spaces in community. Aunty Chantay has long been part of healing circles on Country and shares this knowledge with Aboriginal women finding their pathways through trauma and toward healing. She is actively involved in First Nations-led grassroots groups and is committed to walking alongside women as they grow in confidence, leadership and cultural strength. As she says, "I know there is so much more to learn, and this is a wonderful opportunity to share and learn." Her work is grounded in care, lived experience and a belief in the power of community to heal across generations.

Aunty Olivene (Olly) Yasso is a proud Yiman woman and Australian South Sea Islander with ancestral connections to Vanuatu, based in Queensland. Her work is grounded in culture, community and walking alongside her people with strength, unity and love. Aunty Olly delivers Cultural Match to Governance and Cultural Resilience programs, training and workshops that support self-determination for individuals, families and communities. She is also the Organisational Development Officer for Ya'djin Women's Collective, where she supports culturally grounded governance and community leadership. Her practice is shaped by lived experience, cultural responsibility and a deep commitment to intergenerational healing.



Project Activities & Creative Outputs

On-Country Story Recordings

Yarning sessions with two First Nations women in each location are recorded. These interviews form the narrative foundation of the project.

Documentary Films

Each location's recordings are developed into short documentary films.

Podcast Episodes

Audio from the recordings is edited into podcast episodes for accessible, ongoing listening.

Creative Workshops (Artistic Contribution)

Dance and visual art workshops led by The First Creatives contribute directly to the performance, with participant-created banners used in the set and optional participation in choreography.

Live Performance – *Ya'djin Spirit Women*

Recorded voices are integrated into the dance-theatre work, with each presentation shaped by local stories.



Cultural Wellbeing & Community Engagement

It is incredibly important to us that this work has a tangible impact on the individuals and communities it is made for – primarily First Nations women and children who are survivors of domestic and family violence. To support this, several care-focused elements run alongside the project delivery.

Culturally Safe Women's Workshops

Facilitated by Ya'djin Women's Collective with local DFV services, creating trauma-informed spaces for connection and healing.

Cultural Leadership & Safety

Aunty Chantay Link travels with the project to ensure cultural continuity and participant safety.

Community Ticketing Access

Discounted tickets for mob and free or low-cost tickets for children support family attendance.

Post-show Care & Support

After each performance, identified support people are available for a yarn and debrief.



Live performance - Technical Requirements, Costumes & Set

Yadjin Spirit Women has flexible technical requirements and has been presented in both indoor and outdoor locations.

- Audio playback from laptop using QLAB
- One handheld microphone if available
- Lighting can be adjusted depending on the available rig
- Projector & screen (usually we project onto a mounted sheet)
- Haze if available

The costumes and set for this show were designed by the company in consultation with Aunty Chantay and Aunty Sharyn. The involved artists have skills in weaving, painting, sewing, fashion design and other visual mediums, which were utilised to create intricate and vibrant costuming and set design, with rich cultural significance and grounding.

There are several costume changes throughout that align with the generational shift in focus from grandmothers, childhood, adolescence, motherhood, sisterhood and healing. The set is relatively simple with the use of various props made of natural fibres including ropes, baskets, cotton sheets, leaves and sand. For site specific performances in outdoor spaces we would also utilise the landscape and surrounding structures including trees, stairs, platforms and walkways to stage the show in creative and multidimensional ways. Towards the end of the show we bring out signs, banners, art work and other elements created by the womens groups that we work with.



Marketing Strategy

The First Creatives have created pieces of work for various performances, completed two sold out seasons and developed networks to support the promotion and audience development for a national tour. Our marketing strategy predominantly involves:

- Social media campaigns via Instagram & Facebook
- EDMs to database of previous attendees
- Promotion via a strong network of relationships with First Nations organisations
- Promotion via network of organisations working in the arts, health and social justice
- Interviews with local radio
- Articles in local print media

In addition, The First Creatives have several key partner organisations who offer consistent networking, marketing, audience development and community engagement support. These include:

- Breaking Silent Codes - Australia/Pacific
- BRISSC - Brisbane
- Full Stop - Sydney



Videos & Reviews of Ya'Djin Spirit Women

Footage from a creative development at Metro Arts in 2023

https://youtu.be/gxQeTk_hA9Q

Performance as part of NUDO's work 'Granted' in 2023

https://youtu.be/Yfh_4ObSYNo

Post-show audience reviews of *Ya'Djin Spirit Women* @ BEMAC May 2024

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/OYgIGAWRT2M>

Show reel from *Ya'Djin Spirit Women* premier @ BEMAC May 2024

<https://youtu.be/kot7ZyC5UXU?si=d4yqHCWKC-1P-PR>

Show reel from *Ya'Djin Spirit Women* @ Backbone Festival October 2024

<https://youtu.be/NFzzOOfuYIU>

Review from Stage Whispers - May 2024

<https://www.stagewhispers.com.au/reviews/ya%E2%80%99djin-spirit-women>

Instagram account @the.firstcreatives

