

ORAL HISTORY MEDIA AWARD 2021

The Anne St Reserve Oral History and Concert Project

Produced by Big MAMA Productions, Gwen Knox, Broome WA

Output: Stories of Strength: Songs and Stories from Anne Street Reserve 2021

Stories of Strength was a concert that was produced by Big MAMA Productions, and performed in Broome in May 2021. The concert featured songs and stories of Aboriginal people who grew up and lived in the former Anne Street Reserve between the 1960s and early 1980s. It stemmed from research at The University of Notre Dame Australia, and from oral history interviews recorded by Dr Elaine Rabbitt with former residents of 'The Reserve'. The narrators then collaborated with singer songwriters Meryn Mulardi and Lyn Hazelton to create songs and music inspired by their oral history accounts. The production also incorporated audio excerpts, historical photographs, governmental records, and live storytelling, which together situated the songs in the broader history of Anne Street Reserve.

Stories of Strength is a wonderful example of how oral history interviews can inspire and inform other forms of creative expression. The concert illuminates an otherwise largely unknown history. The (multilingual) songs and stories are beautifully grounded in place, and they show how former residents now remember their experiences of living on 'The Reserve'. The concert is a celebration of strength and resistance, and it offers a valuable and historically illuminating new local history of Broome. Excerpts of the oral history interviews can now be heard in the Western Australian New Museum.