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“Connecting to the Earth” (*Wayapa Wuurrk*), supporting families: centring Indigenous perspectives in co-creating a culturally responsive parenting program for inclusion in a novel parenting app for all Australian parents and carers of 2–5-year-olds

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This project aimed to co-create a culturally responsive parenting program integrating Indigenous perspectives through *Wayapa Wuurrk*, an Aboriginal Earth mindfulness wellbeing practice. Embedded within a parenting app (Daily Growth), the resource supports diverse parents and carers of children aged 2–5years to respond to common parenting challenges.

Methods: Guided by Indigenous governance and a Two-Eyed Seeing framework, the co creation process engaged Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers, content designers and *Wayapa Wuurrk* practitioners with early years’ experience. Cultural responsiveness was ensured through yarning, deep listening (Dadirri), and relational accountability, overseen by a Wisdom Circle of five Aboriginal *Wayapa Wuurrk* practitioners recognised as Senior Knowledge Holders or Elders. Indigenous knowledges central to *Wayapa Wuurrk* were adapted into 30 common parenting scenarios and delivered as brief, video-based micro-interventions.

Results: The co-created parenting resources provide culturally relevant, Earth-centred parenting strategies that support children’s emotional regulation. The inclusion of *Wayapa Wuurrk* iconography, storytelling and earth-mindfulness enrich program accessibility and relevance.

Conclusion: Integrating *Wayapa Wuurrk* within Daily Growth demonstrates the value of Two-Eyed Seeing by weaving Indigenous knowledges with Western parenting approaches, strengthening culturally inclusive support for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait and non-Indigenous families. Future research will evaluate impacts on parent and child wellbeing.

KEY POINTS

What is already known about this topic:

- (1) There are significant gaps in early childhood social emotional development outcomes between Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children compared to Australian non-Indigenous children.
- (2) Despite the known benefits of parenting support in the development of emotional regulation in their children, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander parents and carers are less likely to access evidence-based parenting support.
- (3) Co-design of culturally responsive parenting resources with and for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander parents and carers are recommended to address these gaps, but currently underutilised.

What this topic adds:

- (1) This study is the first to draw on *Wayapa Wuurrk*, an Aboriginal earth mindfulness practice, to develop a parenting program that embeds Indigenous Knowledges relevant to healthy parenting and child rearing.
- (2) By drawing on *Wayapa Wuurrk*’s 14 Elements to respond to common parenting challenges, the research introduces a unique, culturally responsive approach to supporting parents and caregivers to build their children’s emotional regulation and family well-being.

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KEYWORDS

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families; children; cultural responsiveness; emotional regulation; parenting programs; socio-emotional wellbeing

- (3) By integrating the *Wayapa Wuurrk* parenting content into the Daily Growth smartphone app, this study expands the accessibility of culturally informed parenting support and supports both Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and Australian non-Indigenous families to engage with Earth connection through Indigenous knowledge in an adaptable, on-demand format, addressing the gap in universal parenting support.

In this article, we acknowledge both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the First Nations of Australia. We recognise that terminology preferences vary among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. With respectful consideration to these preferences, we will generally specify Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples when referring to First Nations Peoples throughout this article. At times, we use the term Indigenous when we are referencing its use from another source, or where it is the established use of the term, such as in Indigenous knowledges. We acknowledge, however, that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples do not prefer this term. Where referring to individuals, we have endeavoured to respect their expressed preferences, including for example, identification with the Country they are connected to.

Positionality

Indigenous ways acknowledge that researchers must position themselves within their research because we are relational beings (Begay & Klor, 2024), and as such the *Wayapa Wuurrk* co-design team embedded themselves and their knowledge within the parental advice that was created for Daily Growth (Westrupp et al., 2025). We begin by highlighting our positionality. Melody Popple, first author, shares:

As an Aboriginal woman (Bundjalung) who is deeply connected to Country, I began working in academia to join the conversation and highlight the importance of Indigenous ways of doing and being. I'm someone that enjoys using my voice in education spaces yet sits on Country with community learning from the land and Elders. When I found *Wayapa Wuurrk* I became a practitioner and soon thereafter was asked to be a part of the Daily Growth project. I see myself as someone who traverses two worlds: both Indigenous and colonial spaces, and in these environments the importance of acknowledgement flows throughout my cultural ways as well as the *Wayapa Wuurrk* teachings. And so I acknowledge who I am and where I came from and I acknowledge the many hands and minds that are part of Daily Growth.

Co-author Melissa O'Shea shares: I a non-Indigenous mother, Psychologist, academic and yoga teacher/practitioner of settler ancestry, living and working on unceded Wadawurrung Country (Barwon region, Victoria). My work is grounded in a commitment to inter-weaving Western psychological approaches with complementary and ancient practices to support mental health and wellbeing. I am a member of the Australian Indigenous Psychology Education Project (AIPEP) and have been privileged to engage in extensive cultural awareness and safety training led by Aboriginal scholars and practitioners. I support the Uluru Statement of the Heart and all efforts to decolonise Psychology. For over five years, I have collaborated with *Wayapa Wuurrk*, supporting the growth of knowledge regarding Aboriginal healing practices that promote healing of both people and Country. I remain committed to ongoing learning, reflection, and accountability in my practice as an individual, ally and professional working within systems shaped by colonisation.

We have also included reflexivity statements for all the authors of this paper to deepen the readers understanding of our positionality (see [Appendix A](#)). These reflexivity statements aim to demonstrate the array of different cultural and social positionings among our team that combined to create the *Wayapa Wuurrk* parenting resources. From time to time, the voices of the researchers in the team are included to authentically represent their views and perspectives. All researcher/co-creators have given permission for their contributions and are authors on this paper.

We also reflect the principles of Two-eyed seeing through the integration of Indigenous narrative practices, which shape the Methods and Results, authored by Indigenous Scholar (First Author and *Wayapa Wuurrk* Practitioner, MP) – and Western scientific language and conventions evident in the Introduction and Discussion, written by a non-Indigenous academic (senior author and trained *Wayapa*

Wuurrk Practitioner, MOS). This collaborative approach extended to the co-writing of the manuscript as a whole. By sharing the development of the *Wayapa Wuurrk* parenting content through the first-person perspective of first author and Bundjalung researcher and *Wayapa Wuurrk* Practitioner, Melody Popple, we weave in Indigenous approaches to sharing knowledge, including Yarning (Barlo et al., 2020) and pay homage to the different ways that knowledge can be shared to be more inclusive, including to those outside of the Academy (Bishop, 2021).

Introduction

The parent-child relationship is one of the most powerful influences on a child's growth and development (Frosch et al., 2021). In particular, parents' and caregivers' capacity to support the development of emotion regulation in early childhood is critical in shaping children's socio-emotional development and long-term mental health outcomes (Gottman et al., 1996; Morris et al., 2017; Sanders & Mazzucchelli, 2013). Parenting is therefore a key determinant of children's healthy socio-emotional development. Early childhood is an opportune time for investment, as young children begin to grow the building blocks of healthy emotional and relational lives (Walker et al., 2015). However, significant gaps exist in Australia's universal parenting services for children aged 2–5 years, with many parents having limited access to evidence-based parenting support – including guidance to help their toddlers understand and manage their feelings (Clancy et al., 2019; Enns et al., 2016). Regrettably, these gaps are particularly pronounced for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander parents and caregivers, who often face additional barriers to accessing appropriate, culturally safe and responsive support (Sicouri et al., 2018; Westrupp et al., 2020). Limited access to parenting support may exacerbate ongoing disparities in the socioemotional outcomes for young Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children who continue to experience disproportionately high rates of developmental and mental health vulnerability compared to non-Indigenous children (Baxter, 2013; Dunstan et al., 2019; Priest et al., 2012; Wise, 2013).

Various factors contribute to the poor access that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander families have to parenting supports. A persistent deficit-based view of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander families and child-rearing practices continues to foster widespread distrust in institutional health and social services (Bowes & Grace, 2014; Bullen et al., 2023; Darwin et al., 2023; Dunstan et al., 2019). In addition, the underrepresentation of these families in parenting research limits our understanding of their specific needs, priorities and interests (Turner et al., 2007). For example, a recently published scoping review by MacDonald et al. (2024) examined the extent and nature of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander parent inclusion in randomised controlled trials (RCTs) of Australian parenting programs. Whilst acknowledging that RCTs can undervalue community-led and qualitative research approaches more aligned with Indigenous methodologies (Luke et al., 2022), and the authors' recognition of the problems associated with reporting standards on cultural identity in research, the review found that only nine out of 109 published program evaluations identified the number of participating Aboriginal or/and Torres Strait Islander parents. Of these, just two evaluated programs designed specifically for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander families. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander fathers have been particularly overlooked in both research and service delivery, despite evidence that they may require tailored support to empower them to fulfil their roles and potential as fathers (Canuto et al., 2019; Prehn et al., 2020; Stuart et al., 2015).

Arguably, the most critical factor contributing to poor access to parenting support among Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander parents is the lack of recognition of the socio-political and historical landscape in which they parent – both in the design and delivery of current parenting support (Guttorm et al., 2021; MacDonald et al., 2024). Australian colonisation not only resulted in dispossession of land and displacement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families but also involved the systematic disruption of Indigenous knowledge systems, kinship and community networks, languages and parenting traditions (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2024). The forced removal of many tens of thousands of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children as a result of racially driven government policies and practice stripped parents of their right to nurture and raise their children according to Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing – traditions and practices that had previously supported the healthy growth and development of their children for thousands of years (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 1993; Bailey & Clark, 2024; Dunstan et al., 2019;

Wright et al., 2023). The ongoing legacy of these events and policies continues to shape health, social and economic disparities for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait families, an outcome we recognise within the framework of intergenerational or transgenerational trauma (Atkinson, 2002; Darwin et al., 2023).

Consequently, Sherriff and Gwynn (2024) recently called for an expansion of co-design approaches in the design and assessment of parenting programs for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander families. They argue that through understanding and valuing Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing in family life and child-rearing practice, and incorporating these knowledges into parenting programs, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander families are more likely to participate and enjoy improved outcomes. To date, just two trials have examined a culturally tailored parenting program for Aboriginal families (MacDonald et al., 2024). The first, an RCT, assessed an adaptation of the evidence-based Group Triple P – Positive parenting Program (Turner et al., 2007) with 51 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander parents, yielding support for the value of engaging Aboriginal communities in the tailoring of parenting resources. A more recent study also evaluated a community-tailored Triple P parenting program (Jandu Yani U – for all families) with 30 families in the very remote region of Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia (Andersson et al., 2024). Study findings highlighted the value of community engagement in the adaptation and implementation of evidence-based parenting programs in remote Indigenous communities, and identified the feasibility, benefits and cultural acceptability of these programs for local parents, carers, and children.

Daily Growth: a personalised “ecological momentary intervention” parenting app

Despite the contributions of Turner et al. (2007) and Andersson et al. (2024), there remains a significant gap in the availability of *universal* parenting programs that are accessible and culturally appropriate to all families, including Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait parents and carers. **Daily Growth** is an innovative smartphone parenting app for parents and carers of children aged 2–5 years (Westrupp et al., 2025) which delivers 3-minute micro-intervention videos tailored to real-time parenting challenges. The conceptual model underpinning Daily Growth draws on emotion socialisation theory and research evidence showing the pivotal role of parents and carers in shaping children’s emotion regulation skills and broader socio-emotional development, particularly in these early years (Gottman et al., 1996; Lin et al., 2024; Morris et al., 2022; Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2022). There is strong evidence that programs that explicitly target parent and/or child emotion regulation lead to improvements for parenting practices and child outcomes across mental health, emotional, behavioural, and relational domains (Compas et al., 2017; England-Mason et al., 2023; Havighurst et al., 2022; Jeong et al., 2021; Pandey et al., 2018). Daily Growth was designed to address key limitations in existing parenting resources through two innovative design features: (1) offering parents a range of offerings via three distinct types of parenting programs; and (2) the delivery of real-time support through a novel co-designed app-based platform (Bufton et al., 2024). The app prompts parents twice per day (7 am and 7pm), offering brief video resources that respond to a parenting situation selected by the parent based on their current needs (Figure 1).

In addition, a core objective of Daily Growth is to respond to the specific needs and contexts of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander families. To support this, the app incorporates parenting perspectives and practices aligned to Indigenous knowledge systems through the inclusion of *Wayapa Wuurrk* (herein *Wayapa*) – An Aboriginal led earth connection and wellbeing modality co-founded in 2014 by GunaiKurnai Maara Nation Descendant Jamie Thomas and Canadian Welsh Australian Sara Jones. Aligned with the Social and Emotional Wellbeing framework (SEWB; Dudgeon et al., 2020; Gee et al., 2014), *Wayapa* recognises connection to Country and environmental stewardship as a wellspring for social, emotional and collective wellbeing – including for young children and families (O’Shea et al., 2024). Together with Emotion Coaching and Active Play, *Wayapa* represents the third distinct type of parenting support offered by Daily Growth and represents with the aim of responding to the limitations of current parenting programs for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait parents.

In this paper, we describe the co-creation of the *Wayapa* parenting resources embedded within the Daily Growth app. Our approach is guided by the concept known as Two-eyed Seeing, which emphasises the value of integrating Western and Indigenous knowledges. Coined by Mi’kmaq Elder, Albert Marshall in 2004, Two-Eyed Seeing recognises that each “eye” (i.e., Indigenous knowledges and Western knowledges) offers distinct yet complementary ways of understanding the world (Roher et al., 2021). Importantly, this approach also

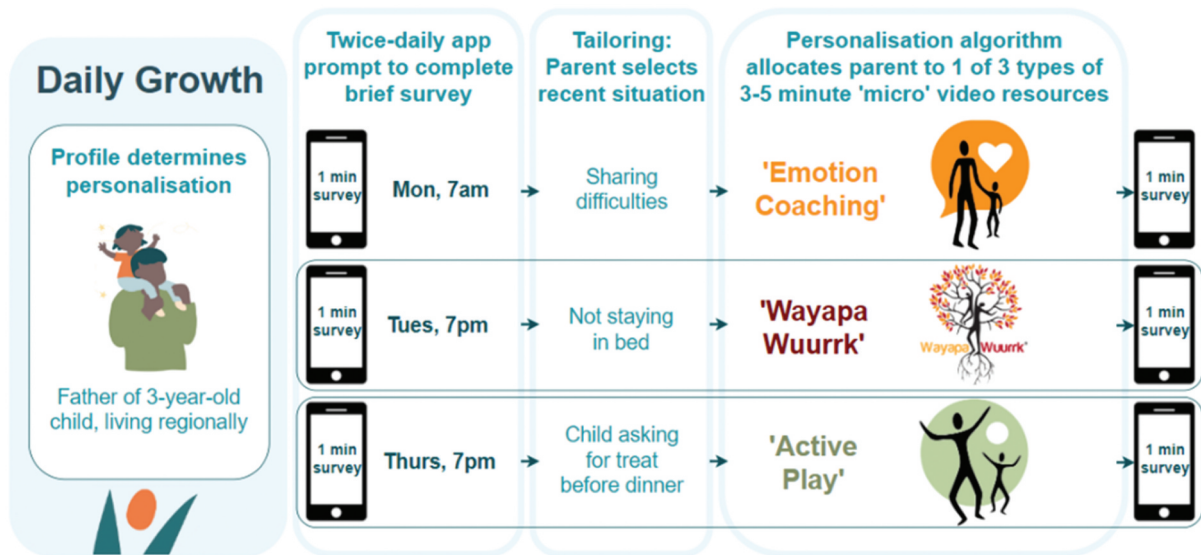


Figure 1. Daily Growth, tailoring & personalising brief, in-the-moment micro-interventions (Westrupp et al., 2025).

represents an important step towards decolonising psychological research and practice (Iwama et al., 2009). We explore how the integration of *Wayapa* content within Daily Growth complements and enriches the Western knowledge foundations of the app's other two parenting programs – Emotion Coaching and Active Play – as well as its overall design. The overarching aim is to improve access to parenting support for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander parents and carers, while also making Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing more accessible to all parents.

What we did (or Methods)

Yarning about Wayapa

I, Melody Popple, as the lead author of this paper, invite the reader to consider our team's ontological positionings. I joined Daily Growth in an identified Aboriginal and *Wayapa* Research role, recognising the importance of shared engagement of Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge and voice in the project. I like to conduct business in this way to genuinely take a moment to reflect upon where I am situated and how grateful I am to be a part of this work.

An Acknowledgement is customary for signifying genuine respect to the Traditional Custodians of the lands, sky and waterways of where we live and work. As such, I begin by acknowledging the lands in which we met as part of this work – the lands of Bundjalung, Gubbi Gubbi/Kabi Kabi, Kulin and Gunaikurnai Nations. I pay my respects to the Ancestors and Elders of these lands, and I acknowledge that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples are the sovereign custodians of the continent we now know as Australia. In keeping with *Wayapa* protocols I also honour the origins of *Wayapa*. I acknowledge its co-creators – Jamie Thomas, a Gunaikurnai Maara Nation Descendant, and Sara Jones, a Canadian Welsh Australian woman. Together, they drew on their shared passion for healing the deep ties between self and Country, honouring and accrediting the Earth connection practice through which both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples can rediscover a path to collective wellbeing. *Wayapa Wuurrk* means “connect to the Earth” in the languages of the Maara People from Southwest Victoria and the GunaiKurnai People from Gippsland, Victoria.

We all need support in life and when people are so disconnected from the Earth and their own lineages, they can only see things from one perspective – disconnection. By implementing connection-based methods within colonised spaces we can highlight different ways of doing things. (S. Jones, personal communication, August 12, 2024)

Grounded in Aboriginal wisdom, *Wayapa* is a wellbeing practice based on the understanding that our individual and collective health and wellbeing and the health of Country are interwoven and reciprocal – this



Figure 2. *Wayapa Wuurrk*, conceptual framework (design by co-author Justine Tarrant).

also means that in order for us to be well, we must support Country to be well (Burgess et al., 2009). Incorporating earth mindfulness, intentional physical movements, and storytelling to foster connection to Country, it aligns closely with the SEWB (Gee et al., 2014; Figure 2). *Wayapa* honours 14 elements which include the Sun, Moon, Tree, and the Child. *Wayapa* asks us to reflect on how we can form our own ways to connect with and care for Country, mind, body, and spirit and invites us to understand that we all have an obligation to the Earth and our children’s wellbeing (Boulous Walker, 2022; Graham, 2023). Although *Wayapa* is grounded in Aboriginal wisdom, it is not a cultural practice in itself. This means it can be respectfully accessed and engaged with by non-Indigenous people without requiring specific place based cultural knowledge, while still offering a pathway to deeper connection – and understanding – of such knowledge.

Yarning about how we did business

Daily Growth is very values driven and community focused. It’s silly, really, to think that a single researcher, or a single group of researchers and professionals, clinicians, psychologists, can know the needs and preferences of everyone in the community and how best to support them. Co-creation and co-design creates a partnership which means we take away the hierarchy of an “expert” psychologist who “knows best” and we dismantle that, and we rethink that, and we instead come from the ground up working as equal partners. We partner with those in the community who will hopefully benefit from the program and the resources. We trust their knowledge and their wisdom. (E. Westrupp, Daily Growth Principal Investigator, personal communication, August 19, 2024)

Wayapa was one of three parenting programs co-created within the broader Daily Growth project, alongside Emotion Coaching and Active Play. Prior to Wayapa’s involvement in the project, the Deakin Daily Growth team implemented a three phase “purpose-designed Design Mapping framework” that identified 30 common parenting scenarios to use in the parenting App and important features to support its usability and relevance to parents and carers. This involved examining parenting literature and interviews with 17 diverse parents – including two Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander parents – and parenting professionals (Westrupp et al., 2025). These interviews revealed that parents want brief in-the-moment advice when parenting challenges occur.

While we worked within a set of parameters established through earlier co-design with parents and caregivers in the Daily Growth project (Bufton et al., 2024), it was critical that we retain autonomy to shape the content and approach in culturally meaningful ways and ensuring alignment with *Wayapa* philosophy and practice. Our brief was to create short, 3-minute videos (or scripts) tailored to support parents and carers respond to the 30 common parenting challenges (e.g., sitting for meals, going to bed,

brushing teeth, conflict between children, fighting in the car) that parents and carers previously identified. In each video, we draw on the *Wayapa* practices and Elements -something we like to refer to as *Wayapa Ways* (Tarrant & Tarrant, n.d.). Audio recordings of these scripts were used as a voiceover for 30 video resources in the Daily Growth app, with visual imagery tailored to reflect our *Wayapa* parenting advice. The app features on-camera narration by experts (i.e., “talking heads”) accompanied by animations and illustrative footage showing diverse families engaging in everyday parenting situations aligned with the advice provided (often described as “B-roll” in media production). The animations were created by the Deakin design team in collaboration with us to ensure they were visually inclusive and reflected *Wayapa Ways*.

A critical first step in our work was to establish Indigenous governance over *Wayapa's* involvement in Daily Growth. Indigenous governance privileges relational accountability and reciprocity and protects against top-down research governance frameworks that have been damaging for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples (Duke et al., 2021). This began with the endorsement of *Wayapa* co-creator, Jamie Thomas (GunaiKurnai Maara) to include *Wayapa* in the project. Following this, we reached out to the wider *Wayapa* practitioner community to identify trusted senior community advisors and knowledge holders who could help ensure we remained grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing throughout the creation of the *Wayapa* parenting resources. This group was known as the “*Wayapa Wisdom Circle*” and included eight senior *Wayapa* practitioners, trainers, and early years educators. Of these, five were Aboriginal *Wayapa* practitioners or trainers, recognised as Senior Knowledge Holders or Elders within their Communities. They embodied Indigenous leadership, bringing cultural advisory, wisdom, and community trust to guide the process. The remaining three *Wisdom Circle* members were non-Indigenous representatives from the *Wayapa* leadership team, two practitioner trainers and one early years education trainer who contributed a model of leadership through experience. In this way, non-Indigenous leaders offered skills and knowledge gained through professional practice, while working respectfully alongside, and under the guidance of, Indigenous cultural leadership. The *Wayapa Wisdom Circle* were engaged at three key stages of the co-creation process to offer their experience, critical reflection, cultural insight, and feedback on the emerging ideas of the *Wayapa* Daily Growth content team. In the first instance they were engaged to seek their endorsement of the involvement of *Wayapa* in the Daily Growth project. In the second, they reviewed and verified the *Wayapa* Elements we had selected to provide the most meaningful parenting guidance for each of the parenting scenarios explored within Daily Growth. During our final consultation, we sought their input into the drafted scripts and they provided minor suggestions in our language across each of the parenting scenarios. This also suggested a small change in the language used in the 30 parenting scenarios whereby the word “whining” was replaced with “whinging” which was viewed as a more appropriate way to frame this parenting scenario. We also took this opportunity to consult the *Wisdom Circle* around who might be featured as “talking heads” in the co-created videos. We were eager to see the inclusion of our *Wayapa* Daily Growth content team, but also to honour both *Hunter* and *Gatherer* Elements through the inclusion of male and female voices. They embraced both ideas, particularly recognising the power of having *Wayapa* Practitioners sharing *Wayapa Ways*. The content team practiced deep listening, or *Dadirri* (Ungunmerr-Baumann et al., 2022), during exchanges with the *Wisdom Circle*, which facilitated learning through attentive and reverent listening.

Finally, working with the broader Daily Growth team, we established a way of working – and being with – that could successfully bring the aims of Daily Growth to life. The *Wayapa* Daily Growth content team was formed, comprising five highly experienced *Wayapa* practitioners [SJ, *Wayapa* co-founder; JS, *Wayapa* training manager and cultural lead; LT, *Wayapa* General Manager and early years learning program coordinator; JT, *Wayapa* early years learning program design and trainer; and Bundjalung researcher and *Wayapa* Practitioner, MP], collectively bringing together cultural wisdom and expertise in early childhood care. Our content team worked in partnership with the Deakin-based Daily Growth research team, regularly exchanging ideas and insights. This collaborative exchange not only ensured alignment and harmony across the 3 Daily Growth programs but also created a space for mutual learning and an opportunity to challenge potential colonial assumptions that continue devalue and disrespect Indigenous parenting practices and child rearing approaches. We use the term co-creation to describe a collaborative and iterative process grounded in mutual learning, shared decision-making, and cultural guidance.

An important example of this was how we worked closely with the Daily Growth app-design team, emphasising the need for diversity and inclusion in the imagery of the app. In my yarn with Maria Bates, who oversaw the app design for Daily Growth, she spoke to me about the cultural knowledge that the *Wayapa* team brought to the project:

The key thing I have learnt is that people respond best to things that they can relate to and see themselves in. When it comes to visualizations, whether they are of real people or representations of people or culture – audiences need to feel that the images are talking to them in order to engage and respond to it. I like how *Wayapa* has the elemental approach because from our investigations, parents want to have quick takeaways or little formulas of knowledge, and the *Wayapa* elements have provided that. (M. Bates, personal communication, August 13, 2024)

Feeling respected in the ways we wanted our material to be showcased allowed us to lean into a deeper commitment for the Daily Growth project.

Within our own *Wayapa* content team, we regularly drew on the *Wayapa* Elements to support and guide our way of working. For example, when we felt stuck or uncertain, we would reflect on the *Air* element, symbolised by the eagle – as well as all other creatures of flight. The *Wayapa Air* Element reminds us to rise above and look at our situation from fresh perspectives. Implementing the *Wayapa Air* Element helped us pause and reassess at key moments; circling back when we had gained enough distance to consider our ideas in a new way. This way of working mirrors Indigenous ways of being, where learning is understood as a gradual process, and knowledge is shared over time following reflection and integration (Yunkaporta, 2020, pp. 20–22). At other times, we drew on the *Wayapa Tree* Element. This Element teaches us about the tree's ability to root deeply into the land in order to survive adverse weather conditions – reminding us to stay grounded during times of turbulence. Trees also support one another by sending nutrients through their advanced and interconnected root systems (Kimmerer, 2013). Inspired by this reciprocity found in nature, our team worked relationally – drawing on Indigenous principles of interconnectedness – in order to create content that supported not only the wellbeing of parents and carers, but also ourselves as *Wayapa* practitioners. In my yarn with Justine Tarrant, she elaborated on the *Wayapa Ways* of relationality when approaching this project:

The way we engaged in this process was relationship based – an Indigenous perspective and Indigenous processes. It was heart learning. Our process focused on supporting families to think about how to utilise the process of storytelling to teach concepts. With this approach, *Wayapa* creates a relational way of being that invites parents to think about opportunities to connect with their child and the environment. The fourteen *Wayapa* elements give parents a way to integrate the Earth into childhood education and it supports children with self-regulation, connecting with nature and story. (J. Tarrant, personal communication, September 10, 2024)

What we co-created (Results)

We began by acknowledging that we, and families, are all unique, yet we have a collective experience. We presented our *Wayapa* wisdom in ways that could be embraced and then utilised to suit each family's uniqueness. It was a great opportunity of finding a balance between heart and head. (L. Tarrant, personal communication, August 13, 2024)

In [Table 1](#), I describe how each of the *Wayapa* Elements were drawn on to support and guide parents as they nurture and guide their young ones. A recurring theme is the way that observing the natural cycles of and within nature can help both young children and parents understand and regulate their own emotional rhythms and foster the development of healthy routines. For example, in the context of bedtime routines, as the sun begins to set, we would invite parents to talk with their children about the *Sun* Element preparing to rest and that the world is winding down for the night. Parents might encourage their child to say goodnight to the Sun and welcome the *Moon* Element, who will watch over them as they sleep, offering comfort with its gentle glow.

Another key theme highlights the power of connecting with Country – learning to look, listen and draw on her wisdom. By encouraging their children to connect with the natural world through *Wayapa*, parents can then draw on various stories and metaphors that children are more likely to connect with and often find easier to relate to. For example, in a situation where a child may be

Table 1. The *Wayapa Wuurrk* 14 Elements for the Daily Growth app and their corresponding parental advice.

Element	Parental Advice
	The Creator Element acknowledges all of creation and acknowledges our own creative potential. The Creator Element reminds parents that they created their child and have a responsibility to support their life. Parents can create safe and nurturing ways for children to learn, grow and thrive. The Child becomes the Creator of future generations.
	The Sun Element teaches us about the different cycles in life. We encourage parents to create routines that align with the transitional phases of light and dark by educating their child about the importance of following the natural cycles of the Earth. The Sun Element encourages parents to create routines with their child.
	The Moon Element remind us that we all go through phases in our lives. Every phase in life requires us to adapt in different ways to connect with our surroundings. The Moon Element highlights the constant developmental changes for a child in their early years as well as honours the different phases of parenting that caregivers go through in order to support their child
	The Earth Element teach us about giving back to Country/the Earth. It can apply to the physical or imaginary space a child wants to explore. The Earth Element gives parents language to communicate boundaries around what they consider safe places to explore. It also educates caregivers about the importance of outdoor play.
	The Lightning Element validates feeling “charged up” in difficult situations. The Lightning Element gives parents’ permission to show their feelings to their child and remain firm with their boundaries when necessary. Similarly, the Lightning Element reminds parents that children can “strike like lightning” when they are frustrated.
	The Rain Element acknowledges the healthy need to express emotions. Both children and parents are validated that heightened emotions and tears are OK. The Rain Element connects us with our individual and collective history on this planet, as all the water on Earth has been here since the beginning. The Rain Element can be a great way to explore ways to care for Country and our own emotional wellbeing.
	The Wind Element helps children understand the importance of shifting their energy through movement and exercise. Free movement and expression are especially important when household tensions arise, as long as these movements don’t hurt anyone. The Wind Element teaches both parent and child the importance of pausing and taking a breath when they are feeling overwhelmed.
	The Tree Element asks both parent and child to embody the characteristics of a tree. It reminds us to stay grounded and strong when necessary. It also reminds us to remain flexible and open to change. It teaches how to assess situations and find a balance between knowing when to stay firm, but also when to be malleable. The Tree Element acknowledges that caregivers hold so much, and it is important to reach out to a network of support.
	The Air Element reminds caregivers to observe challenging parental situations from different perspectives. It asks parents to pause, take space if possible, and wait a moment before we react. The Air Element highlights the different developmental capacity of an adult and a child. It encourages caregivers to consider if they hold unrealistic expectations of their child.
	The Land Element teaches us about self-care. We use this language to educate children about the importance of looking after themselves, and how our role as a parent is to care for them. The Land Element reminds parents and children of the importance of community (trusted friends and/or family networks) that can help support the child-rearing process.
	The Water Element teaches us about our internal instincts and intuition. It reminds caregivers that children are on a learning journey – and so are we. This is a gentle ebb and flow of constant renegotiation. The Water Element encourages both parent and child to explore what feels safe but also acknowledges that guided independence is needed for a child as they mature.
	The Hunter Element asks caregivers to embody the mentor role for their child. The Hunter Element gives language for communicating the need for parents to protect their children. The Hunter used tools to keep their family safe and provide for their community, therefore, when caregivers embody the Hunter Element it acknowledges the parental necessity to build skills, remain alert, calm and action orientated.
	The Gatherer Element asks caregivers to embody a nurturing role for their child. It focuses on teaching parent/child emotional regulation and the need for emotional safety within our families. The Gatherer Element models different ways that caregivers can be resourceful and intentional with their actions to educate their children about emotional wellbeing. The Gatherer Element embodies the caregiver trait of nourishing their family through food, secure-attachment and skills for positive relationship building.
	The Child Element recognises that every child is unique, and developmental timelines vary. It validates caregivers that they know their child best and they have the capacity to model different ways of being to their child unique to their own family and circumstances. The Child Element encourages parents to remain open-hearted during the varying stages and challenges of child-rearing.

resisting an end to screen time, parents might draw on the *Land* element, symbolised by the Kangaroo and all land-dwelling animals. They might encourage their child to think about the Kangaroo, who reminds us there are times for play and times for rest. In doing so, we can support children to understand that everything we do needs to be in balance. We know that children are naturally connected and open to learning from their environments – by using *Wayapa* in this way, we also support children to feel a sense of belonging to the natural world, fostering their earth-centred wellbeing.

We also encourage parents to observe Country as ways to better understand themselves and their young ones. For example, the *Wayapa* Air Element might invite a parent to imagine their child as a baby bird, still learning to fly. In this way, it gently reminds parents that, like baby birds, young children need time and patience to grow and learn new things – and helps ease the frustration that can rise when they don’t do things right the first time. The *Wayapa* Air Element also invites caregivers to “rise above” challenging parenting situations and to look at a child’s behaviour from a “birds-eye” view. In practice, this element asks parents to internally investigate if there is a deeper need hidden beneath a behavioural expression – i.e.,

Wayapa Ways, Parenting scenario 26: Child having a meltdown when screen is turned off

In this scenario, we use the Wayapa Lightning Element to support children to consider how being over-stimulated can be unhelpful at times. The parental advice offered by the Lightning Element encourages them to playfully engage with their child around how activities like screen-time can charge them up too much, reinforcing the need for limits. It also encourages them to share how the Lightning Element can also provide their child with good advice as to how to re-charge and ground themselves. Wayapa scripts written for this scenario included such guidance as: "It can be challenging when our child is having a meltdown when the screen is turned off. In times like this we can look towards the teachings of Wayapa to guide us. The Wayapa Lightning Element is a great tool to use in this situation. It reminds us that we can all feel charged up at times and we can discharge that energy with movement and expression". Parents are then encouraged to support their child to discharge their energy by role-playing being a Storm through dance and movement. Alongside, drawing on Wayapa's emphasis on supporting parents to connect with their children through shared experience, they are also encouraged to talk about their own experiences of feeling over-stimulated and what is helpful for them: "As parents, we can also be vulnerable with our children by letting them know that sometimes we also struggle with screen time boundaries. We know if we don't turn off our screen, we may feel overloaded and may be ready to explode into fire so we calm our storm by disconnecting from the screen and reconnecting to the Wayapa Elements".

Wayapa Ways, Parenting scenario 20: Child resisting getting in/out of car

In this scenario, we used the Wayapa Wind Element to explain the concept of change to children. The parental advice offered by the Wind Element comes in two ways. First, we encourage parents to explain to their child the concept of the wind: the wind is always there and it's important, the wind is moving – sometimes slowly and sometimes fast. The wind helps to carry pollen and seeds all around our planet and keep our ecosystem alive. Relating the Wind Element asks a parent to encourage a child's imagination by saying: "We are little seeds being carried around in the wind. We have important work to be done and our special car helps carry us from place to place". The second way we encourage parents to implement the Wayapa Wind Element is in a physical exercise if the child has excess energy needing to be expelled before they are bound in a car seat. We encourage parents to join their child in shaking out excess energy by "moving like the wind". A parent might ask their child: "are you a gentle breeze or a stormy gale?". Together the parent and child move their bodies like the wind before getting into their vehicle with hopes of creating exhaustion in the child so they will settle and potentially sleep in the car trip.

if our child is displaying challenging behaviour, are they trying to express that they need more support or attention?

The Elements are also drawn on to highlight the importance of the interconnectedness between family members and the wider community. By drawing on the Hunter, Gatherer and Child Elements collectively, parents are empowered to embrace their various familial and community roles and responsibilities. For example, with predictable routines leading up to moments of separation for a young child – such as being left with another parent or carer so that a parent can take on a *Hunter* role – parents can use these moments to share knowledge about the strength of their child's kinship systems and community networks. This can help children understand that everyone has special roles and responsibilities – including them – within a broader, supportive network of connection. Parents are also reminded about intergenerational and collective wellbeing – for themselves and their children – as well as how their community and the natural world can reciprocally be drawn on as valuable parenting resources.

Finally, the Elements encourage parents to keep earth-wellness in mind for them and their children – and to explore how joining as a family to care for Country can nurture their bonds while also promoting the wellbeing of the environment. For example, in situations where a child may be demanding an unhealthy or processed snack, parents might reflect with them on the value of eating healthy foods that come directly from the Earth Element. Participating in the creation of a compost might be another way to teach children how food choices can support the environment and represent a shared activity for children and families.

Script development for each of the 30 common parenting scenarios explored in Daily Growth was guided by these themes, as we wove in the wisdom of the *Wayapa* Elements. Importantly, we were also grounded in a commitment not to blame parents for their child's behaviour. Instead, we wished to validate that child-rearing is complex and shaped by various socio-political, cultural and economic influences and that parents are doing their best. The content for each scenario included ways parents could be nurtured through the *Wayapa* wisdom as well as their children as a shared way of being. We viewed this as a critical way to honour the vulnerability, and sometimes shame, that underrepresented groups – particularly Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander parents – may experience and acknowledge that these broader complexities are often overlooked in conventional parenting material.

The Earth has always nurtured and provided for us — and she continues to do so. When we cultivate a deep relationship with our Earth Mother as our caretaker, we, as parents, can draw on her wisdom, strength, and steadfast support to guide us through life’s challenges. She is also a profound teacher of resilience, showing us how to stand strong and endure, even amidst constant change and adversity. In the context of parenting material, Wayapa supports parents because it highlights that we all share a relationship with Mother Earth. This is an important message because some people don’t feel supported by their own families, but they can connect to the feeling that Mother Earth is holding them through their parenting experience while they are doing one of the most important jobs, raising the next generation. (J. Stone, personal communication, August 6, 2024)

Our *Wayapa* parental advice also recognised and acknowledged a broader framework for parent and child wellbeing, akin to the SEWB model. Various scripts reminded parents to tune into their own knowledge sources, whether they be spiritual (for example as depicted by The *Creator* Element) or ancestral (for example, as considered in the *Water* Element) reinforcing their resilience and capacity.

To illustrate how *Wayapa* content was integrated into Daily Growth,

I will share summaries of the scripts developed for two of the 30 parenting scenarios below.

Finally, recognising that some people are visual learners who may engage more with images and iconography, we also implemented visual learning tools as an alternate way to represent our parenting resources. This was particularly important in acknowledging that Indigenous knowledge is often conveyed through imagery and visual storytelling (Cameron, 2015). Working with the Deakin graphics team we visually represented the 14 *Wayapa* Elements, tailored to suite the aesthetic of the Daily Growth app (Figure 3 and 4).

Recognising the importance of this work, it influenced the visual representation of the other two parenting resources within Daily Growth – Active Play and Emotion Coaching (see Figure 5 and 6) – further highlighting the value of Two-eyed Seeing approaches in research. This value was expressed in my yarn with Design Research Assistant Kayla Redpath, as she spoke about unknown design bias:

This project has been incredibly important for my design and academic career as working with Wayapa made me question how designers can show diversity and inclusivity. As designers, we create images, and ultimately, our



Figure 3. The 14 Wayapa Elements for the Daily Growth program (Westrupp et al., 2025).

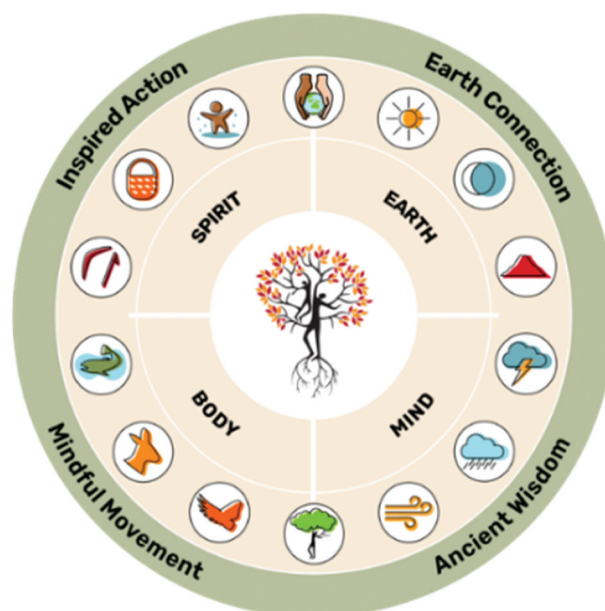


Figure 4. The Wayapa for Daily Growth parenting resources framework (Westrupp et al., 2025).



Figure 5. The Active Play for Daily Growth project parenting resources framework (Westrupp et al., 2025).

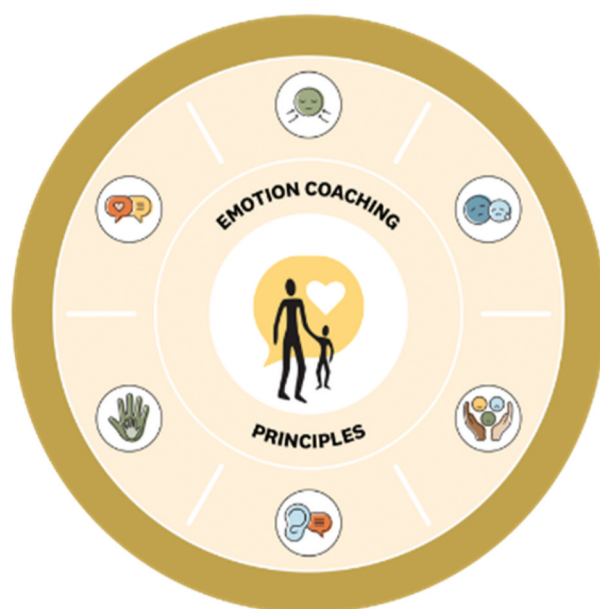


Figure 6. The Emotion Coaching for Daily Growth parenting resources framework (Westrupp et al., 2025).

work comes from our own experiences and perspectives. My initial design of the hands for the Creator Element depicted one hand as an outline. The Wayapa team pointed out that what I saw as an outline and empty space, they saw as a white hand. To me this was groundbreaking and is an example of my own bias and privilege as a designer. This has been a huge turning point for me and has influenced my ongoing academic work where I am exploring the biases in design and the lack of inclusive representation. (K. Redpath, personal communication, August 13, 2024)

The next steps on the path (Discussion)

To their detriment, tertiary places of learning in Australia have largely failed to elevate Indigenous Knowledges across many disciplines, including psychology. In doing so, they miss the transformative potential offered by

frameworks such as Two-eyed Seeing. I have been honoured to learn from, and work with, my fellow Wayapa Practitioners, deepening my understanding of how Earth connection and stewardship can nurture and enrich the lives of children and families. As both an Aboriginal wellbeing practice and a method of enquiry, Wayapa expands our understanding of wellbeing and invites us to re-consider ways of knowing (Professor Melissa O'Shea, Senior Author, personal communication, 14 August, 2025).

A central aim of Daily Growth was to address the persistent disparity in socio-emotional outcomes between Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and non-Indigenous children – which remains a deeply entrenched and complex challenge in Australia (Darwin et al., 2023). By applying a Two-eyed Seeing lens (Roher et al., 2021), we have sought to highlight how Indigenous and Western knowledge systems can offer distinct and potentially complementary approaches to supporting parents and carers in navigating the common challenges of early childhood, while fostering emotional regulation and socioemotional wellbeing in their children. Through integrating parenting resources based on *Wayapa Ways* - alongside Active Play and Emotion Coaching – we also honour the importance of practice-based evidence being valued alongside evidence-based practice, particularly in consideration to the development of culturally safe and relevant protocols and practices (Gray et al., 2025). We emphasise that Indigenous Knowledge Systems, which guided the development of *Wayapa* and its application in Daily Growth, elevate the consideration of social and cultural factors related to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander parenting in Australia and enable the inclusion of a broader understanding of wellbeing amongst children and their parents and carers more aligned with the SEWB framework (Gee et al., 2014). The inclusion of *Wayapa* significantly strengthened the cultural responsiveness of the other two parenting resources – for instance, through the inclusion of meaningful visual iconography that reflects Indigenous ways of sharing knowledge.

Through its inclusion in Daily Growth, *Wayapa* places Country and earth-connection centrally in its parenting resources, encouraging parents and carers to listen to Country and to draw on the natural Elements within the world as a resource and teacher for them and their developing children. The fundamental relationality between humans and the Earth is highlighted to remind parents of the power of connection and relationship, as they nurture their children and support them to develop the skills to cope with life's opportunities and struggles. This relationship also invites parents and carers to connect with their children through shared opportunities to care for the Earth, actions that can re-orient young children away from day-to-day frustrations, such as putting on their shoes or holding a carer's hand whilst crossing the street! Additionally, *Wayapa* reminds parents and carers they are doing their best, emphasising their strengths and resources, and of a broader network of care and support that they can access, including intergenerational wisdom and Community. By drawing on nature-based metaphors, such as the baby bird learning to fly, *Wayapa* also gently reminds parents that children, like young birds, require time, patience, and support to grow into new skills. While grounded in *Wayapa's* Air Element, this imagery also resonates with Western developmental concepts, including attachment theory, which similarly emphasise the importance of a safe and nurturing base for children to explore and mature. Once again, this illustrates the value of a Two-eyed Seeing approach, weaving Indigenous Earth-centred wisdom with Western psychological perspectives to enrich parenting support for diverse families.

Notably, in their exploration of how Aboriginal and culturally competent non-Aboriginal mental health professionals conceptualise bonding and attachment in Aboriginal families, Nikia Bailey (Ngarrindjeri) and Associate Professor Yvonne Clark (Kokatha and Wirangu) emphasise the deep relationship that exists between Aboriginal people and Country, and its vital role in healthy child development (Bailey & Clark, 2024). They argue that bonding extends beyond a child's birth or blood connections, and that parents can be supported to help their children form a connection to Country as a foundation for their socioemotional wellbeing. Their work also highlighted other key themes: the centrality of Community and kinship in child-rearing practice; the urgent need to move away from deficit-based frameworks often applied to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait parenting; and the inadequacy of many current parenting resources and services in meeting the needs of Aboriginal families. While Daily Growth was designed to be a universal and accessible parenting resource, we hope that the inclusion of *Wayapa* meaningfully responds to some of these concerns.

Importantly, with a focus on connecting with the Earth and the elements found within it, *Wayapa* also imagines a possibility of raising a generation of Australian children that is more aligned with Indigenous ways of being and the understandings of Earth custodianship. In this way, not only do we hope to address

current gaps in the reach of parenting support for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander parents, but we also hope to promote Indigenous knowledges for healthy family life for all Australian families.

Daily Growth is soon to be tested via a cluster randomised controlled trial (RCT) (Westrupp et al., 2025) which will examine the effectiveness of the program on a range of social emotional outcomes for Australian children aged 2–5 years, as well as outcomes for their parents and carers. A sub-study will gather the qualitative perspectives of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australian parents and carers who engage with the *Wayapa* parentings resources, and we look forward to understanding their views and perspectives. Future iterations of Daily Growth may also offer opportunities to expand the current suite of parenting scenarios available to parents, providing for opportunities to further strengthen their relevance to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait parents and carers.

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Data availability statement

This study describes the co-design process of a novel parenting program and as such there is no additional available data.

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Appendix A. Reflexivity statements (all Authors)

Melody Popple is a Bunjalung researcher and artist who is currently completing her Doctorate in Indigenous Philosophies. Melody is a *Wayapa Wuurrk* practitioner, a We-Al li Culturally Informed Trauma Integrated Healing facilitator and a researcher of place-based Country-centred ways of being. Melody is passionate about integrating Indigenous Knowledges into academia and currently works for Deakin University and *Wayapa Wuurrk* alongside Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples to embed earth connection and Indigenous perspectives into the Daily Growth project. Melody balances her academic career by connecting with Country and community through her visual arts practice as well as helping to facilitate Bundjalung-based cultural camps. Melody is a descendant of varying cultural heritages and envisions a future where we celebrate and integrate Indigenous ways of being into western models.

Elizabeth Westrupp is a non-Indigenous Australian woman of New Zealand and European heritage, living on the lands of the Bunurong people in Melbourne, Australia. She's a mum to a wonderfully neurodivergent daughter, a dog with a lot of energy, and a cat who runs the house. A *Wayapa Wuurrk* practitioner, Elizabeth is an Associate Professor and researcher in child development and parenting. Originally trained as a child clinical psychologist within a Western deficit-based model, she has come to recognise how this approach can be harmful for under-served communities, particularly Indigenous families, by placing responsibility for engagement on them rather than critically examining how services are designed. In leading the Daily Growth project, she has sought to shift away from deficit-based frameworks and instead co-design a parenting program that is grounded in Indigenous wisdom, centring relationality, kindness, and connection – to self, others, and the Earth. She is committed to decolonising research and universal parenting programs by learning from and amplifying Indigenous knowledge systems.

Jem Stone is a Bundjalung woman with mixed heritage and is the *Wayapa Wuurrk* training Manager and Cultural lead who is deeply committed to creating safe, inclusive, and decolonised spaces for healing and learning. Living on Wurundjeri Country, Jem weaves Indigenous knowledge systems into education and wellness spaces to foster meaningful connections and transformation. Jem is also a Cultural educator and We Al-li lead facilitator, specialising in intergenerational and historical trauma recovery. Jem believes that reconnection with the Earth and embedding Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing across all services is essential to honouring the brilliance, strength, and enduring wisdom of First Nations peoples. Jem is a proud mother and grandmother and travels both nationally and internationally to share this work and walks gently with the Earth in stewardship.

Sara Jones was born and raised in Canada until she was a 14 when her Welsh parents decided to move countries again and set up the family in Australia in 1982. For over 20 years, Sara has had the privilege of working and living in Aboriginal communities across Australia and is currently living on beautiful Bunurong Boonwurrung Country. In 2014, Sara co-founded *Wayapa Wuurrk* P/L as an Indigenous Social Enterprise and co-created the *Wayapa Wuurrk* wellness modality which has 400+ certified practitioners who are passionate sharers of the *Wayapa Ways*. Sara is passionate about sharing the gift of *Wayapa* to create earth mind body spirit wellness for all beings of this planet; honouring and embedding Indigenous ways; and creating belonging and purpose through activated earth reciprocity. Sara loves being an aunt and a fur-baby mum; is trained in business, energy healing & breathwork; is a superfan of all ancient wellness practices; and is in awe of the interconnectedness of everything we know and beyond.

Leslie Tarrant was born in New Zealand and has made Australia her home since 2002. Of Niuean, Māori, Irish, and American Samoan heritage, her cultural background shapes her perspective and approach to education. She became a *Wayapa* Practitioner in 2019 and, in time, took on a greater role in advancing the *Wayapa* vision for education. Alongside her sister, Justine, she played a key role in developing the School Readiness Funding Program, establishing its systems, processes, and supporting materials. During the creation phase of the education program, Leslie wrote *Learning the Wayapa Way*, a book in verse, which was illustrated by Justine, with the intention of sharing it within the program. As the program expanded, she stepped into the role of General Manager to support growth across the organisation. Her work is guided by a deep commitment to embedding Indigenous wisdom into education, fostering stronger connections to culture, sustainability, and holistic well-being for children and educators alike. Leslie believes in living with purpose and contributing to the well-being of humanity and our world, ensuring future generations inherit a deeper sense of connection and responsibility.

Justine Tarrant was born in Aotearoa, and acknowledges her unique Niuean, Māori, Irish, and American Samoan descent. As an educational professional and holistic wellbeing advocate, Justine has dedicated decades to fostering holistic wellbeing within educational settings and developing programs that expand both hearts & minds. Justine began her teaching by delivering bilingual education (Māori/English) in New Zealand embedding Tikanga Māori before moving to mainstream education and gaining leadership roles for integrating holistic wellbeing pedagogy and practice. Upon relocation to Australia, she ventured into early childhood education as an educator and parent, bringing a unique lens to embedding holistic Indigenous perspectives and processes into early learning environments. Later, leading to assuming educational leadership roles, Justine created and delivered professional development programs and mentoring to early learning educators and services. Justine is Kind Connections Learning and is dedicated to embedding wellbeing into educational communities, both in policy and practice. Her role supporting *Wayapa Wuurrk* as the Educational Leader was instrumental in securing *Wayapa Wuurrk* a place on the Victorian School Readiness Funding (SRF) menu. Justine designed and delivered the professional development program aimed at building capacity for *Wayapa Wuurrk* practitioners and early

learning professionals, to use responsive strategies that support wellbeing, access, and inclusion. Justine's knowledge and experience in Indigenous pedagogies, professional development, and research informed practice demonstrates her dedication to elevate Indigenous methodologies within education. This project reflects her ongoing commitment to advancing holistic, culturally grounded approaches that support the wellbeing of children, educators, and community.

Maria Bates is a non-Indigenous Australian woman who lives and works on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. A mother of two, she is a researcher and educator with extensive experience collaborating with community-based organisations to develop inclusive strategies through a human-centred design lens. Her work focuses on how co-design can shape effective community health interventions. Currently, Maria is undertaking a PhD to develop a specialised, multidisciplinary toolkit that integrates design and health research methodologies.

Kayla Redpath is a non-Indigenous woman living on the unceded lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. She is a researcher and graphic designer with a practice grounded in inclusive, culturally respectful and reflective design. In the *Daily Growth* project, Kayla was responsible for the creation of all graphical elements and video content, working with *Wayapa Wuurrk* to translate their knowledge and wisdoms into accessible visual narratives. Her involvement in the project, and the opportunity to collaborate with *Wayapa Wuurrk*, deeply influenced the direction of her Honours research and exegesis titled *Interrogating Design Thinking and Personal Bias in Australian Graphic Design*.

Sarah Hardgrove is a non-Indigenous woman living and working on Naarm (Melbourne), on the unceded lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. She lives in an intentional co-housing community with her cat and a vibrant network of people committed to sustainability, connection, and shared living. Sarah is currently completing her Master of Clinical Psychology at Deakin University, where her research explores the experiences of parents engaging with *Wayapa Wuurrk* as part of the *Daily Growth* project. With a background in horticulture and a deep appreciation for embodied nature connection practices and Indigenous wisdom, Sarah is committed to integrating these values into her clinical practice, research, and daily life. She approaches this work with humility, curiosity, and a desire to listen and learn from First Nations peoples, honouring the cultural knowledge at the heart of *Wayapa*.

Melisa O'Shea is a non-Indigenous mother, Psychologist, Academic and Yoga Teacher and Practitioner. She lives and works on Wadawurrung Country (Geelong) and has an interest in the interweaving of Western and Complementary and Ancient practices for wellbeing. She is a member of the Australian Indigenous Psychology Education Project (AIPEP) and has undertaken considerable Cultural awareness and safety training led by Aboriginal scholars and academics. She works with *Wayapa* to support them to grow knowledge around the practice and how Indigenous wisdom can heal Country and address disconnection. Melissa supports the Uluru Statement of the Heart and efforts to decolonise Psychology.