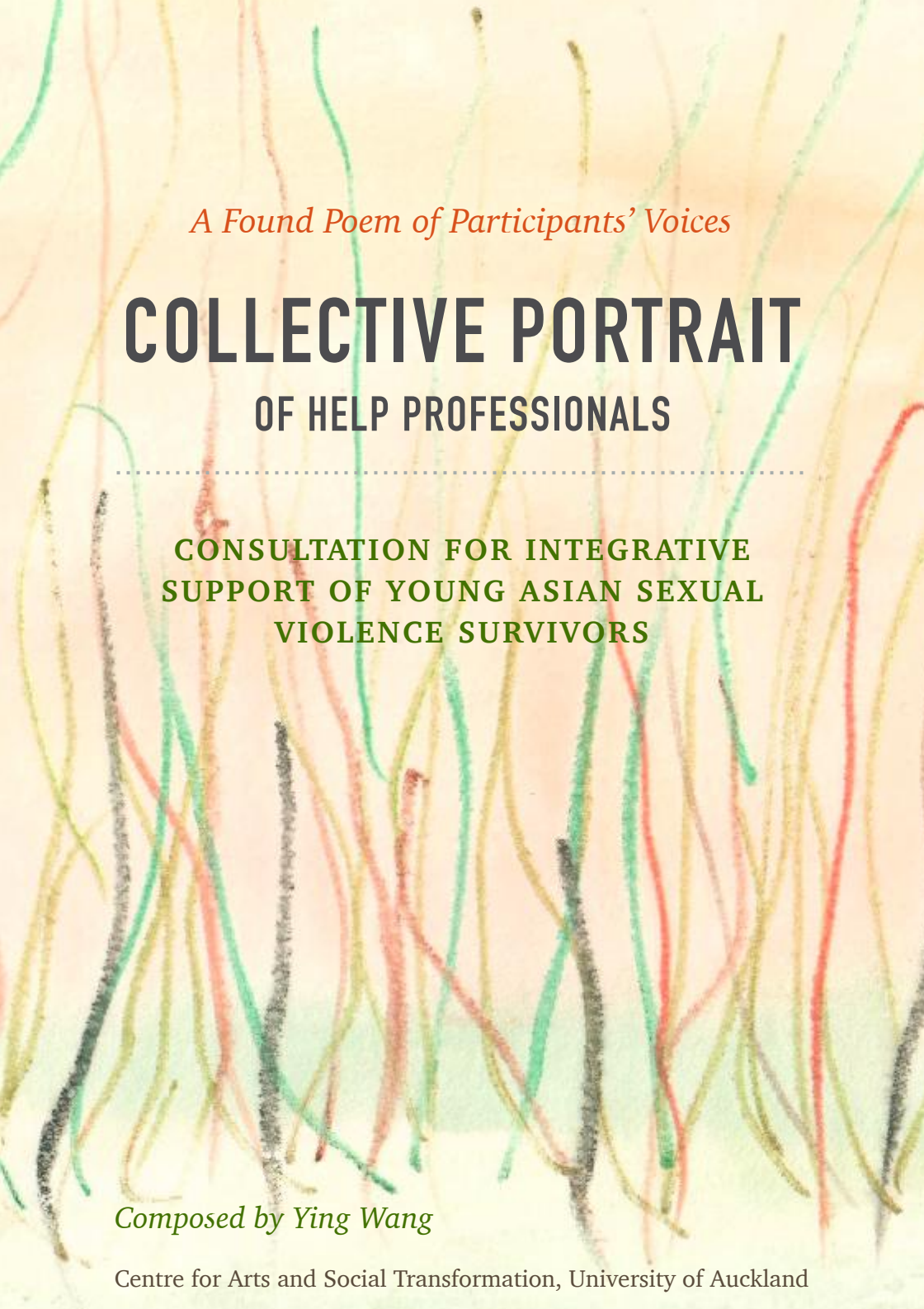




A Found Poem of Participants' Voices

COLLECTIVE PORTRAIT OF HELP PROFESSIONALS

CONSULTATION FOR INTEGRATIVE
SUPPORT OF YOUNG ASIAN SEXUAL
VIOLENCE SURVIVORS

Composed by Ying Wang

Centre for Arts and Social Transformation, University of Auckland



An AI-generated image in response to a participant's artwork
(Microsoft Copilot, 2025)

Foreword

.....

This poem is a creative component of the research report for the *Consultation for Integrative Support of Young Asian Sexual Violence Survivors* project. It was created using the found poetry method, which draws directly from participants' narratives collected during arts-based interviews and focus groups. Only minor edits were made for clarity, such as adjusting tenses, pronouns, and punctuation.

Each of the 24 selected artworks is paired with six lines of found phrases. The metaphors in the poem emerged spontaneously and individually from participants, revealing surprisingly common themes through this arts-based analysis process. This poetic inquiry invites readers to engage more authentically with the lived experiences shared by the participants.

The collective voices of the helping professionals reflect the emotional nuances, conditions, and challenges they experience while providing support services to the community. Full study findings are detailed in the project report.

This poem is dedicated to the compassionate individuals supporting young survivors of sexual violence and their families. I extend heartfelt thanks to the participants who shared their voices, and to the team at the Centre for Arts and Social Transformation, University of Auckland, for their unwavering support.

This project was funded with a Health Research Council Activation Grant.

Ying Wang, 2025

This study received ethical approval from the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee in 2025 (UAHPEC28591).
(Cover image: Participant's artwork, watercolour)

Water

1

.....

I am water, looking for the waterways and helping to find the flow.
I witness stuckness; there is a thickness of the materials underneath.
I am trying to support them to see what's underneath -
The sufferings and pain, the blackness.
I am trying to help them find a little stream of water
In the very dry seasons, nourishing that land, that earth.



(Narratives and artwork by an educator/therapist, Taiwanese/Chinese)

Water

2

.....

I am water too, to support those struggling to cope.
They need the time and attention -
The undivided attention from everyone around them.
Water can carry the boat back and can also drown boats.
I am learning to swim alongside them,
With waves up and down.



(Narratives and artwork by an arts therapist, Chinese)

Boat

3

.....

I am the little boat on a lake.

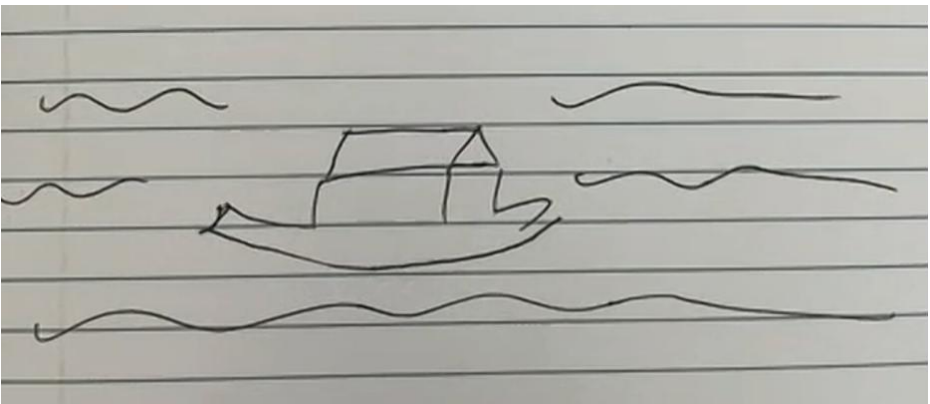
I invite my clients to be on the boat.

I am not the main driver, with no set destination.

Under this canopy, a very private space.

I am a companion who provides a safe space.

Through our conversation, they start to find their own direction.



(Narratives and artwork by a counsellor, Chinese)

Boat

4

.....

I am a lifeboat in a choppy sea - the conduit to move them on board.
The boat faces towards safety, opportunity and grounding feet
As a rescue vessel, I make sure they feel safe,
Listen or hear without any shame or judgment.
Take them on a journey to where they want to step off,
When they are able to make their way through the dark shallows.



(Narratives and artwork by a well-being advisor, New Zealand European)

Fire

5

.....

I am campfire, a warm place to approach.

I need firewood too - a whole pile of firewood.

The firewood is the people, colleagues, family and my dog.

And the arts are a way to manage the big, harsh cold.

The fire is bigger than the cold.

It gives a bit more hope.



(Narratives and artwork by an arts therapist, South African European)

Fire

6

.....

I am fire too, but a candle fire isn't small either.
It gives warmth and light,
Providing them with some hope in the darkness,
Helping them to live a life,
Regain their confidence and begin to care for themselves.
See, they become steadier and calmer in the darkness.



(Narratives and artwork by a counsellor, Chinese)

Light

7

.....

I have burned myself out like a candle before, truly.

I wanted to save everyone and was full of passion.

Then, a lot of disappointment, too.

I don't want to burn myself out again - I've got nothing left to burn.

Now, I'd rather be a bridge, helping others cross.

Their readiness differs, so I take a step back and meet them halfway.



(Narratives and artwork by a psychologist, Chinese)

Light

8

.....

I am a small desk lamp offering a limited light - a small light.

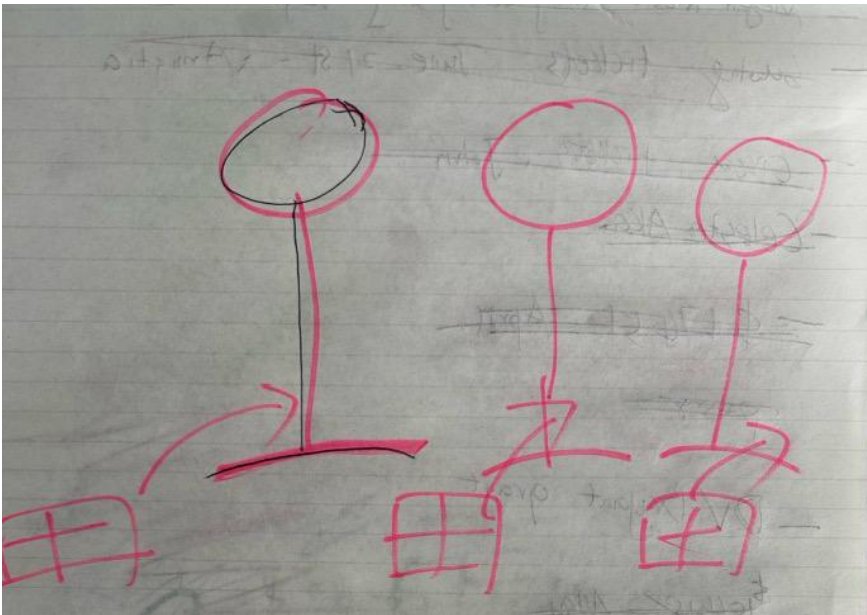
I don't have a power source to charge me,

Not enough physical and mental energy or time.

They are not very willing to talk about these things openly.

I help them receive better support, to maximise the light.

I can only do what I can within my limited time and energy.



(Narratives and artwork by a coordinator of a support provider, Chinese)

.....

I am a lighthouse - looks like a strong woman.

With a lightbulb on top - looks like a human head.

Here, the beacon of light, soft and colourful light, says: I am here.

Providing safety, guidance, or direction.

I have to be who I am and be authentic in myself.

They give me the gift of what they hold.



(Narratives and artwork by a counsellor, Indian)

.....

I am the light of breaking dawn,
Rising again at the deepest low.
A sprouting seed coming up from the soil.
Everyone has their low points.
I help these new lives restart, to be reborn and grow anew.
Rising again means a whole new life.



(Narratives and artwork by a teacher, Chinese)

.....

The sunlight on these soft cushions – protecting them.

Small, less intimidating; no repercussions.

Creating a safe space where they feel okay to say anything.

We just talk together and work out something together.

Revealing about myself is part of the work,

This can allow them to open up and feel safer.



12

.....

These trees represent my clients metaphorically.
Many of them are facing various life challenges and uncertainties.
I am the sunlight above these trees.
I help them to see hope.
As long as they're willing to seek direction,
Their lives can still be renewed and grow again.



13

.....

I am a tree too, but the only one here.
I feel lonely, with a lot of responsibilities.
I ground myself, with a big canopy for people to rest.
I see little progress in them; we progress together -
Reaching a fruitful stage, and flowers too.
Different seasons for different things.



(Narratives and artwork by a counsellor, Chinese)

.....

I am a tree too, but very isolated.

They are under this small tree.

In the stormy weather, I cannot protect them from everything.

They are in denial by not engaging.

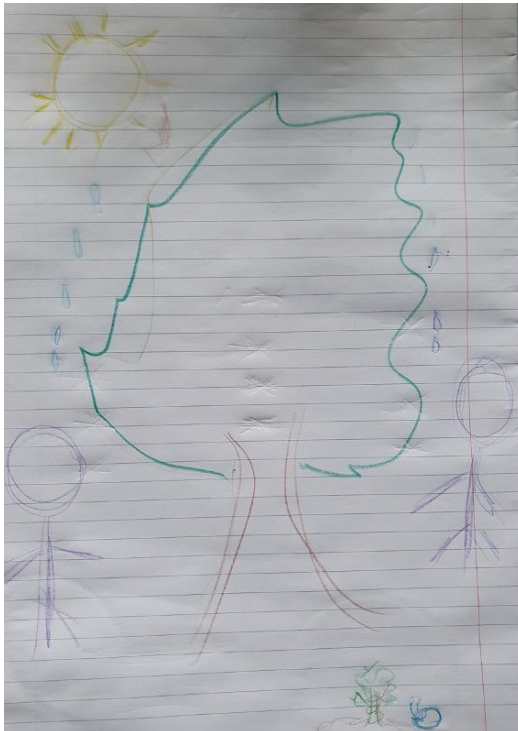
Sometimes I need to let them go for another transit time.

I hope there will be more trees to provide some shelter.



.....

I am a pine tree, and I can withstand quite a lot of things.
I create a conducive environment, and I am part of the environment.
I use a little bit of my influence for other trees to keep growing.
I cut off some leaves and pruned nasty vines that are suffocating the tree.
Sometimes it could be like a more major surgery.
Keep working, stay really strong and try to thrive.



.....

I am a cinnamon tree - yes, the cinnamon you eat.

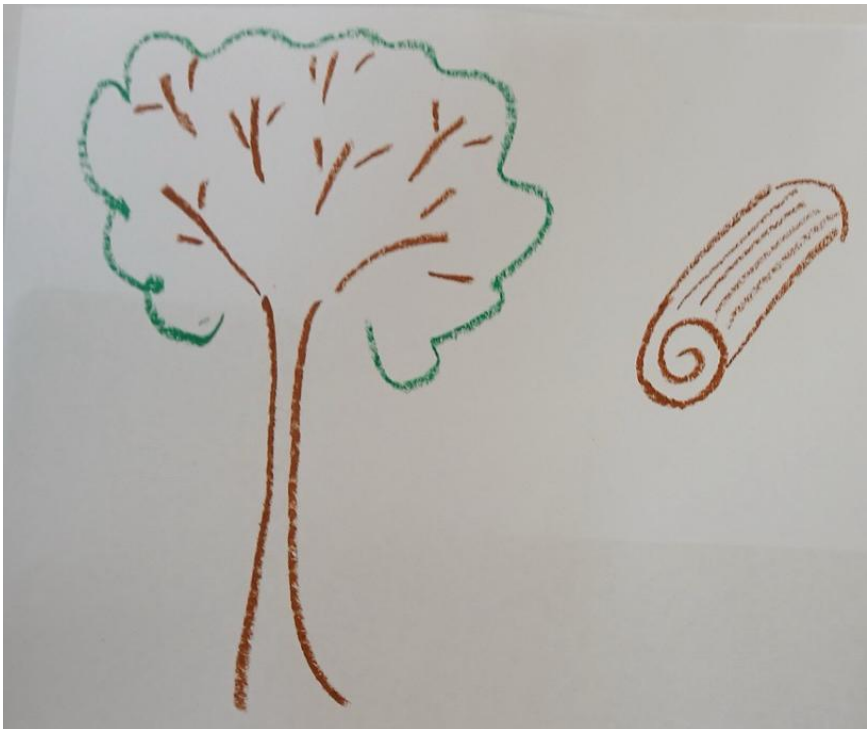
It is a herb in Chinese medicine, opening up the energy pathways.

I look at things with a wholesome, holistic perspective.

To observe external signs, like the dull or grey colour of the leaves.

To identify what's wrong at the root and what nutrients are missing.

Only when you truly see them will they be willing. It is a cultural trait.



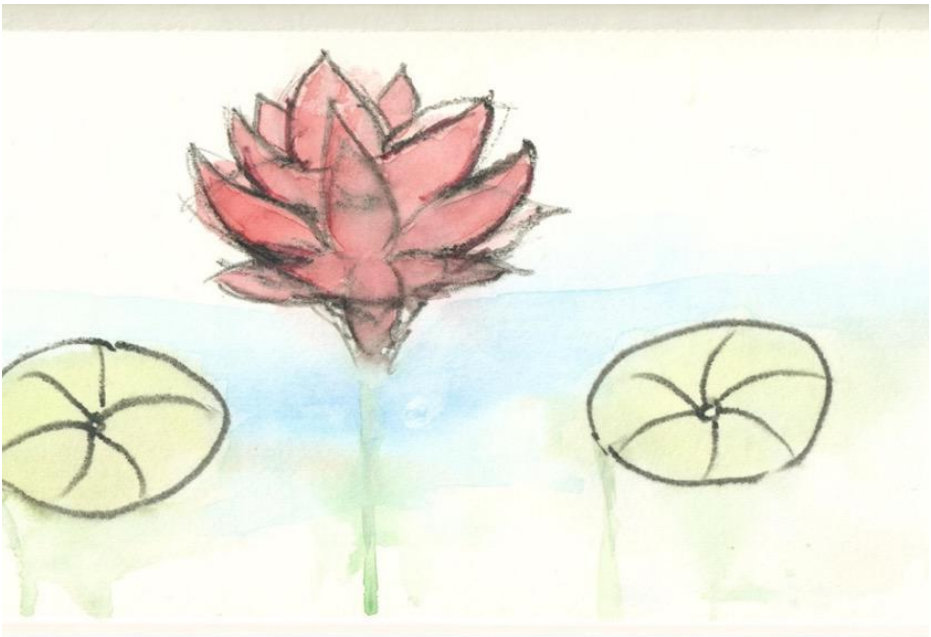
.....

I'm the garden or nature, supporting butterflies to emerge from pupae.
When I first met her, she was sad, didn't want to talk - just crying.
Now she is bold and happy, like a butterfly free.
With small plants, water or a stream around.
Being available for them is so important.
Keep my smile in a very stressful workplace.



.....

I am a lotus flower, blooming in the muddy water.
Transform or assimilate some of the things from the past.
We can grow from it, then become something beautiful and hopeful.
The lotus leaves are big, for frogs or insects to land.
It's an exchange and it's a relationship -
It's both me and the clients.



.....

I am the Koru, for renewal and regrowth.

I am helping them help themselves -

Giving the agency and power to them rather than being a helper.

It's hard to feel that deep sadness.

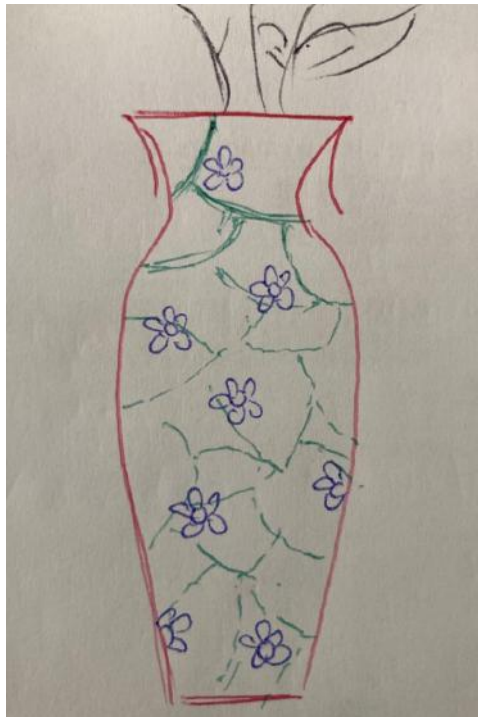
A part of it is the humanness.

The whole healing journey is a lot bigger than this.



.....

There is a spectacular porcelain vase for the plants and flowers.
It was hit and shattered into 100 or a million broken pieces.
The next step is overwhelming, like climbing an endless mountain.
I am a Kintsugi artist collecting the pieces,
Pulling every single piece step-by-step back together,
Lacing it with gold, so it will become even more beautiful.



.....

I am waiting outside their wall.

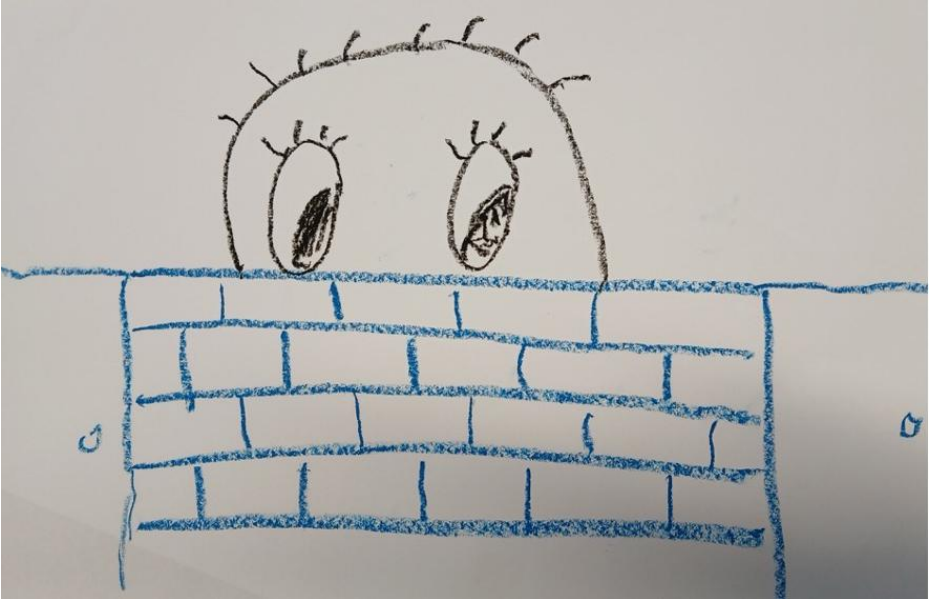
The wall protects them, but also blocks them.

They need to build their trust, to give me the opportunity.

But it's their choice, their willingness.

I have big eyes; it is important -

To catch them with curious eyes.





I am a snow leopard, hiding from the system.

In these harsh conditions, this is survival.

Nobody can see me - I am invisible.

I am invisible until life starts speaking.

I speak on behalf of them, the clients.

I am invisible when needed and loud when needed.



I am the red string or a connector.

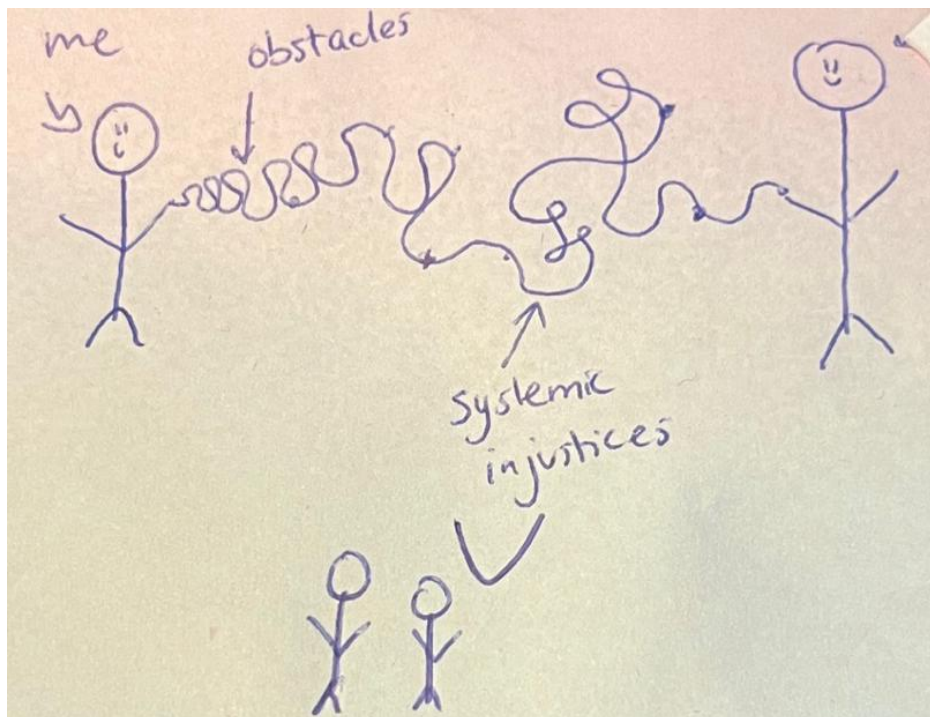
The string might be tangled and knotted.

Different obstacles - I untangle it.

I can't be the only one unravelling them.

We'd be working together, getting rid of all obstacles.

Then, we would be together at the end.



.....

I am a teddy bear with a very warm presence -
Calming and grounding presence.
When things are a bit shaky,
A warm thing to hold onto or look to.
The rest of their journey is huge and overwhelming.
I am small, but a big comfort, just being there.



We are ...

We, water, boat, fire, light, plants, and our presence.

We are all in the choppy ocean, also swimming.

In the darkness, we meet with them.

We also have a vulnerability; there is no solid land.

We need to be safe to provide safety.

We are struggling in two cultures, two systems.

A big elephant is just sitting there,

Trying not to see.

Saving, saving, saving...

Compromising everyone's safety.



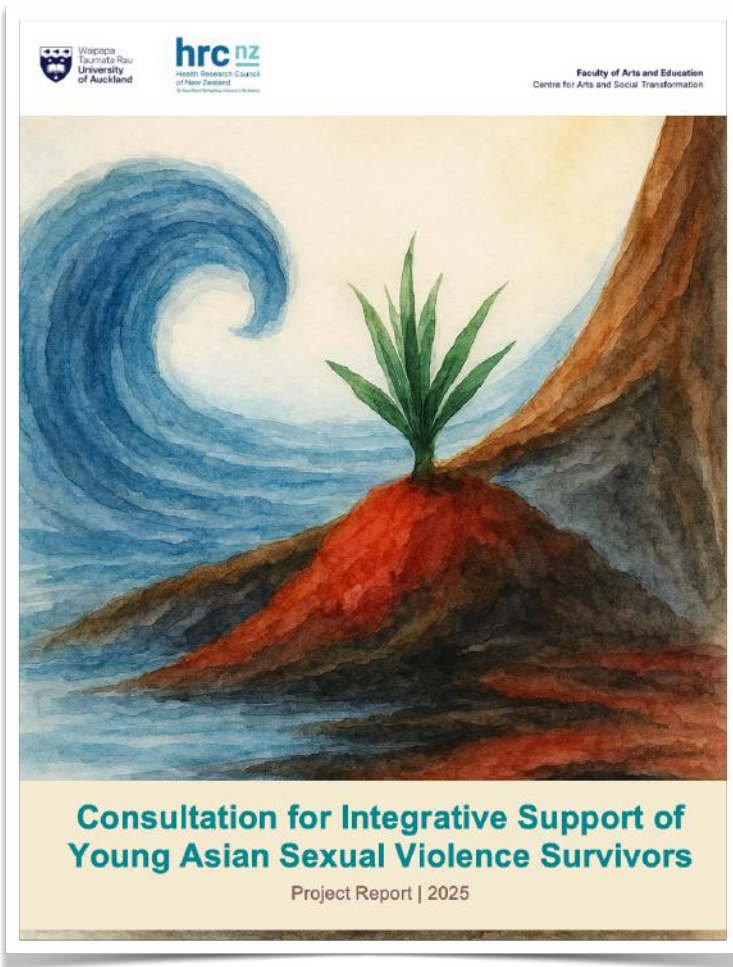
(Collective art-making by participants from help professions)



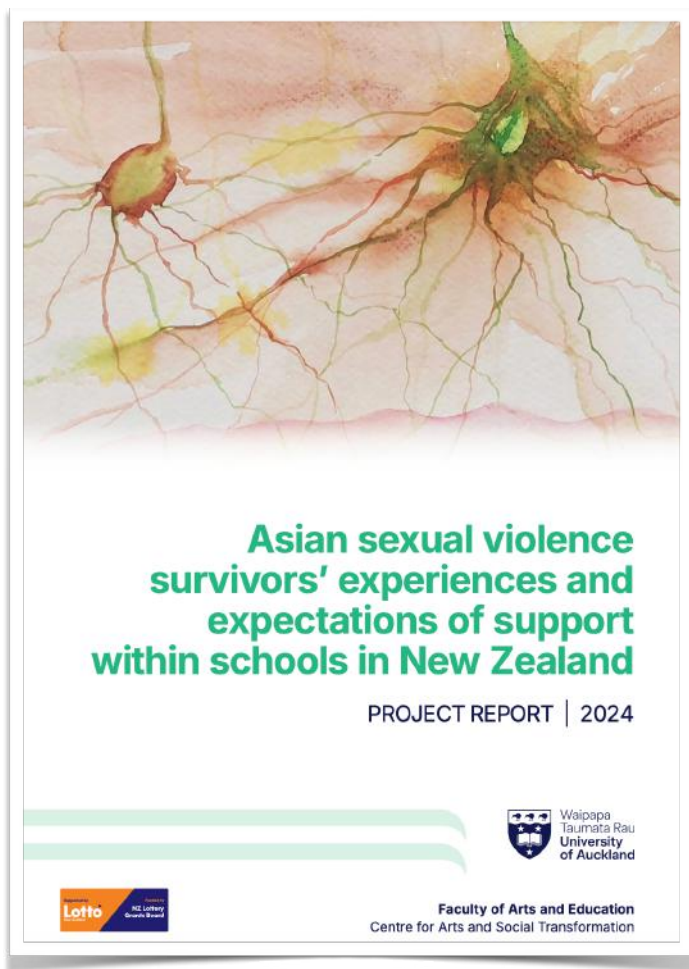
“We are all in the choppy ocean, also swimming.”

An AI-generated image in response to a participant's artwork (Microsoft Copilot, 2025)

Relevant studies:



This project, funded by a Health Research Council Activation Grant, builds on a key finding from a previous project, *Asian Sexual Violence Survivors' Experiences and Expectations of Support within Schools in New Zealand*, which identified significant gaps in support services for young Asian sexual violence survivors in Aotearoa New Zealand. In response, this study employed an innovative, arts-based methodology to explore the current working models, conditions and challenges within the support systems for young Asian individuals affected by sexual violence.



This project, funded by a Lottery Health Research Grant, employed an innovative, culturally responsive, and age-appropriate approach to understanding young Asian sexual violence survivors' lived experiences and expectations of support within schools in New Zealand. This study draws from the current challenges schools face in delivering support for young Asian individuals affected by sexual violence and intends to explore this topic through different perspectives, such as teachers, school counsellors, and caregivers, and the centrally important views of young Asian sexual violence survivors themselves.

To be referenced as: Wang, Y. (2025). *Collective portrait of help professionals: A found poem of participants' voices*. Centre for Arts and Social Transformation, University of Auckland



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