

COMMUNITY

## Local project gives a chance to share our stories

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Brodie Everist

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*TELLING OUR STORIES: Neighbourhood centre receptionist Annelise Stone and manager Jill Graham are happy to work with Kintsugi Heroes to help record locals' experiences of the Black Summer bushfires. PHOTO: Brodie Everist Id:34476*

MYRTLEFORD Neighbourhood Centre is partnering with 'Kintsugi Heroes' to tell the Alpine Shire's personal stories of the Black Summer bushfires.

Kintsugi Heroes is an organisation that works with those who have suffered trauma or adverse circumstances to record and publish their experience, both as a process of healing and to create a permanent historical record to help others.

Working with the Myrtleford Neighbourhood Centre, they are seeking to interview people in the Alpine Shire impacted by the 2019–2020 Black Summer bushfires.

The recorded conversations will be edited and issued as podcasts, while transcripts of interviews will be edited and issued in a book.

"So the idea is just to get the communication going," Kintsugi Heroes founder and chief executive officer Ian Westmoreland said.

"It's incredibly therapeutic when people actually start to speak and know that other people are listening."

The name Kintsugi Heroes comes for the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery with lacquer and gold, meaning the breakage is not only visible, but a cherished part of the pottery.

"When you look at the crockery or whatever the item was, you see that it's been through difficulty, but it's now far more valuable than before," Mr Westmoreland said.

"The people going through adversity, like bushfires, it actually increased their value in terms of their ability to support the people around them and the community."

"We label each of these people who share their story kintsugi heroes."

According to Mr Westmoreland, Kintsugi Heroes have worked with a range of people to tell their stories, including migrants and refugees, people with disabilities and gender-diverse people.

For those interested in being interviewed for the project, Mr Westmoreland said the first step is to chat with him.

"I can explain how the process works," he said.

"I can even show examples of some of the other conversations that have been had."

After that, he said potential participants will be asked to sign a talent release form to agree their stories will be shared publicly, and will be recommended to meet with the organisation's conversation host, a professional podcaster.

"They then book a time for the full conversation," he said.

"That usually goes for about 45 minutes and we do that via zoom."

The Myrtleford Neighbourhood Centre worked with Kintsugi Heroes to successfully apply for an Alpine bushfire recovery grant for the project.

The centre has also supplied Mr Westmoreland with several local contacts.

Neighbourhood centre manager Jill Graham said they were happy to finally give locals the chance to tell their story after two years.

"The best way to overcome that trauma is to talk about it," she said.

"It's just a pity we've had to wait a long time for it."

To get involved and have your story told contact Mr Westmoreland on 0400 606 768 or by email at [ian@kintsugiheroes.com.au](mailto:ian@kintsugiheroes.com.au).