

# Between 2 worlds

By Russell Irving

Remote Indigenous communities.

Intergenerational trauma, poverty, alcohol, drug abuse, powerlessness, despair.

Domestic violence, sex offending, the Intervention.

Or

A ceremony held since the dawn of time,

family groups travelling hundreds of miles across potholed tracks in broken down

wrecks. Gathering, in their hundreds, housed, fed, loved.

Mothers, daughters, sisters, grandmothers, and aunties,  
preening, sharing, laughing, gossiping.

Fathers, sons, brothers, grandfathers, and uncles,  
glistening, muscular, painted proud,  
gliding and stomping, singing spears quivering.

Shaking the earth, calling the ancestors,  
certain of who they are, where they belong.

Holding at bay a fractured calling from the west.

Night-time, as dark and silent as our imagination allows.

Night owls, crickets, the cries of the eternal, long gone.

Winds of loneliness kept at bay, placated by clap sticks,  
and ancient chants invoking the spirits.

Biding their time to welcome the dawn, when,  
kinship elders lead the procession from ceremony ground to sea.

A ritualistic cleansing is enacted, a baptismal rebirth,  
re-affirming all that is eternal.

Traditional obligations in contemporary lives,  
beacons for navigating two complex worlds.