##### [00:00:02.740] - Bernard Namok Jnr

Hi and welcome to Yarning Disability, the FPDN podcast. I'm your host, Bernard Namok Jr. I'm a proud St Pauls, Badu, and Erubian man from the Torres Strait. I'm also the son of the designer of the Torres Strait Islander flag, Bernard Namok Senior, and an advocate for the First Peoples Disability Network. Join me now on Yarning Disability as we showcase first nation's people living with the disability, as well as their families and carers and other industry professionals.

##### [00:00:42.080] - Carly Wallace

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are warned that the following podcast may contain the voices and names of people who are deceased. The First Peoples Disability Network and the producers of this podcast recognize the traditional custodians of the land on which this podcast is recorded. They pay respect to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders past, present and the future leaders of tomorrow. FPDN would like to acknowledge our founding elders and their lasting legacy, Uncle Lester Bustock and Auntie Gal Rankin, and acknowledge all first peoples living with a disability.

##### [00:01:29.920] - Footy Snippets

The short shot, there's a lot of room there. It's a good looking kick and a try. Bowen has got it down, has he? We'll go for the replay, but I reckon, Brenton Bowen has scored the try there. 90 seconds into the game of football, and North Queensland is on the board. Brenton Bowen is the try score. In the home of the world. Wait up his options, pinpoint kick, and Bowen. What an athlete. What a player. Here they go again. It's Ashley Graham. Bowen is on the inside. Brenton, he takes the ball, he collects a double inside of 10 minutes. Two tries to Brenton Bowen.

##### [00:02:10.120] - Carly Wallace

Hello and welcome to another episode of Yarning Disability. I'm Carly Wallace, a disability advocate at FPDN. On today's episode, we meet Aboriginal man, Brenton Bowen. Hailing from the small Aboriginal community of Hopevale in far-north Queensland, Brenton fulfilled his dream of becoming a professional sportsman, playing in the NRL for the North Queensland Cowboys and the Gold Coast Titans. Brenton is now an ambassador for Deadly Choices in Queensland, where he promotes healthy lifestyles for our mob and is also an artist. I chatted to Brenton about his football career, his artwork, and the day his life changed with news about his health.

##### [00:02:48.600] - Brenton Bowen

My mob is the Guugu Yimithirr speaking people of Hopevale. My dad's side is Dharrpa and my mum'sis Deethaarwara. Sorry, Dharrapawara and Deethaarwara. In Hopevale, we got 13 different clan groups. That's my two clan groups. I grew up in Hopevale up until the age of 12, and we have to... Because there's no high school in Hopevale, so I had to move away. I had to go to boarding school. I went to Abergowrie College or St. Teresa's College Abergrowie. I just did my high school years there and graduated and then moved on.

##### [00:03:38.750] - Carly Wallace

Yeah, nice. You went to that school and no doubt it was a rugby league school because that's how most people probably know you. I've known you since I was trying to work it out. I was trying to remember and I was like, I've known you since I was 17 years old. Can you believe that?

##### [00:03:55.050] - Brenton Bowen

Yeah, I know. It's crazy. With the Abergowrie, because I think I only went to that school because Matty went to that school. He was obviously a year older than I was. But we had other cousins that went to that school as well. I think it felt like it was only natural to go to that school as well because obviously the family was there. But in saying that, even though I had family there, I was just homesick that first 2-3 weeks, just homesick and just want to go home. It didn't matter if I had family there. I had Matty there. We obviously grew up together. But I just still wanted to be back home, back home in the country and back home in Hopevale. I just missed everything about home, mom and dad. But luckily, I was on the phone to my parents every day and they said, Oh, just stick it out and just see how you go in the first term. And if you don't like it, then maybe we can swap schools. But luckily, I stayed on. And then after that, two, three weeks, I just met some new friends, which I'm friends with still today.

##### [00:05:14.510] - Brenton Bowen

When I talk about that with my journey, I always refer to that moment because if I went back home, I could have been mixed up with the wrong people, even though they were my family and friends and I'd still be mixing up with the wrong crowd and making the wrong choices and that. Yes, I always, when I'm telling my story, I always reflect on that moment. So I feel like for me, it could have been like a make or break. Yeah.

##### [00:05:48.870] - Carly Wallace

A lot of people wouldn't even come to terms with what that means as a 12-year-old, really, 11, 12 years old to leave your community because you don't have a high school there. So you have to leave your family. You have to leave your culture, a little bit of culture behind. You're not getting it as regular as you would when you're living there, your family, extended family, friends. A lot of people in mainstream just would never understand what that's like. But it's such a reality in remote communities. For you to actually go and do that and then to... It's not easy just jump in the car and go home either. It's a long way, right? Between... For those that don't know, like yourself and Matty Bowen, who's your cousin, ex-NRL player as well, you're all there. How far is it between Abergowrie and Hopevale?

##### [00:06:35.450] - Brenton Bowen

Yeah, so it's a 12-hour drive..

##### [00:06:40.680] - Carly Wallace

I couldn't walk home. No, you couldn't run away. I couldn't get my eyes. But you do touch on the culture, missing that culture. Although I enjoyed the success of playing in a role and making a living out of it, I still feel like it's hard because I always think about, I'm missing out on the culture. For me, in hindsight, I feel like I want to be back home because I'm not missing out, but I feel like I'm very distant from my culture. Along the way, I feel like I've disconnected from the culture. That's something that I think about a lot.

##### [00:07:46.980] - Carly Wallace

I think a lot of people will have to do that. Reality is a lot of us have to live off country now, whether it's from a young age or as adults. Because where we're from, like you and I, yours is a lot more rural from where I'm from on the table and growing up in far north Queensland, it's very rural and away from everything. I think that's a journey that a lot of people could probably relate to, like having to miss out parts of family or culture or country to have to just live. It's just sacrifices that we were doing. I think you and I met when we were at uni and we were doing a Uni course together. At the time you were from memory, you were with the Young Guns, that's what they were called back then. I think at the time that was the Feeder Club for the Cowboys. You were in that, and then you got your break into the NRL with the Cowboys. You played alongside Matty and some of the greats, obviously. What were some of the highlights, I guess, besides meeting me at uni and......

##### [00:08:46.120] - Brenton Bowen

That would be the biggest highlight.

##### [00:08:49.110] - Carly Wallace

That would be the biggest.

##### [00:08:49.910] - Carly Wallace

That was the start of your career.

##### [00:08:52.030] - Carly Wallace

That kicked off the career, really now. What were some of your highlights, I guess, of your rugby league career?

##### [00:08:59.100] - Brenton Bowen

I think the highlight or the first highlight would be to making my first trade debut. A lot of people don't know the sacrifice that go in to realizing your dream. That would be the massive highlight for me. All that hard work, all that sacrifices you had to go through. One of the main thing was being away from my family. I got to play alongside Matty as well in my debut. I feel like, well, to me, that was not really fitting, but I'm not too sure how Matty felt. I didn't ask him about that, how he felt about that. But yeah, that would be one of my highlights. The other one would be, even though I didn't play, would be the NRL Grand final when we played against the West Tiger in 2005. So although I didn't play, I was still a part of that squad. So we flew down to Sydney together. We went to the grand final breakfast and did the warm up with the team. So I did everything but play. So even though I didn't play, I still felt obviously like a part of that team. And I felt that loss as well for the team.

##### [00:10:29.670] - Carly Wallace

I remember that game. It's one of the best grand finals in NRL history. I guess every little young Black fella, especially our young boys, want to be a rugby league star. They want to be that's the big thing in our community. But did you always want to be a rugby league star? Because everyone thinks they can do it. But like you said, the heart actually goes in from doing it to then actually playing and thriving in it. Did you always want to do that?

##### [00:10:56.660] - Brenton Bowen

Yeah. No, not at all. Because my my dad at the time, he worked in the mines. So I was like, Well, when I finish school, I want to go and work with the mines with my dad. So that.

##### [00:11:11.620] - Carly Wallace

Was my- That's the other dream, right? Everyone's growing up up there.

##### [00:11:16.250] - Brenton Bowen

Yeah. So that was my dream was to do that. I think it changed, maybe, through my footy careers. I was like, Actually, I want to be a physiotherapist. But obviously, I never got around to doing any studies and that.

##### [00:11:37.560] - Carly Wallace

Then you went to the Gold Coast. That's where... Did you end your career from memory at the Gold Coast.

##### [00:11:42.820] - Brenton Bowen

Yeah, ended my career. I think by then, I feel like I was just over footie and I just wanted to move into the next phase of my life. I feel like I could have played on an extra five, six years, but I just thought, Look, I'm at that stage in my life where I was like, Maybe I should be thinking for my future outside of footie. I just said, Look, I'm going to retire five years early then I want to... That way I'm five years ahead of where I need it to be, thing. I finished up and then the CEO of Northern Pride, he rang me up and said, We want you to come up to Cans to play for Northern Pride. I was like, Okay, that's close to home. I played a couple of years there. At the same time, I was just... Yeah, my heart wasn't there to play 14 miles. Then because I had a young family at that stage as well. With the Queensland Cup, the training schedule is that they do training either before or after work. It was at Northern Pride when I thought I'll be leaving home at 5:30 and then getting home from work and then training seven, eight o'clock.

##### [00:13:16.820] - Brenton Bowen

Having a young family, I never really got to see the kids. I'd be up before they were awake. Then by the time I get home, they'd be asleep. I just thought, No, I'm just going to get fully away and concentrate on family and work. But then funny enough, that's when we talked about the tumor I had. It was in that period when I was at the Northern Pride.

##### [00:13:48.030] - Carly Wallace

You're playing football at this stage, and then around 2011, you start getting sick, yeah?

##### [00:13:55.830] - Brenton Bowen

Yeah.

##### [00:13:56.900] - Carly Wallace

How did you even realize that you started getting sick and like, what's going on at that time?

##### [00:14:02.110] - Brenton Bowen

Yeah, well, it was... I don't know. I can't remember when it happened, but one day I turned that rocked up to training and we were doing some high balls. And I was like, Oh, I can't see the ball. I just couldn't see the ball. I could see my vision was blurred, but I could still see the ball coming. But I'd had to change the way that I look because I had peripheral vision. But direct contact to the ball, I couldn't see it because it was just all blurred. I was like, Oh, I need to go and get this checked out. I left it a couple of days and I thought I have to go and get it checked out. The club doctor said, he takes the eye injuries very seriously. He referred me on to the eye specialist and we did all these field tests and they couldn't find anything. I couldn't find what was wrong. Then I went and got a MRI scan, and then that's when they found the tumor that was pushing on the optic nerve from the pituitary gland. It was pretty scary at the time because when we first found out, I didn't know whether it was going to be cancerous.

##### [00:15:44.910] - Brenton Bowen

It's all benign tumor. It wasn't until a day after then the doctor called me and said, It's common, the pituitary tumor. He said, But there's people that walk around with it today, but they don't know that they've got it until something like this happens. That was a bit of an eye-opener.

##### [00:16:14.980] - Carly Wallace

Yeah, wow. Besides your vision, physically, a brain tumor, did you have headaches? Did you have any other signs of a health scared that was going on besides the eyesight?

##### [00:16:28.170] - Brenton Bowen

Yeah, the headaches, they'd be in the front, they'd be in the back of my head. I didn't have any migraines, just constant headaches, which I couldn't get rid of. As soon as we found out, as soon as the specialist found out it was benign tumor, they booked me in straight away to get it removed.. Yeah. It all happened straight away really quick. Today, I've still got... There's a little bit there that's still on the pituitary gland. I get regular catch-ups with the endocrinologist. Just keeping eye on it.

##### [00:17:23.220] - Carly Wallace

Yeah. I guess you still live with that.

##### [00:17:26.130] - Carly Wallace

There would be, like.

##### [00:17:26.950] - Carly Wallace

I could imagine there'd be a fear there of like, What if this turns into something else? Is that fair to say?

##### [00:17:34.110] – Brenton Bowen

Yeah, 100%. Because when I first got it out, I did the 3-6 months checkups. After 12 months, the endocrinologist, they came to me and they said, Oh, we've found that the pituitary gland tumor has an active cell. From there, yeah. That's when I got flown down to Melbourne to get the radiation treatment, just to zap it and make sure it doesn't grow again. That's always in the back of my mind. What if it's still there now that it's growing and it's affecting another part of my body? That's something that I always think of and feel full of because I just don't know. It's one of those things where you can't keep an eye on it because it's internally, you can't. If it's like a scratch on your body, you're like, Oh, you can see that, and you can see if there's growth or anything like that. But yeah, that's something that I live with and I hope it doesn't come back. But yeah, just on that. Because the tumor. It's a gland that's responsible for all your hormones and the growth hormones. I'm at the moment, so I'll be taking medication for the rest of my life now, which acts as a replacement tablet.

##### [00:19:25.010] - Brenton Bowen

That's something that's with me for the rest of my life, which is something that at the moment I manage really well. I just have to keep on top of it. Otherwise, I just get really lethargic and I can't think properly.

##### [00:19:51.050] - Carly Wallace

That's so intrusive, isn't it? You've gone from being a football player, playing football, you're healthy until a little bit of, Oh, blurred vision, can't see the ball, which isn't good for a fallback. You used to play a lot of fallback because it's just been under a lot of high balls. You're probably thinking, Oh, great, there goes the career, in your mind. Then—and from then, you found this brain trimmy, you've done the scan, and immediately they've taken you in to get it. Is your career at that stage, your rugby league career, is it pretty much done? Have you told yourself it's done?

##### [00:20:27.740] - Brenton Bowen

Yeah. That's why I went straight in to see the coaches and said, Look, I have to look after my health and I have to get footy away. Because I said, I have to be there one for myself and then for my family as well. Yeah. I've just said, Coach, I'm finished. I want to finish up as soon as possible and make sure that I look after my health.

##### [00:20:54.640] - Carly Wallace

That's so scary on top of having something so serious and all that. Obviously, until you know it's not cancerous there, that's a long period of time where you're probably just contemplating life. You're finishing your football career. That's what you've done since you were a little old. You've got a young family. How did that impact your mental health at the time? Because I can imagine physically it was impacting you, but mentally and emotionally, how was that?

##### [00:21:22.290] - Brenton Bowen

Yeah, well, I think I thought I had a handle on it, but the ex-wife was like, Yeah, she could just notice different patterns that I was going through. One of the things that I was eating a lot, and I think there was like a stress release, I suppose, where I'd eat and I'd feel good in a way. There was that point where I put on a lot of weight. It was just by eating because it just felt like I needed to do that to feel good.

##### [00:22:16.560] - Carly Wallace

Depression, hey. Because I guess it's something in our community, especially for mob with disability and with health, any thing that we're going through mental health, whatever it is, our mob are really fine at hard to open up and talk.

##### [00:22:33.070] - Carly Wallace

Could imagine something like that, you would have had so many things going on. It's like, where do you even begin? How do you begin to talk to people? And especially with the health system and seeing doctors and things like that, how was that journey for you? Because that's really full on for our mob. And how was that for you?

##### [00:22:52.090] - Brenton Bowen

Yeah, well, because I went through the public system with the hospital and that. So just seeing, especially with people, when I see the neurologist who did the surgery, especially when I go in to see the neurologist, just seeing other people there going through the same thing. That was a bit of an eye-opener, I suppose. Yeah. There were times there where you're like, Oh, why am I here? Why this shouldn't be happening to me? Because I was playing rugby league at the top level and this thing could happen to anyone. That's the thought that was going through my head of like, Why me? Yeah.

##### [00:23:59.980] - Carly Wallace

How old were you at the time when this was happening?

##### [00:24:03.160] - Brenton Bowen

I think it's like 27.

##### [00:24:05.850] - Carly Wallace

Wow, 27. That's far out. It's so young. I'm sure they're sitting in that clinical system of a hospital or doctor's surgeries. You look at the country when people your age that don't usually have, not to say that young people don't, but it's generally very rare for younger people to have such intense stuff like that.

##### [00:24:29.840] - Brenton Bowen

Yeah. That's what the endocrinologist and the neurologist said to me. It's very rare for someone like you that would come through as one of their patients. They just couldn't put a finger on it because I just didn't know. Because they said it's normally people that are 40 years or older. Yeah, so I guess I'm maybe one of the lucky ones.

##### [00:25:04.350] - Carly Wallace

Yeah. Have you thought about that? I'm not sure at the time, because there's a lot of science now on, as you would know, happening around rugby league plays and head injuries and all of that stuff that's happening now. I'm not sure how common that conversation was back then, but did you ever think, could it have been related to my rugby league career? Did something like, I'm sure these thoughts probably, how has this happened and where did it come from?

##### [00:25:34.090] - Brenton Bowen

Yeah. So that was one of the questions I asked myself and about the ex-wife. Yeah, that's one of the questions we did ask. It's just, of course, from playing rugby league. Is it because of head knocks and that? But yeah, he just said, No, that's got nothing to do with head knocks or playing rugby league. It's just one of those things that, like I said before, there's a lot of people that's walking around with a pituitary gland or pituitary tumor, but they don't find out until something happens to them, which normally it is the headaches and the blood vision.

##### [00:26:23.370] - Carly Wallace

Besides the physical and mental life, how did your life change financially? Because life is still going on, right? Kids are still needing to go to school. That all of a sudden, when this stuff pops up, how does that come about? How do you continue to just keep living life on top of trying to deal with what you're trying to deal with?

##### [00:26:44.560] - Brenton Bowen

Yeah. There's one instance where I talked about getting flown to Melbourne. They had this machine that was the only one in Australia that could do radiation treatment on the pituitary tumor. And the family came down with me. And so we had to stay there for two weeks. We'd gone on Christmas holidays, so I'd take on leave from work. So we went down to Newcastle for Christmas. And then just after Christmas, I think it was maybe the 28th of December, I get a phone call from the neurologist. He was in his neuro-surgeon, sorry. He said, Look, we're going to… You need to fly down to Melbourne and get this treatment. I think by then, I think I only had maybe five days of my sleep with annual leave. At that time, my ex-wife, she didn't have any… She wasn't working at the time because she just had a baby. He was only... I think he was 10 months old. We had been flying down. I got talking to Maddie because at that time, we had no money. We couldn't afford the accommodation. We couldn't afford to eat. I got on the phone and Maddie called me and said, Oh, how's things going?

##### [00:28:31.240] - Brenton Bowen

We're struggling at the moment because we don't have money to pay for the accommodation. He sent through, he said, I'll give you $500 to go towards whatever. You just do what you need to do with that. Then from there, the word got back to Northern Pride. I think Chris Shepherd, he was the CEO at the time. Chris called me and said, We were going to do a fundraiser for you. They put on a fundraiser and they raised five grand for us. I was like, This is awesome. I couldn't thank them enough. You hear about these stories about rugby league, just giving back to their plays and giving back to the community. I felt that happen to me and my family at the time too. I was like, Yeah, this is awesome. I'm very lucky. I was very lucky to be a part of the rugby league community back then. They come through. Then the CEO, Chris, he got in contact with the Men of League as well, and then they paid for accommodation. I was Yeah. It was pretty scary because we were like, Well, we're just living day to day and just paying accommodation one day at a time.

##### [00:30:12.130] - Brenton Bowen

The place where we're staying, they were pretty accommodating as well, just with those payments and that. Even just afterwards as well, because I couldn't go back to work straight away. It was pretty scary and nerve-wrecking. There are just a lot of things go through your head and depression. I was very anxious and didn't know what tomorrow would be.

##### [00:30:46.960] - Carly Wallace

No doubt, like a humbling experience. You've got this second chance at life, and I'm sure your life has completely changed your outlook and how you see things. But no doubt it's deserving. I think for me personally, as a disability advocate now, I work in this space because I always think about those families that our mob that are going through this stuff that may not have a cousin that they can chuck in or a rugby club. It's also that anyone at any point, anything can happen. You can have that disability journey on your doorstep. You'd hope that there'll be people in the community, there'll be places like FPDN and there'll be rugby league clubs or other places that will step in and help. But those systems actually should be the systems that are there to help our mob and that sometimes fail. I'm glad in that moment, you had really good people to support you. How has it changed your outlook on life now?

##### [00:31:53.120] - Brenton Bowen

I feel like I had to change my lifestyle completely. I went from eating heaps to just eating portions. One of the things that the specialist said was just to try and stay away from sugary foods. They said that it was something that the tumor feeds off that. I just tried to watch what I eat. That can be stressful as well, trying to watch what you eat where you went from eating what you can and what you could to trying to minimize the things that you like.

##### [00:32:51.600] - Carly Wallace

No salty Plums.

##### [00:32:53.090] - Brenton Bowen

No salty gums.

##### [00:32:54.800] - Carly Wallace

Had to drop the stem. Put lemon in it.

##### [00:32:57.380] - Brenton Bowen

It takes it out. It even.

##### [00:32:59.570] - Brenton Bowen

Takes it out. Yeah, I.

##### [00:33:00.810] - Carly Wallace

See how that works. That is like a constant journey that you're going through. I guess that it probably segments into what you do now is a deadly choices ambassador. If anyone outside of Queensland, maybe I know it's spreading slowly, but it's mainly Queensland-based still. But if anyone hasn't heard of deadly choices, what is deadly choices and what does deadly choices do?

##### [00:33:25.240] - Brenton Bowen

Yeah, so the deadly choices is an arm of the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health. It's a health promotion initiative or incentives. It's based around encouraging our mob to get the 715 health checks. We've got our school programs as well. We've got the Healthy Lifestyle Program, which is an APW program, which touches on chronic diseases, tobacco cessation, a healthy lifestyle. We also talk about the history of sugar and tobacco as well, like how it was introduced to our country. Yeah, there's all those. With those education programs, we don't tell the kids, This is what you have to do. It's about empowering them off to go in to get their health checks and making the right choice for their family and for their community.

##### [00:34:34.260] - Carly Wallace

How did you become an ambassador with them, obviously, through Rugby League? Because I know Rugby League is a big arm of deadly choice. Why did you want to sign up, I guess?

##### [00:34:43.690] - Brenton Bowen

Yeah, because at that time, and this was after I finished playing rugby league, I went into work at the Human Services, the Settling. I just worked like an office job there with going through my communities. But there was a time when I moved down to Brisbane. And then Ian Lacey gave me the call and said, We want you to be an ambassador. Because at the time, I had... Because we have the NRL clubs, we've got Broncos, we got Titans, we've got Cowboys, and now we got the Dolphins. But then we got a few of the Sydney clubs as well. But for me to come on board, they wanted someone that played for the Cowboys and played for the Titans. I suppose it was like a double whammy for me to be involved and having played for the Titans, the Cowboys. He called me up and said, Want you to be on board with us. I said, Sign me up. Obviously, at that time, I knew what the Lead Choices were doing in the community. I didn't know to the full extent until I went on board. I was like, Well, this is an eye-opener. Because I'm backtracking me now with my NRL career.

##### [00:36:11.480] - Brenton Bowen

One of the things that I... We're talking about sacrifice. One of the things that I spoke about was I'm a non-smoker and I haven't smoked a cigarette in my life and never will. But I didn't know what was in cigarettes until I worked with Daily Choices. It was just everything that's in cigarettes, I was like, Oh, this is such an eye-opener. I think those sound like 3,000-7,000 chemicals in one cigarette. That's a bit of an eye-opener for me. Actually knowing what was in cigarettes and not just saying, No, I don't want to do it because I want to play on and on. That's something that I want to not do or sacrifice in order to reach my goal.

##### [00:37:01.110] - Carly Wallace

Yeah, I think you've always been like a relatively, obviously being a sporting person. But even when I met you young days, you weren't a real big drinker. I don't even think you really drank then. You didn't do cigarettes. So it makes sense now that you're aligned that with something like deadly choices. So you get to travel around and get to meet different mob and especially young kids. That's more the way.

##### [00:37:24.620] - Brenton Bowen

That you work. Yeah, we've got some deadly choices all over Queensland. We've got a few of our licensees that are in the NT, New South Wales, Melbourne, and Tasmania. They had the licensee through us to run their own programs in the community, like run the daily choices programs. In that way, they have access to the healthy lifestyle, sorry, the 7.5 health checks yet, so they could have their clinics and their schools as well.

##### [00:38:08.900] - Carly Wallace

You are also an artist. You're a painter. Yes. When did this come into play? Like painter or when did this come into play?

##### [00:38:20.850] - Brenton Bowen

I obviously like to watch the old people back home. I do painting and they were into carving as well back in the day. But I took a liking to painting. I did it a little bit while I was at school. I just try to keep that culture alive through school. I didn't really touch painting until throughout my footie career. But it wasn't until when COVID hit, when the lockdowns and that, I started to get back into it. I started with just the lead pencil, just drawing and just having a play around. Then it went on to come back into painting. I feel like that's my way of... It's for my mental wellbeing as well, just getting away from everything and just, I suppose, sometimes putting pen to paper and drawing or on the canvas. It's just my way to get away from everything and just focus on the artwork.

##### [00:39:42.290] - Carly Wallace

FPDN had an art competition that we put out for the community, for artists to do a piece of art to go with the National Footprint program or project that we have, which is really around that closing the gap stuff and empowering sectors around disability and empowering our mob around our human rights. We wanted to really showcase that in a nice piece of artwork that we could tell that story to our mob when we're on the ground or when we're talking to different sectors. You actually entered and you ended up winning. How was that?

##### [00:40:21.210] - Brenton Bowen

Yeah, that was a really good feeling. I see that I've got one of the competition came about, and like you said, I entered in and I thought I'd met all the requirements and the criterias. When I got the phone call, I was like, Oh, this is awesome. I had a little... I think I was crying at one stage. I was like, This is so good. After all the hard work, I suppose, getting back into the painting and the design and the artwork. I feel like it was really special to be selected as a winner in the artwork. I just wanted to touch on the work that the staff do. I just wanted to touch on that because you're all the staff that are on ground. There's different layers to the service as well. I just wanted to touch on that as well. I suppose for the future, I just want to see the art grow and maybe go into the perils and just... I suppose it's all endless, I guess.

##### [00:41:49.860] - Carly Wallace

Yeah. It's anything's possible. You've got second chance of life, second careers. You've got your whole life ahead of you. We really wish you well, baby. Thank you so much for coming on Yarning Disability and having a yarning about your disability journey, your health journey. And we wish you all the best.

##### [00:42:10.250] - Brenton Bowen

Thank you.

##### [00:42:11.500] - Carly Wallace

That was Brenton Bowen sharing his story on yarning disability. Thanks for listening to Yarning Disability. F. P. D. N. Would like to thank you for coming on this journey, as each week, we hear from first peoples living with a disability and shine a light on the issues they are facing. If there's anything you heard in today's episode that raises concerns for you, there is help available. You can contact 1.3 Yarn on 1392.76 or BeyondBlue on 1300. 22-4636 or Lifeline on 13.11.14. Follow F. P. D. N. On our social media accounts to stay up to date with future episodes and information. You can also visit our website at www. FPDN.Org.Au.