**Country, Climate, Colonialism (2023)**

**Who is Country to me: Sovereign women protecting Country and culture.**

SARAH: And welcome to the very first Critical Public Conversation by the Australian Centre for 2023. My name is Sarah Maddison. I'm the Director of the Centre. Before we go any further though, Elder Georgina Nicholson has recorded us a welcome to Country to this morning's event, and I will play that for us now.

[Welcome from Elder Georgina Nicholson]

As always, a beautiful and warm welcome from Aunty Georgina, I'm sad not to see her smiling face on the screen, but her words are always heartfelt, and they connect us to Country, which is of course the central part of today's webinar, and the central part of this year's Critical Public Conversation series for the Australian Centre.

Our theme this year is Country, Climate, Colonialism. We're looking at the connections that draw those ideas together, the fact that Australia's rotten colonial heart is also in the way of us engaging properly with the impending climate catastrophe, and it absolutely remains in the way of us fully honouring and recognising the abiding Indigenous sovereignties across this land. Wherever you are Zooming in from today, all 200 and something of you, you are on Aboriginal land, a land that always was and always will be Aboriginal land, because sovereignty was never ceded.

This is gonna be it for me today, because you don't need a white woman in a way of these deadly Black women who are gonna have an amazing conversation. So I'm gonna hand over to our beloved Lou Bennett, who honours us every day as Chair of the Australian Centre Advisory Board. Lou is going to lead Professor Di Kerr, Stacie Piper, and Dr. Ngaree Blow through an extraordinary conversation. We're honoured by all of you, and those of you tuning in, you're in for something very special. Just before I hand over to Lou, a reminder that we do invite your questions, please use the Q and A function though, there is not the capacity, and the way this webinar is organised for you to speak your questions, but please use the Q and A question, Q and A function at the bottom of your Zoom screen, and you can write that question at any time during the webinar. So if a thought or a question occurs to you, get it in early, and Lou will select some of the more interesting questions towards the end of our time together this morning. So I'm gonna disappear now, and hand over to Lou, and thank all of you, incredible women very much, for being with us today.

LOU: Thank you Sarah, and hello everyone out there in Zoom land. My name is Dr. Lou Bennett, and I am Yorta-Yorta Dja Dja Wurrung woman. I'm coming to you from the beautiful Country of Kaurna, Kaurna Yerta, I'm here in my nephew's room, that's why there is a bit of a blurred background, being in a young teenager's room, so I would also like to acknowledge this beautiful Country that I'm on, but also to acknowledge the Elder, our dearest elder here, Aunty Di Kerr, who's gonna be joining, and probably kicking off the conversation.

But before we do, I would just like to read out, some of the bios that I've got here. So those that do not know our speakers, get a bit of a sense of who these beautiful women are. Also on that note, happy International Women's Day, I hope you are honouring the women in your family, I hope you do that every day, but today is, again, a special day to acknowledge that, that we play a very important role in our communities, in our families, and in the context of this talk, caring for Country and caring for our bodies.

So Aunty Diane Kerr, Professor Aunty Diane Kerr, OAM, is a very well-respected elder of the Wurundjeri tribe. She's devoted much of her life to local community as a mentor and a foster carer. She has worked in various fields including childcare, education, Native title, Stolen Generation support, and other community work. Professor Aunty Diane, was recently appointed as a Fellow of the Indigenous Knowledge Institute at the University of Melbourne, congratulations, and she's working on a project to understand the impacts, of Indigenous medicine and healing knowledge on infection management and antibiotic use. A really important, I suppose a really important point of, and point of Western medicine, and Indigenous medicines coming together.

We now, other speakers are Stacie Piper. Stacie is a dance educator, in the Djirri Djirri Wurundjeri Women's Dance Group, now Stacey is also a proud, Wurundjeri Dja Dja Wurrung and Ngurai-illum Wurrung woman, and a dancer educator, of that particular group. She volunteers on the Victorian NAIDOC Committee on which she is a current chairperson. There you go, I didn't know that, Stace. Piper has, it's funny when you read someone's bio, isn't it? Stace holds a position of First Nations curator for Yalingwa, is that how I say it, Love? Yalingwa, 2021 at Tarra Warra Museum of Art, where she curated the exhibition Wilam Biik of South Eastern Australia, which will also tour around Victoria throughout 2022, so we've just missed that, have we? Is it still going? I hope we get to see it. Anyway, Stacie's currently completing her Masters in Social Change Leadership at Melbourne University, as a part of the Atlantic Fellows for Social Equity.

And our last speaker, but not our least, is Dr. Ngaree Blow. And Ngaree is a Senior Lecturer of Medical Education, in Indigenous health, medical education. And Ngaree is my family, as well, she's Yorta-Yorta and Quandamooka of the Noonuccal Nation, which is up there in beautiful Tjerangeri Country, which is Stradbroke Island. So she's currently completing her advanced training in a public health, as a public health physician. She works as the Director for First Nations Health and Medical Education at the University of Melbourne, and dedicates part of her time to the COVID-19 response. After working on outbreaks for the most part of 2020, she currently works in the COVID-19 vaccination program for the Department of Health Victoria. Dr. Blow was most recently recognised for her work in 2020, when she was awarded the Australasian Faculty of Public Health Medicine, Victorian Gerry Murphy Prize, and was named one of the 2019 Australian Financial Review's, 100 Women of Influence. Dr. Blow is also a board member of the Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association, and has been involved in many First Nations health research and educational roles. So please welcome these amazing women to the fore.

So, wonderful to see your faces. Always wonderful to see, strong Black women, the work that we do, we certainly have much to talk about today. So I'm going to just come back, and, pardon me, allow you to unmute your microphones. And I suppose the first thing I wanted to ask, and I would like to direct this firstly to Aunty Di is, interestingly that your focus now, pardon me, is around the idea of this, of our medicine, and how it interconnects with Western medicine, as you said in your bio, the antibiotics. The bigger question is, how or who is Country to me? And I thought I'd start with you first as the Elder, to get the ball rolling.

AUNTY DI: I am Country. I feel very honoured and, I can't think the word, but I feel very, very blessed to be a Wurundjeri Elder and woman. And we came, our apical ancestor was Annie Borate who, had all of Wurundjeri, all of the Wurundjeri-Balluk clan. And Country to me is not only about land and waters, it's about respect, respecting each other, following Country laws, our main laws are not to harm the land or the waters and not to harm any of Bundjil's children. I lived holistically. I think we all do. We don't live in silos. I try to bend the rules as much as I can. We have such a beautiful Country Wurundjeri. We've got the Dandenongs and down to all of those beautiful trees is amazing. Whenever I'm sick, I travel up through the Dandenongs and put the windows down and smell the eucalypt. I'm pretty lucky.

I do welcomes every day. Very blessed. And smokings about three or four times a week. So I get to heal while I'm doing my welcomes. And it's wonderful to be able to talk to people about who we are as the Wurundjeri, which is the grub of the tree. And I love, teaching my young ones how I was taught, when I went in the car with my aunties and nanny Winnie there behind the states secretary for many years. But whenever her mum and whatever other aunty was with us would drive, they would say, "This is your tree, this is your river. This is how far you'd go. This is not your Country anymore." And things like that. And I've taught my children and grandchildren and now teaching my two wonderful great-granddaughters. So yeah, I feel that, we came for Country- from Country, but I really feel that I am Country, and I think that's the best way to explain it. I know it's really hard for people to understand that, but we are blessed to be who we are.

LOU: We sure are. I'd like to open that question to you too now, Stacie, just off the back of what aunt was talking about "I Am Country." Can you sort of further comment on what that statement means for you as Wurrung Ngurai-illum.

STACIE: Yes, thank you. And just before I do that, I will acknowledge that I'm on Wurundjeri Country and Happy International Women's Day to all of you beautiful women, to everyone watching, women who are online, and yeah that I have Aunt Winnie behind me today in my picture because, we've got so many that we can put up as our backgrounds. I'll sometimes have my daughter or my nieces who dance the Djirri Djirris. We've got our beautiful aunties like Auntie Diane and Auntie Georgina who did the welcome to Country. We've got so many amazing inspirational women and, just wanted to put into context that today I've got Auntie Winnie in my thoughts and in my mind quite a bit given she, well I'm writing about her at the moment in one of my master's essays and just unpacking, her final words, which, well basically for Wurundjeri people particularly, but I think it applies to everybody. And today for Wurundjeri women to pull together and stick together and unite. And I feel like, it is a really hectic time for a lot of people and yeah, society and families and work everything. But I think if we just stick together and Auntie Winnie's words bring so true to me, particularly at the moment. So I just wanted to honour her and obviously for a million other reasons and we're on a time limit.

I've gotta answer your question, but yeah, thank you Aunty Diane for your words. Cause just sitting here listening to you speak, even that, it's just very healing and I love listening to you talk about when you were growing up. And it reminds me too of, Nan was doing the same thing and Aunty Winnie - I was raised by them, and I had them remind-, always telling me that "you're a Yarra princess" is what they would say when I was little. ‘Princess’ has a different sort of connotation for us now. But yeah, it's beautiful and I've always grown up, with that knowing, and I've been very lucky to grow up connected to my Country. To Country and, I honour Annie Borate, our apical ancestor, William Barak's sister on that note as well, because she and Barak fought, very hard to make sure that we stayed on Country, and that we remained on Country because we could have ended up anywhere. So it's with thanks to them that we're still here today.

For me, Country is, in so many different contexts in my work, Country is the curator. When I'm curating an exhibition, in my life, Country is my sustainer. It sustains me. It heals me. If I need healing, I do the same thing. Go up to the forest, go up to the old trees with Djirri Djirri we've danced under the trees. Birds respond, the elements respond, the layers of Country respond, the wind kicks up and it's real and you can feel it. And we dance in logging coupes as well, so that we're giving back to Country and letting it know that we're there and we see what's happening and we are doing, what we can amongst a million other things to fight for that as well. And yeah, just observing Country, for me, it's just for me, it connects all of us. We're not separate. So even with Wilam Biik my exhibition observing the river systems and the bush Country that connects mobs in different ways, through those song lines, the water lines and the bush lines. And they make, for me that was sort of limited for the exhibition to Southeast Australia. And whilst we're using that Country as a methodology and following those lines of Country that, in turn connected us all as family and kin. So Country is everything. It informs everything that I do and I'm grateful that I get to make it a part of my work.

LOU: Thanks Stace that was wonderful. You're right. Country is everything. It's central to who we are as Aboriginal women, isn't it? You know? And my partner Romaine Moreton, Dr. Romaine Moreton often talks about, us as Aboriginal women being earth centric, Mother-Earth centric. We put her there right at the centre, right? And that then informs who we are and what we do on Country and within Country. I'd like to throw it to you now, Ngaree. Dr. Blow, how do you see and who is Country to you?

NGAREE: It's so nice following after Stacie and Bamboo Auntie Di because I think you've so eloquently articulated all my thoughts and feelings about Country, but I do wanna acknowledge my perspective and where I'm connecting from as well. 'cause I'm currently a guest here on Yuggera and Turrbal lands, and I'm right near the Maiwar, the river that extends through Meanjin or the central part of Brisbane out to the Coral Sea and the Moreton Bay area, which connects to my father's Country, Quandamooka Country and the islands there. And I also connect up to Grand Green Country in Queensland, but I did have the privilege of growing up on Wurundjeri land, and also my mother's side, the Yorta-Yorta and Bangerang people as well. And so I'm acknowledging those women behind me as well, Aunty Marge Tucker and Nanny Nora Charles and their activism and their leadership, along with some of the men in community, but particularly the women that have nurtured, I guess Country. And I did also grow up on Wurundjeri Country and had, that Dandenong community and Aunty Winnie was part of, kind of introducing my parents and also I see Stacie and Aunty Di as my family even though they're not my mob specifically. So I just wanna pay respects to those communities and those elders and women and yes, Happy International Women's Day. I just wanna acknowledge women, cis women, trans women, sistergirls, and also acknowledge that there's also a non-binary experience too. And yeah, basically I speak to anyone with feminine spirit or energy today.

So what does Country mean to me? I basically feel very similar to these women speaking today. And not only is Country me, but it's also ancestors and how you connect to those ancestors and also how you heal as well. And it's a lot of the reason why I got into medicine and learnt the Western side of medicine because I also grew up with the traditional side of medicine too. And so I remember - I have really vivid memories of my mum taking me out around Wangaratta area along the King River, to not only go on the river together as a family with my siblings, but she would also always ask us to touch and feel the trees and the energy. And I remember as a little kid, I thought it was a bit strange and didn't really comprehend it, but as I started doing it more with family, it's now something I continue to do. I even remember us Stacie going out, yeah to the mountains and just feeling the tree and connection to Country in that way. So I think there's a lot more power and energy that we don't acknowledge as much and specifically in a university context, I guess, when learning at a university level that wasn't acknowledged, and sort of health in that holistic way wasn't. So that's why I've actually worked with these two women here to start to decolonise some of that teaching in the healthcare setting.

LOU: Beautiful. Again, Country being central to everything as you said. Thanks Ngaree. A question's just come through and I think it's actually quite a good question, so I just wanted to throw it to the three of you. What does the word sovereignty mean to you as our First Nations women? Anyone can go first who would like to, you know, comment on what does sovereignty mean in the context of health and wellbeing for our mob.

STACIE: I'm gonna wait to see if Aunty Di wanted to jump in first.

AUNTY DI: I don't like using the word sovereignty, just we were disempowered, and refugees on our own Country, and we never owned the land. We cared for the land, we were custodians of the land because the land is our mother. We don't own our mother, we care for our mother and we honour our mother, and the waterways and other veins of our mother. And that's how I look at my sovereignty, I suppose. We didn't give permission for people to take our Country. We gave permission for them to come and share. Wurundjeri people always welcome people on Country and we still do today. People were always welcome on Country as long as you tread lightly and take care of Country. So sovereignty is a new word to me. People have only been using it for I suppose 10 years if that. I suppose I have a different point of view. I listen to other people with their points of view about sovereignty and, yeah I just, it's a strange word for me. Yeah.

STACIE: Yeah. I appreciate hearing you say that Aunt, because I think as we, everyone's on a learning journey, as colonised people and I first of all remember hearing it years ago and thinking, "Yeah, sovereignty, sovereignty, that makes sense and that's a tangible word." And language because we lost our language, that we can use to describe a movement, or not even a movement, but just our world vision, I guess. But worldview, sorry.

But yeah, for me, what I've found too is that over time I've learnt that sovereignty is used in different ways, and some people impose their sovereignty onto you and that's not sovereignty. So I get very, I try to sit in truth and understanding and contemplation and I think for me it just comes down to us being human and connecting to Country and we are ... you know, I'm Wurundjeri, that's where I grew up, but I'm also, Irish, as Aunty Georgina said in her welcome to Country, that's my mum's baby sister, and Nan who was born on Coranderrk, who met granddaddy, you know, Patrick Nicholson, that's where the Nicholson name comes from that's formed part of our identity, the Nicholsons. And he was a beautiful Irishman. And yeah, so I think, for me, I'm going on a tangent I guess, but sovereignty is just so hard to consolidate into one sort of ideal. It means different things for different people and I think the way it's used today, yeah.

LOU: Yeah. I'm with you on that one too, Stace. For me, I think again, it's another word, another context of another label, and again, trying to understand what that label entails, 'cause from an Indigenous point of view, it may be quite different to say a Western point of view as you said Aunty Di. What do you think about it Ngaree? What does it conjure for you?

NGAREE: Well, I'm really glad that both Stacie and Aunty Di brought up language, English language, and how we've had to adapt our language and our concepts to these English words that sometimes, just cannot convey the same message or the same concepts, but also sometimes we use particular English words to create a particular narrative. And it's like how Aunty Di said, we're not actually traditional owners of the land, we're actually traditional custodians of the land. But I think we often use owners to basically convey a message to non-indigenous people that actually, you don't own this land, we do, but we also don't see ourselves as owners either, but we use that intentionally to create that concept, right? So I think that's similar with sovereignty, sovereignty is this idea or notion of power or authority to self-determine who we are and where we're from. But we actually don't need to do that 'cause we're naturally sovereign peoples. And so again, I think these words are intentionally used, to send a message to non-indigenous and not always specifically about how we view it, but the concept of being sovereign. I think we already are, and we know we are, and no one can take that away from us, whether we call it that or call it something else.

LOU: I remember Uncle Colin getting all fired up when someone mentioned, "Land rights! We deserve land rights." And I remember him saying, "What do you mean land rights? We've got land, this is our land. We don't need land rights." That just dispels what we are all about is that, we don't need that movement. Land rights 'cause the land is ours. We are it, you know, and it really sort of made it sink for me. I go, all right, okay. No it doesn't matter what any Western construct that's put here, it's not gonna take away any connection or relationship that we have with our beautiful Mother Earth, our beautiful Biik, our beautiful Dja, our beautiful Waka. It's not gonna take anything away from that.

I just thought I'd just quickly, because we're like you said, on a time limit. I just wanted to touch on a beautiful video that you both made, Stace and Ngaree, and it's, you're both talking about social determinants of a health model of, Ngaree you working with the Wurundjeri people and bringing about another type of language, that works for us as Indigenous women. Can you talk a little bit more about how that came to be and what you sort of intend to do with those beautiful models that have come out of your conversations?

NGAREE: Yeah, I'd love to talk about it and then also pass to Stacie as well. But I do wanna acknowledge that these concepts did come out of conversations I had with Aunty Di and other elders of the Wurundjeri community, around how we represent this notion of not just holistic health but of a localised context of health. Me as a medical student and even when I did my Master's of Public Health as well, the concepts around First Nations health were very much about Northern Territory, Arnhem Land. We had a lot of doctors fly in and say, these are the clinics I do up North and I never really heard the story of where I was actually learning, which was on Wurundjeri Country. And so I wanted to bring that into the teaching for the medical students, but not just medical students or the health profession students at the university. And I wanted to bring in, I guess story of Country and story of land, and actually I didn't really know the story of the six layers well when I started to speak to, elders and community about this. But as we were talking about the social determinants of health just naturally, we started to talk about the six layers of Country and that's kind of where this concept came out of. And so, I might pass to you, Stacie, just to talk about that and how that process happened.

STACIE: Yeah, I think it took a while, didn't it? And that's probably a key point is that things don't just happen quickly. You were very patient, and I know you'd obviously spoken to the elders first and then reached out to me. It was during lockdown, and we had a few Zooms and a few yarns and yeah, I suppose I spoke to Mandy Nicholson about, getting her permission to help, contribute to this model and contribute the six layers of Country through the lens of what we utilise as Djirri Djirris. So yeah, it was really quite easy really to convey it to you because we dance it, we sing it, we talk about it, we embody the layers of Country in every way. So for me to share it with you and you've seen us dance it as well. It was kind of easy just to sit down and yarn about it.

And it's really interesting too because these layers of Country link to our totems, they link to our values, our cultural values, and yeah, they link to, just, I mean I think mainly totems Country and our values, it encompasses so much just in six language words. So we just talked about it and unpacked it and then talked to an amazing graphic designer and they created the imagery. Do you wanna keep yarning about it together, Ngaree?

LOU: Well, another question about that. So you've got the models now. How will you implement them into the community? So what are the ways, some of the practical ways that can be utilised?

NGAREE: So it's already been used I guess at the university level in the teaching. And it's used to, I guess convey this, not just the social determinants of health, but really looking at health in a holistic way, so that these students can realise that health isn't just about treating an illness, it's about actually looking at all the ways in which other factors really impact on health and wellbeing, but also thinking about preventative health and I guess public health concepts. And so we use that in the teaching and what's nice is we don't just use it on the Aboriginal case, we use it on any case or any patient that they're talking about. So actually we're embedding First Nation knowledges into all health teaching and the way that these future doctors and future health professionals are gonna look at how to treat patients or work really with community.

Because community are not all patients, we're just people and sometimes we're well and sometimes we're not. And that is kind of how it's being used.

And what was really nice is recently we got to share that internationally, and Mandy Nicholson, Cayegana and Nanjera all came with us over to Vancouver in Canada and we were there with the Squamish, the Tsleil-Waututh And the Musqueam people and we were able to actually, yeah, we were able to actually dance six layers and Djirri Djirris taught us, yeah, it was really beautiful. And we had First Nations people from there, from Māori - from Aotearoa. We had indigenous people from Taiwan, native American, native Hawaiian. It was just this beautiful sharing moment. So it's not just about teaching at a university, it's also about yarning with other communities globally and interstate as well about how we can use these First Nations knowledges and embed them into ways that we see and look at help.

STACIE: Can I just add, I loved how, the actual model became a tool in which you can decolonise that space as a teacher or lecturer, and even the language changed around, instead of, what was it social determinants that feed into this it was the undercurrents and the forewind or it was really, every bit of language was decolonised. It was great.

LOU: So the language then starts to come through, it just starts to embed itself, in that space. That's wonderful. I just wanted to shoot quickly over to Aunty Di. I'd really like to hear a little bit more about what your project that you are undertaking through, is it through the Indigenous Knowledge Institute, the medicine and your healing knowledge on infection management and antibiotic use? How's that going? Tell us a little bit about that.

AUNTY DI: Well, I'm still in training.

LOU: Yeah.

AUNTY DI: We're almost ready to start our interviews. So be families and some professional people who we think, understand antibiotics and Indigenous healing. And I did a thing with Beyond Blue, I don't know how many years ago, about the Wurundjeri about our wellbeing. And I felt like the next step was our children, to help them be stronger elders and people. But I also find that antibiotics are overused with our kids.

LOU: Oh yeah.

AUNTY DI: Well overused, and I'm one of those kids, allergic to everything, you know, because I was allergic to penicillin.

LOU: Me too aunt.

AUNTY DI: I could only take a few antibiotics and then, because they were used every time, I became allergic to them. So I my own visit at the end, right down the end, that we get themes and see how much people use indigenous plants, their Indigenous knowledge, we don't have a lot, but we have some old stuff that our parents taught us, and I think that's very important that we use those, still use my old man weed .

LOU: Yay! Good I was hoping someone would mention the old man weed.

AUNTY DI: And it helps me with my osteoporosis, you know?

LOU: Yeah.

AUNTY DI: I just feel that doctors need to know that there are other avenues because I also look, because if we're not well in the heart and in the spirit, we won't get well, that's why we have to look at health holistically. That doctors are starting to understand that, I'm hoping that with what we learn, I could go further afield with it, but also that it comes into the hospitals and the doctors, that knowledge comes in, like the [indistinct] in South Australia in hospitals. That's what I wanna hear. And it should be here. So that's what I'm trying to do.

LOU: Well done Aunt. It's a big job. It's a lifetime commitment too, isn't it? To our health and getting us back on track to, in some way address colonialism as you've all spoken about this monster that we refer to or this project. I say project, it's just a project, but it can be overwhelming because of the damage that it has done to our mob. But if we can consider it as something that has a start and a middle and an end that we can tailor it to push it to the side so then we can centre, our own belief systems, our own value systems, our own practical systems. Because this is what we are dealing with, isn't it? We are dealing with, these racially driven systems, that have made our mob quite sick in some cases. And we are getting back on top of that through the work that you three and the likes of you three are doing, with medicine. I do it through song, I do it through performance, I do it through language and we all do. Like you said, we all take a sort of a holistic view of that. Look, wonderful to speak to you all today. I think it's time that we put it out to have a little look at some of the questions. I'm just going through a couple now. Is there anything else that you wanna add or, have we missed any big pieces that you'd like to comment on?

AUNTY DI: No.

LOU: No? All right, here's a question. Do you see the social determinants of health models being available beyond Melbourne Uni, or for use practically across the health and health education sector?

LOU: You wanna answer? Long answer Stacie.

STACIE: Yeah, well from your perspective, I'm sure it will be, I'm sure it's already in motion, but the ripple effect of that, you know, but yeah, in terms of culturally, I don't know, even somebody commented in there saying that they've seen it embedded into architecture and you know, the work that Mandy's doing with that and obviously the Djirri Djirri's and then elders, it's everywhere. It's, yeah I'm sure it's gonna be hopefully part of everyone's way of knowing, being and doing.

LOU: Yeah. And that is the, I think that is part of the big role of, we can talk about these ideas conceptually and it's good to get clarity around that. And then the big work is in implementing it, isn't it? It's about making our laws, laws of this Country, of these countries, second nature in a way, for non-Aboriginal people. And for some of our mob too that haven't had the opportunity to be embedded in that or grow up with that embodied knowledge. Important to always go back to Country. I do the same as you lot do and I love the fact that you talked about being a kid and just going and when you're feeling run down or tired or feeling a bit crook, go full circle, go back to camp base, base camp. Go sit around the fire, go walk Country, go and sit by the river and just be still, some people call it meditation, we just call it getting back the Country. Being one with Country, listening to the Glaz, love the Glaz up on Jotijota Waka, you know, they call out. It just makes you realise you are part of a bigger process. We're not in control of this in a sense, she is. Mother Earth is in control of this and she's, we gotta follow her lead in a way too, yeah.

AUNTY DI: The Country while you're sitting there, you know.

LOU: Yeah.

AUNTY DI: The more you're hear and the more you learn, Country talks to you.

LOU: Oh yeah.

STACIE: It does. And it was popping into my head but Aunty Di I'm just so proud of you just quickly, for the work you're doing in that specific space, you're bringing your experience and obviously in the health system as well and you've just, yeah, thank you for doing what you're doing, and for me I just, it's a personal story but I wanted to just touch on, cause I scribbled it down and we're talking about, women's business and embedding or a holistic way of living. And for me recently I was living right up, so I'm not at Tarra Warra anymore, but when I was, and that shows touring now. But while I was, I thought I'll relocate up mountain Country for a while and we ended up in lockdown and it was great 'cause my five kilometres was waterfalls in the Birrarung that you can swim in, not this polluted Birrarung, but I yeah, had an incident at the end of October last year where a huge, and you're talking huge, even when Ngaree and I went out, there's young ones we've taken from up North to see the trees and they're just like, wow, breaking their necks 'cause they've never seen trees that big or tall either. But I had one of those fall on my house, while Fenner and I were inside, my daughter, and it was on the 31st of October, Halloween. And she had a curriculum day and we were getting ready for it and there was just a lot of on reflection, a lot of movements of that day that saw us in the right spot at the right time in the house. And for a little while I felt like, "Oh, why would Country do that to me?" But it was actually, Country was talking to me. It's so funny because the patriarchy, sorry, I don't mean to get, but I was pretty cross with the men who I'd communicated it to. So my landlord, the neighbour whose tree it was and, the arborist, all males, "That tree's not gonna fall, it's a strong tree, it's not gonna fall." And I kept telling them it's gonna fall. And I wasn't sleeping in my bedroom, hadn't slept in my bedroom for four months during the winter season. And sure enough, my bedroom was under the trunk.

So for me, I'll write about it one day. But for me it's a very strong reminder that, Country does try to tell you, I could feel that tree every day. I've got videos of it dancing in the wind. And I talked to Fenner about it and I knew, and I tried to warn these big strong men who know better, and they didn't listen. And there's something in that, there's something very powerful in that. Yeah, so it wasn't Country, it's just they weren't listening. Country was trying to tell me.

LOU: That's right Stacie. It doesn't have to be this 'ooey' mystical, fantastical way of, the colonial eye or the colonial definition of our connection to Country. It really comes down to instinct. It comes down to listening with open ears and open body, open heart. When you feel something's not quite right and it's being self-aware, you know? And I think that's where our, for me, that's where that connection comes from. That deep listening, that that goopna ngarawr use the term goopna, which means deep, well, deep waterway, goopna or gulpa and ngawar being, listening and looking, these senses, these language that we use, it's multiplicity. It's about being multiple, the use of one word can have numerous meanings. And so for me is about deep and respect for listening. And I think we all have that connection to our beautiful Country.

As you said, Aunty Di, "Country is me, I am Country and Country is me." And I think what I might do, I think we've got about four minutes to go before we turn off, I'd like everyone that's online at the moment, thanks for sticking with us and have an a having a little yarn. Thank you also, could you please put your hands together and your hearts and your emoji cons and please thank our guests, Aunty Di Kerr, Ngaree Blow and Stacie Piper. thank you so much.

STACIE: Thank you.

LOU: It's been a wonderful conversation. I look forward to the next stage of, watching your work. And I'll be keeping an eye on you, aunt. I'm coming down to Melbourne Uni. We'll have a cup.

AUNTY DI: I'd love it.

LOU: It is.

STACIE: It's so beautiful.

LOU: Yeah, isn't that lovely?

LOU: Look at all that heart love in the house. Happy International Women's Day, folks. We really hope you enjoy your day and as I said, pay respect to Mother Earth. She is the most important woman in your life. Keep her central in everything you do. Keep her healthy and she will keep us healthy in turn.

AUNTY DI: And remember your mothers, you are your mother's gift to this world. And only she can do that.

STACIE: True.

LOU: Thanks Aunt.