



**ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER SUNDAY 4 JULY - NAIDOC WEEK 4 TO 11 JULY**

### CONNECTION TO COUNTRY

What is seen as missing from the understanding of connection to Country is that it is an integral part of life in every way for Aboriginal peoples. When we look after Country, Country looks after and provides for us ... When an Aboriginal person looks at Country - we see a cultural map, we see living breathing beings. Mining people and such, when they look at Country all they see is dollar signs

Tyson Mowarin, filmmaker: *Connection to Country*

For First Nations people, "Country" encompasses an interdependent relationship between an individual and their ancestral lands and seas. This reciprocal relationship between the land and people is sustained by the environment and cultural knowledge. When people talk about country it is spoken of like a person: they speak to country, they sing to country, they worry about country, and they long for country.

The land is a link between all aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's existence - spirituality, culture, language, family, law and identity. Each person is entrusted with the cultural knowledge and responsibility to care for the land they identify with through kinship systems.

Rather than owning land, people develop strong intimate knowledge and connection for a place that is related to them. The intimate knowledge of a place forms this strong connection that is inherent to Indigenous identity.

Land sustains Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lives in every aspect - spiritually, physically, socially and culturally. The notion of landscape as a second skin is central to a lot of Aboriginal Art, whether it be theatre, dance, music or painting.

To not know your country causes a painful disconnection, the impact of which is well documented in studies relating to health, wellbeing and life outcomes... It is this knowledge that enables me to identify who I am, who my family is, who my ancestors were and what my stories are. We are indistinguishable from our country which is why we fight so hard to hang on.

Catherine Liddle, Arrente and Luritja woman, and Aboriginal activist



### HEAL COUNTRY

This is the 2021 theme for NAIDOC week. The artwork on the left top of the page was the winning entry for the annual poster competition. Painted by **Maggie-Jean Douglas**, a **Gubbi Gubbi** artist from South East Queensland. When she first heard that the theme for this year is **Heal Country**, the 21 year old artist's first thoughts were about how Country has cared for and healed First Nations people in all senses of the meaning for so long. "I wanted to create an artwork that told that story and made me hopeful for what's to come in future years."

Maggie-Jean's painting is titled *Care for Country*.

"When creating *Care for Country* I kept in mind that this meant spiritually, physically, emotionally, socially and culturally. I chose to create a bright and vibrant artwork that included the different colours of the land but showed how they come together in our beautiful country and to make people feel hopeful for the future. I've included communities, people, animals and bush medicines spread over different landscapes of red dirt, green grass, bushland and coastal areas to tell the story of the many ways country can and has healed us throughout our lives and journeys."

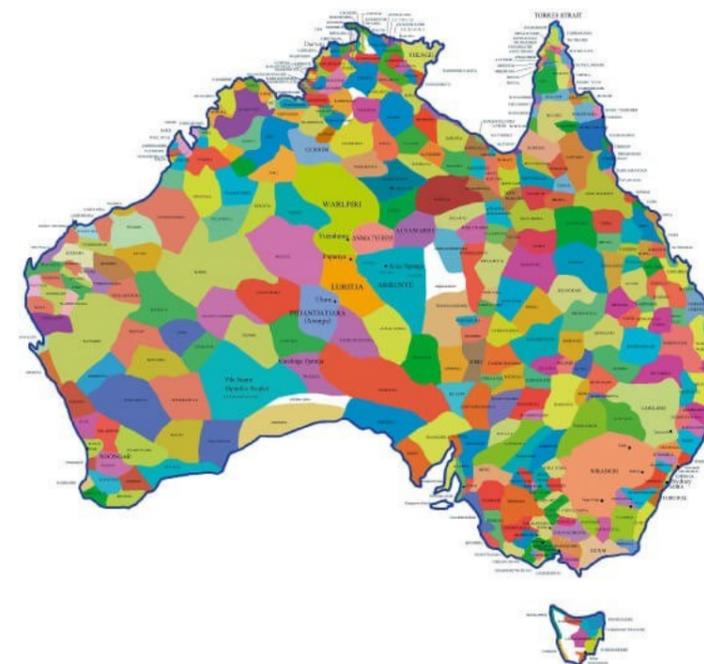
Go to <https://www.naidoc.org.au/resources/poster-gallery> to view the full artwork and the gallery of posters from previous NAIDOC years.

*When an Aboriginal person looks at Country,  
we see a cultural map*

MORE THAN 250 LANGUAGES

600 DIALECTS

AROUND 500 NATIONS



### THE COUNTRY THAT WE ALL WANT TO BE

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) have backed the call for a National Voice for the First People of Australia. They stated: "As well as ensuring input from Indigenous people, the National Voice must be able to demonstrate that the message is received and given respectful consideration in decision making bodies like Australia's Parliament. This may require a formal place in the standing orders of both houses of the Parliament where input from the National Voice can be tabled and debated."

### HEALING COUNTRY FOR ALL AUSTRALIANS

In an address to the Cape York Institute last April, Noel Pearson named some of the areas of indigenous rights, justice and inclusion that are now into their third century of campaigning for resolution.

"The parlous present, this burning platform from which we consider our situation, is plain. We live in an extraordinary nation with such bounty and among the highest standards of living in the world and yet the anomaly of the status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders stares us in the face. Its most striking manifestation is the rates of imprisonment of Indigenous peoples: 3 per cent of the country's population represent 30 per cent of the prison population. The rates in Western Australia and the Northern Territory are even more egregious.

Rates of children in out of home care are obscene, as are the rates of youth in detention. Young people just like you coming from a miniscule proportion of the population fill the detention centres across the country, and will likely go on to adult incarceration.

The *Uluru Statement from the Heart* made these startling truths the starting point for its case for recognition. It said:

Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are alienated from their families at unprecedented rates. This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future.

These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem. *This is the torment of our powerlessness.'*

### WHILE YOU ARE IN LOCKDOWN ....

- Go to <https://iview.abc.net.au/> and put Indigenous into search. There is a wide range of programs planned for NAIDOC Week.
- Go to <http://www.bom.gov.au/> and put Indigenous weather knowledge into search.
- Go to <https://www.csiro.au/en/> put indigenous into search for a range of collaborative projects which includes fire and land management.