

## Making Time 2023: Imagining the future: where will creativity take us? - Transcript #3

Nyoongar performer and advocate Jack Collard

**Wendy Martin:** Today, this wonderful group are looking at arts into the future. And each of the panel members are going to share their perspectives and visions on how community arts can impact the future on a local, national and global level. So Mish has already given you the housekeeping around [how] that's going to happen.

When James was talking about the Revive cultural plan, and the first key pillar, of course is First Nations First. And so it's appropriate that we begin this conversation with Jack Collard, and let me tell you about Jack.

Jack is a Nyoongar man with cultural and ancestral ties to Whadjuk and Ballardong Boodja. He is executive director of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander International Engagement Organisation. He's also program coordinator for the Natural Resource Management Pathways Program, which Nyoongarises the curriculum and paints a picture for Nyoongar kids in the Wheatbelt, where they see themselves as – I'm gonna give this a go – as Moondang Kaaradjiny, the carers of everything, you can correct me Jack.

Jack's also a poet, an educator and increasingly is involved in advocating for Indigenous rights internationally serving on a range of United Nations forums.

Welcome Jack.

**Jack Collard:** [speaks in Nyoongar]

Yaarn-ba yaarn yaarn-ba yaarn baalapiny moort wah (hello all my family)

Yaarn-ba yaarn maam-yok (hello my aunty)

Birdiya (leader)

Baal bridiya nidja (leader of this path here)

Kayawah (indeed)

Baalapiny nidja boola boola bidi nidja koorl (all those paths lead here)

Boola boola bidi baalapiny demangka maamangka (Those many paths them grandmothers and grandfathers)

Baalapiny moort nidja kaaradjiny boolarang bidi bah (Those that cared for those paths)

Boolarang birdi nidja djena koorl (All those paths go)

Nginda Baalapiny djena koorl (Wherever those feet travelled)

baalapiny dookertiny baalapiny birdi (They carved those paths)

Ngaitj yeeyee nidja waangkinyiny (This path that led me to be here speaking today)

Nginda baalapiny koorl (The paths they travelled)

Watteriny (Fremantle)

Weitjamup (Rottnest)

Winja Bindiirwoorr kaadaka Mungalah ngarda koorl Kuranup (That place that Bindirwoorr and Mungalah went down to Kuranup)

Beeliar koorl Beeliar koorl (Following that river)

Kaartagarrup (Kings Park)

Winja Banaray Gamelana baal waangkiny (where Banaray Gamelana teaches)

nginda ngalakiny kenya, ngallakiny kwop (When we are one, we are good)

koorl x4 (travelling)

Dandjabut (York)

Koorl x3

Kweradiny (Quairading)

Koorl x3

Kaatakitj (Wave Rock)

Baalapiny birdi (Every path)

Dookertiny x2 (carved)

So what I just said there in that language, that old language, is that as we gather today, we've walked along many different paths, to bring us here. I acknowledge my auntie here today, as one of those that have forged the paths for us to be here, and for me to be here, speaking in that language, a language that all of my grandmothers' grandmothers, my grandfathers' grandfathers, they spoke that language as

they walked this land, as they went from the coast, and as the rains came and made this swampy land not so nice to inhabit, they moved inland.

And they come back and they move with the seasons. And as they move with the seasons, they live that life of balance. And that life of balance can only come when we're connected to the truth.

So that's our culture. It's a culture of connection. And that's because there's levels to connection. My uncle Richard Walley, when I was a young fella, said, our culture is one of respect, respect, respect. And it took me a while to understand what that really meant. Because respect doesn't happen overnight. Respect can be taken away overnight. But for over 100,000 years, this place right here, over 350 different nation states with their own languages, religions, governmental systems and structures maintained that balance. And that's because we connected with ourselves. And when you connect with yourself in truth, you can connect with others.

So I sit here proudly with me, the Yaachity, this headband I made yesterday reclaiming this old practice of how we, as Nyoongar people connect with who we are. And so that's connected but one of the many systems that maintain that balance and that's that totemic system, and it's a system that tells us that you are born perfectly who you are. All of the shadow in those low vibrational times when we're struggling, and how that manifests to those good times, when you're really strong, and you're in your best self.

And so we're at a time in history right now, in this place here. It's a time of reckoning. We might not have got our voice, but we got our truth. And me, as a young person, I'm glad that that truth was spoken. Because I'm sick of being gaslit. I'm sick of the facades.

And all of those impressions that the mob people left when they walked, those are impressions that guided every single step. However, for culture, knowledge is a kaartidjen. Your kaart is your head, your dijen is your foot. Everything we absorb, every song, every dance, every story, tells us how we are obligated to one another. As that spider teaches us at Kings Park there, how we are interconnected in this web of life and that interconnection infers that interdependency and when we are interdependent on one another, then that is that balance.

And so these discussions today about outcomes, these discussions today about who's giving us this money, and who's actually choosing how these things roll out. Us as Nyoongar people, our singing, our dancing, that's our preventative health care. We don't have a word for suicide. And that's because we had these art projects, year after year, and I think it's timely that we're gathered in this season right here, Koomborong, the time that the borang, the totems, they grow koomba, because they've been fed after the rains and the sun has come and brought that life to the land, and then all that life, and all that abundance, now we have all that abundance to make time. And these are the times that we sing these love songs for these animals. We do these love dances for these animals. And we see these animals not just as animals, but as us, as my auntie, as my sister, as my brother.

So my message to share with you today is that we need to stock-take these impressions. I've been on my own journey as a young Nyoongar man, trying to figure out who I was and what that meant. And that

decolonisation process was a process of a lot of shame and guilt, for complicity, in my own journey, my dad's journey, his parents' journey, their parents' journey, shame and guilt, how far we've strayed from that path of balance. But through that shame and guilt and transmuting that, now I can live in my authenticity. And that is the power of community arts.

For a long time, we've been lying to ourselves, so we can sleep at night. And this community here is sick, this land is sick. And we need healing. And when we come together and we share space, and we share time, not just time in any way, in that authenticity. Because we as Nyoongars, we as Indigenous peoples, when I talk about being gaslit, we know what's said at the park, the pubs, at the bars, behind closed doors. We're intuitive people. We know that there's a lot unsaid and we feel that that is being unsaid and a sickness.

And we, as intuitive people, but as healers, are here to guide the rest of the world into that path of balance. But in order to do that, we have to find that authenticity. And a few weeks ago was just a little iceberg of that truth that we need to tell ourselves, we need to tell our children, as we figure out what art we're creating, for what community that we want to live in.