



Bringing together settler and First Nations women

By Honey Neslon, October 2020

One of the important ambitions of the Women's Climate Congress is to enjoin women from the diverse communities in Australia, to come together on behalf of the Earth and our descendants, in the face of climate heating. And we especially wish for the involvement of First Nations women: those who belong to the 250+ different nations in our continent, and who have been so afflicted by settler invasion, and the consequent extreme harm to their lands and waters and atmosphere.

I have some modest connection with some Indigenous women, through a long friendship with the Tent Embassy people, and working in remote communities. I think we'll find it is a slow invitational process for them to join settler women in our Congress. We can recall the extremity of their displacements and stupendous losses, the sundering of their loving sacred duties to birth-country, the overpowering of family culture and language and traditions, the refusal of responsibility and reparation by indifferent perpetrators. In my experience, they remain retracted and doubled-up with unhealed grief and loss. For most strong First Peoples women, the environmental and social harms to their own regional communities overwhelm their attention today. And their traditional duties are to their own land and ancestry.

Women in the diverse Aboriginal societies have strong influence in upholding culture, and a large private realm of women's business. The largely European, Asian and Middle Eastern histories of settler women simply cannot compare – for several thousand years silenced, scorned, trivialised, possessed, oppressed, hobbled, often persecuted and assaulted; and only very recently (some of us) enfranchised, given voice, and at long last in control of our own fertility and thereby vocational futures. The traditional fortitude of First Nations women, and their passionate spiritual daughter-relationship to country, would be a strong sanction of justice in the WCC movement.

My own associations with Indigenous women are very modest. But I think that there could be a growing movement amongst First Nations women, to lead on behalf of their countries and children. We in WCC can be patient, especially during the Covid period, which threat will gradually and thankfully come to an end! I am happy to help invite a coming together, when the time grows.

Our shared feeling is that Women, together, must take a high and rightful stand on climate safety for our children.

And I feel this one also: that we Women can be the ones to lead and rise to the crucial, national ceremonial event of sorrow and apology for our invader/settler peoples' shameful past and present-

day destructions. This is the only path to truth, national union and healing, and to moving forward with new courage and heads held high as a mature people. It may take this deep-hearted national empowerment, led by united Women, to face down the heavy forces for continuing carbon emissions, and the burning of our children's and species' future.

About Honey Nelson

Honey is a vet by profession (now retired) and lived and worked in Central Australia for many years, flying herself to remote communities to look after the animals. She is also a photographer, visual artist and writer¹.

Honey has maintained a close relationship with the Tent Embassy since its inception and knows the custodians and many of the visiting Elders who come there. She has been working for some years to bring about a ceremonial gathering of Elders and settler people to express sorrow for the past and find new ways of working together towards a shared harmony for the land. An event planned for April 2020 (['New Dreaming Gathering'](#)) was sadly cancelled due to the COVID outbreak but Honey and others are still hoping that it will come about when the time is right ...

1. You can see Honey's online book '[Womansong](#)' [here](#).