

## The One with the Welcome

**Aunty Di** I honour my ancestors and my elders. I'm a Manna Gum woman and I always like to be able to give people the gum.

**Aunty Dale** Thank you.

**Aunty Di** Normally you have water ceremony, you have the sacred water, dip it in suck it. And what you do with that is to agree to the laws of Bunjil, and Bunjil is my creator.

**Aunty Dale** Thank you.

**Aunty Di** And he's depicted as an eagle when he went up into the Dream time. And what these symbolise, not only is a safe passage, but it also symbolises that you agree to the laws of Bunjil, and that is not to harm the land or the waterways, and not to harm any of Bunjil's children. So it's about respecting country and respecting each other.

If ever you come past and you see my family fire lit, please come to the fire, you're always welcome, and you're always welcome to tread lightly on my country.

Normally when you leave you go through smoking ceremony again, but I will bless you, and hope that you keep safe, and I would like to say, "May Bunjil, my creator, surround you all and keep you safe on country." And on behalf of my elders, I say, "Wominjeka Wurundjeri Balluk Yearmenn Koondée Bik." That means welcome to the home of my country. And I wish to welcome you all from the tops of the trees to the roots in the ground, because when you look after country, and you look after each other, country looks after us. So Ngoon Godgin, thank you very much. I'll give you this gum to take with you, with the blessing of Bunjil.

**Aunty Dale** Thank you. I'm highly honoured, and on behalf of all of us I thank you for your very special welcome, and pay respects to your family and elders.

**Aunty Di** Thank you.

**Aunty Dale** And your ancestors. And in return, I would like you to accept a small gift from my country. Thank you.

**Aunty Di** Thank you. Thank you so much for having me, and for allowing me to come on behalf of my family.

**Aunty Dale** This is very important as well, this is very symbolic, that Aunty Di has worn her ceremonial possum skin here today.

**Aunty Di** Yeah. I wear it when I do business, and I have a full cloak for ceremony. This one here is ... I do it for two things. Walert is my mother's name, which means possum, so I wear it in her honour. But also, we always had the possum skin. You get your first one when you're born,

and then as you grow so you add the pelts on, so that when you're an adult you have your full cloak. We have possum skin drums which is for women, so they sit on the ground and they put the pelt around their legs when they're sitting, put it down, pull it tight, and they bang. And then we have clap sticks. Men or women can play that. When we dance, we stomp. Other people flick up the dirt, where we stomp, so you hear it very loud on the earth. And that's to let the ancestors know that we're here.

**Aunty Dale** Whereas we have a different tradition where I'm from, it's the men who stomp on the earth, but the women just kick up the dust. We walk lightly on our mother.

**Aunty Di** Yeah. Mother Earth.

**Aunty Dale** Yes.

**Aunty Di** She's our mother.

**Aunty Dale** Yeah. So in my language when we look out on the land, that's Boodja. The land beneath our earth is beneath our feet here is Boodjara. When a woman is pregnant she's Boodjaree. The same as mother. Traditionally were all in our own countries, or moving across the land according to seasons and tradition. So were accessing the food, that's correct in that season to eat.

**Alice** Which is a very different way, isn't it?

**Aunty Dale** Yeah. Yeah.

Most food is eaten the same day.

**Aunty Di** Yeah you never took too much.

**Aunty Dale** No.

**Aunty Di** Never had any extra. Fed all the family, and then you're finished.

**Aunty Dale** So when you come to a fruit tree, you can eat what you need, you can fill your dish, and you leave the rest for the person, and the animals.

**Aunty Di** When the flowers are blooming, when the wattles bloom, when the fish are spawning, when the eels are coming through it's all about nature. All the seasons around you, have six seasons, so it's all the seasons about nature. it's not as a specific day, it's the nature.

**Aunty Dale** We have the same, we also have six seasons on the other side of the country. And we look out there, mother nature tells us when it's change of season. No books, no calendars, no radios, no TVs. Mother nature.

**Maddy** I loved hearing all the Aboriginal words, that I'm not used to hearing.

**Aunty Dale** Yeah it very important that we revive our languages, and that we use language everyday. I wasn't taught my language as a child, because Aboriginal people for a time, were forbidden to speak their languages in some places, like in the capital cities in particular, or the big centres. As long as you have a few fluent language speakers left, you can revive a language. So I've been studying my language now for 15 years, and whenever I can I use my words when I'm talking to people.