

Interview with Davena Monro by Brooke Prentis

Cairns, QLD

Abstract

Davena Monro is a Butchulla and Garawa woman from, K'gari (Fraser Island) and the Gulf of Carpentaria in the north Queensland area. She is currently the RTO and Business and Operations Manager with Wontulp-Bi-Buya College. Here she is interviewed by Brooke Prentis.

Interview

Davena: My name is Davena Monro. I'm a Butchulla and Garawa woman, with bloodline connection to my Grandmother's Country K'gari (Fraser Island), as well as blood connection to my Grandfather's Country situated in the Gulf of Carpentaria in the north Queensland region. I am currently the RTO Business and Operations Manager with Wontulp-Bi-Buya College.

Brooke: Thanks, Davena. So, we're doing an interview today on the Dreaming and Spirit-filled Christianity. First question - when did you become a Christian, and could you tell us a little bit about your testimony?

Davena: Okay. It's been about fifteen years since I have actually been walking with the Lord. I know that my turning point in seeking God was when I lost a very close friend of mine to suicide. I recall this was a very spiritual period of my life... there was a strong spiritual pull, and a desire in my heart to go back to my grandfather's Country for women's business. I now know, that God really intervened, as I was in a very dark and vulnerable state. However, in saying that I know that I will be required to go back to my Country. However, I believe it will only happen in God's perfect timing. Looking back now, I don't feel that I was truly ready to take in the true essence of God and my culture. I say this because I feel that undertaking women's business is not a lighthearted thing to do. Rather it is a very spiritual ceremony. I also needed to be prepared to know exactly where our Lord was in this process. I now know that at the time, I was searching for answers. I wanted to know more about what I was actually experiencing. This was because my life was changing and becoming quite spiritual. I was drawn to what I thought

was my most spiritual connection, which was to return to my grandfather's Country up in the Gulf.

It was in this same period that a Murri Christian woman, who out of the blue started to visit me. I didn't know her personally, and even though I didn't invite her, she continued to visit me every day. Through it all I never stopped the visits either, as I became very interested in her spiritual walk. Her journey was resonating well within me and this was being exposed through our yarning. The spiritual realm was being opened up to me. It was intriguing in a sense, as my inner thoughts were saying, "oh! really, is *that* how Christianity is?"

I must admit I had been exposed to Christianity my whole life - attending churches as a child and youth. Different people came in and out of my life. Whether it was through family, friends or friends of friends, to attending Girls' Brigade. I still recall vividly when I was around the age of nine, when my mum and dad had me baptized, in the Bulimba Baptist church (or Christened when I was younger) and then I actually attended various Sunday schools, so I was always around and exposed to God.

Looking back, I see that the Lord had me in 'His Hands' from as far back as I can remember, yet it was only in the last fifteen years that I really found the Lord and started to be aware of where He is in my life and what my purpose in life is.

Brooke: When you went to church as a young girl, was there significant influence from particular people in your family? Like from your mum or your nan? ... Or was it just community?

Davena: Well ... I feel that I have had this spiritual knowing ever since I was a little girl, the knowing that there was something bigger than I, or any other. I recall, when I was about four or five, I would spend a lot of my life outside, in the open spaces. As kids in those days, we would be outdoors playing every minute we had a chance. It was often in these times I would be continuously talking to God ... I knew him, but obviously, I didn't know him like I do today... but I still believe I knew Him, and I fully believe all children do.

My mum, Euriel Mackey (nee Dawson), along with my aunts, Violet, Dianne, Marsha, Aileen, Elsie and Glenda, grew up on the Cherbourg mission. It was due to their mother, my Nana (Winnie Tanna Dawson, nee Gala), that each one of them come to know our creator as God. It was her walk with the Lord and the transition of knowledge that was passed onto us, her future

generations. Even though this seed sprouted later in our grown years, I fully believe there was a Godly spiritual seed that was planted while I was in my mother's womb. This would explain why as a very young child I was fully aware of His presence in my life. I knew he was all powerful! I believe that all human beings are born with this same knowledge and knowing.

Brooke: What is the role of the Holy Spirit now in your Christian life?

Davena: I believe the Holy Spirit is my guide. He takes me where He needs me to be – or where God needs me to be. Even though at times, I'd rather go. However, when I allow Him, He directs my path. He reveals to me many different things, both good and bad. I believe this is reflected through a gift of discernment I have for people. I feel that the Lord shows me many spiritual situations around people. I see this is an awesome gift, as I have the ability to understand where people have come from in their life. I try to always utilise this gifting when it comes to ministry or counselling-He helps me through! So, I fully believe this gift complements my roles, traditionally and culturally. God just gives us all gifts we can use, and I am continuously using mine today, and I believe it's led fully by the Holy Spirit. So, He plays a very important part in my life.

Brooke: And what does "The Dreaming" mean to you?

Davena: This is only my interpretation; I fully believe it means *order*. It was meant to keep everything in its rightful place. I believe it was a God given system. It kept everybody knowing where their place was, traditionally. Everyone had a good idea of the plans the Creator Spirit had for them, as it was passed down. In their lives, traditionally people had roles, and they had a purpose. That kept the vision and purpose for the tribe and clan group alive. It ensured and enforced our people into sharing what they had with the next generation. So, it was a strong transitional system. I believe 'The Dreaming' was more about capturing that relationality and the connection of every living entity – 'Land, Sea, People' (Monro, 2014), - this is a topic that I have undertaken in my Masters of Education and still building on in my research through my PhD.

Brooke: Are there any significant traditions or cultural celebrations that you consider important?

Davena: Well ...everybody coming together. I feel that relationality is a necessity in keeping a group together or alive. We as First Australians, are required to continue to allow cultural knowledge to transition to the next generation. So "celebrations" these days ... in modernistic times is a

race of people who still share and spend time together. Today we see our people getting together and coming from miles away to participate in Murri Cups, Murri Carnivals, Musgrave Park in Brisbane and Fogarty Park here in Cairns, and many other locations around the nation, for NAIDOC. So, Celebrations are very significant in keeping our cultural alive.

But it's also very important to [gather with] family. For instance, my mother has her weekly "nana's day," ... it is her way of transferring knowledge onto her grandchildren. That is something that is really important... This is ceremony in itself.

Our traditional [owners] getting together for Native Title... even though there are many issues in this process, which in turn have contributed to much division and detriment to family and clan groups. It is still a collective... It still can be observed or marked as a celebration of people coming together. Connecting is a necessity, so when we stop connecting this will only cause cultures to be diluted and dissolved. Inclusion is very significant, and the celebration of First Nations People is required ensure the survival of our culture.

Brooke: Are there any traditions or cultural celebrations that you wouldn't expect Christians to participate in and if so, why?

Davena: Honestly? I believe... since colonization... many sub-cultures have been implemented and adopted into our culture. So, like all aspects of today's society, there are many practices that should not be entertained by Christians. However, in saying that I feel that we need to be sensitive and use our discernment. Many believe through the early church that non-Indigenous people have created a box where Christianity has been kept. So, to follow God, people have been required to jump into the box, and then and only then can we truly be walking with our Lord and Savior. Over the years I have actually observed many of our Aboriginal and Islander brothers and sisters in Christ... expecting the same, -we need not imitate, as this could also be seen as forced subcultures.

Realistically, God should be shown and shining through everything! I actually find it funny that people do not understand God's word. It is clearly written in His scriptures that "He will use the foolish things of this world." We as people on this earth do not know the plans of God. Most times we as humans are totally unaware, that we are judging others and the things they do. You know what? I have witnessed God using people in the most unusual ways. Ways in which we have been taught to believe, is totally unethical. However, He has given them the grace to walk

into dungeons, and into places where not everyone can tread. This is why I believe our God says do not judge anyone, because only 'He knows the plans that He has for His people'.

It has been laid heavily upon my heart, to never try to judge who's who... and I fully believe that all people should never be frowned or looked down upon. I believe that, if people come together with respect for each other as individuals, whether we believe they are right or wrong. Or if we feel they are in the wrong, we should first pray, unless you know that it is totally of God to share with them, then I suggest we just revert to praying... but that's just my opinion.

Brooke: Thank you. What do you think about the relationship between your culture (or cultures) and Christianity?

Davena: I think they actually complement one another. I fully believe that Christianity is very similar to our culture. In today's society, the way in which science has led and directed research, is both good and bad. It has taken humankind and knowledge to the point where by... everything needs to be proven first. Either through the physical and natural...or by reading or written evidence. Many of our First Nations People around the world did not record their histories in this way, but rather through the narrative (oral stories, yarnings). In fact, it has taken a such a long time for Indigenous, Aboriginal, Torres Strait, First Nations people all over the world to be recognised and acknowledged for their wisdom, ... and still to this day there is a fight to be recognised. In many areas of society, our knowledges it is not truly accepted or taken seriously.

It is my thinking, that God had to come through a culture. He needed to leave a precise message, and it was required to be written down significantly, and in depth. So, He chose the Israelites, He chose them as his people, it was all in His master plan. Prior to colonisation, I fully believe that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people walked with God. We walked with Him ... when we look back [at] traditional foods, the way in which our land was looked after... we nurtured our children and people, we cared for the land, it was a culture of caring and sharing, which could only come from a higher power.

The same with the Butchulla people - our three laws. One of them is what is good for the land. We need to ensure that we do... the first rule, look after the land. The land is, essence to every living thing. Every element needs the land - the animals and people are only two. It can be likened to my traditional story of the Butchulla People. It is orally recorded that God the Creator, the Highest Spirit, sent down two spirits to beautify the land. It was around my area, that one spirit, named K'gari, said, "oh gosh, I'm really really tired." Yendingie saw that she was weary

and suggested K'gari rest. K'gari saw that the cove, (of the Hervey Bay Community) was such a beautiful area." She, (K'gari) decided to lay down and had a long sleep.

After a little while the other spirit, known by Yendingie, spotted K'gari lying there fast asleep. When K'gari awoke, she pleaded with Yendingie, to stay in the beautiful cove in which she had awoken. First, Yendingie, said "no" because K'gari was a spirit, but realizing how beautiful K'gari looked in the spot and hearing her plead, Yendingie Yendingie turned her into an island. Biral the Great Spirit agreed. So, she was not alone Biral agreed to give [her] people, to keep her company. He also gave K'gari the birds and the animals to care for and nurture. This dreaming tells us that we do not own K'gari. K'gari owns us Butchulla mob, given to us by Biral, our Creator Spirit.

Brooke: That's beautiful! So, if you don't mind answering this question ... which churches, denominations have been significant in your journey as a Christian?

Davena: No, I don't mind! I feel as though I am not one denomination. Since growing up, I recall going to the Baptist Church - I even remember going to a Seventh Day Adventist Church. I have also attended a Jehovah's Witness church, Lutheran, United, you name it - I've been there. Today I am the same, I feel comfortable with attending any church to feel the love of God. I do not personally believe that God is contained within the four walls.

When I do go to church, this is more for fellowship, because ... I meet God everywhere. He talks to us all in amazing and unexpected places. He'll speak to you even when you're in the shower ...or in the loneliest and darkest places ...It's places that He can be alone with you and actually capture your attention. So, it is my thinking the church (the four walls) is more about fellowship and this is a necessity, to come together as the body of Christ.

Brooke: How have you found that the churches and denominations you've attended or had relationship with, related to the local Aboriginal culture?

Davena: Okay, this is only my opinion, but I feel that there are still many issues in regard to the church and how it connects with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. There is actually a really good story in one of the units at Wontulp... It's outlined [in] one of the workbooks. I believe it

is a story passed on by Ps George Rosendale. It talks about a pot plant ministry. I recall sitting in one of Reverend Victor classes, in which he gave a really good interpretation on colonisation and how it could be seen as a pot plant. So, when first settlers came to our country, they brought their ministry also, they brought their beliefs and their church, which the ideology of a pot plant, is implemented. I briefly touched on this same method earlier in this interview. If someone was wishing to be part of this type of ministry, they would be required to jump into the pot plant. However, on the other side of the scale, the best method to successfully transplant an established plant, is to ensure it has a healthy root system. The plant must be pulled out of the pot, roots and all and in turn placed into the soil.

Another amazing way to achieve this is by actually burying the whole pot, and the plant, into the system or into the dirt. The roots will end up cracking the pot and taking root within the soil. And I think that's where, the church is really failing and falling. We as the church need to shift our mentality and start growing together as one and with one body. So, going back again... colonization, when they first came, instead of just placing that pot plant on the top of First Nations structures and system. Because there was a good system in place, which was established and embedded into the soil (nation) and its people for thousands and thousands of years. If this was done correctly and allowed their roots to grow through, I fully believe the cultures would have been able to be entwined and grow together.

So, by observing the analogy of the pot plant, [we] can imagine how today's society and the Church are *actually* relating to Aboriginal culture. In many churches it is still very taboo to do corroboree or dance - even though it is our way of praising and ushering (Welcoming) in the presence of the Lord. Or even, the didgeridoo, which is similar to utilising any other cultural instrument. However, I find that quite hard to understand, because basically, the instruments that are being used today and throughout history are made of the same type of materials. It's all wood... like the wood [of] flutes or little whistles - even the guitar is a wooden instrument. It's okay for those musical instruments to be utilized in the church, so why not our cultural instruments? Even the horn, when you think about it... in God's word, they used a ram's horn. If we didn't know any different, we'd think "oh that would be barbaric!" with no disrespect intended.

So, I believe people need to have an open mind. It really comes back to that judgmental-ness spirit again. Many times, there still appears to be very big division between mainstream Christians, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Christians. It is reflected in all things we do. I've been in churches where I've also been subdued to people who have not wanted to connect and talk to me. I think, sometimes to myself, well, come on! I'm an educated person,

why are you doing this to me? It obviously comes back to the colour of my skin. So again, they don't know me, it still comes down to that judgmental way in human beings.

It comes back to if, we are seriously wanting connection and relationship, and there is always talk around reconciliation within Australia. We, the Church, need to be the forerunners; we need to continue to strive and find new ways to achieve it. However, it speaks in book of Revelation, regarding the different churches, in the last days, not all [being] perfect. So, I suppose we should not expect everyone to be. We need to just pray and accept and love each other for what we are and allow the Lord to make the changes in the hearts of men. But, yes, there is still a lot of disconnection. [But] there is also a lot more people wanting that connection... this is a lot better than what it has been in times past. Let's keep raising awareness and pushing together as a nation of Christians.

Brooke: What knowledges do you think are important to pass onto younger Aboriginal Christians?

Davena: Well honestly, I still think it is important they know our culture and our traditional ways of the land. I fully believe our people walked with God. And the way in which our environment is going, the way our Country and land is being treated, it is obvious that our land is really sick in many parts. We really need to instill within our children the importance of going back and researching other ways of doing things to help or heal the land. We can actually try and rectify the past, we need to bring a little traditional culture into today, and that's through both Aboriginal and non-Indigenous people. It's becoming a multicultural society. So, the more that we educate our children, they will fight and work for what is right. More importantly, adapting to ways of persevering the land and our cultures within this space, within our Australia, within our Country.

[Also] learning the language. Not necessary speaking it all the time, but to keep the language alive. We need to continue to take our children back to Country and land, and ensuring they have that connection. It is all about God. God is in the mountains, God is in creation, and people are forgetting about it.

I get really scared for the future of my children, my grandchildren. The biggest reason is disconnection. I remember when trying to call my son. It was my grandson who was only about two years old at the time and spoke very well for his age. He answered the phone, he said, "Hello nan, I gotta go," and I said, "where you gotta go to?" And he said "I gotta go bye nan," and he hung up on me. I recall thinking to myself "hey, look out!" Anyways, I got back on the

phone to call my son, however my grandson answered, and again he stated, “oh I gotta go nan I gotta go,” and again I said to myself, “hey look out where are you going, what’s going on?” And it happened about three times. He kept on hanging up on me. And then I rang my daughter-in-law, to find out “what’s going on?” and she said, “oh he’s watching a little cartoon.” And I said, “oh my goodness”. I ended up ringing him a third time and I remember saying “don’t you love nan?” and he said, “oh I love you, love you, love you, but I gotta go.” That experience felt like a real disconnection... our family is a very important aspect to who we are, and the connection is everything.

Every aspect of society is having connection and is developed through technology and social media... a lot of it can be utilised for good, but then a lot can really be destroying our culture. I feel that Christians... and our Aboriginal children, when able, need to go back to their Country. This is so important as one day they will be required to lead this nation, whether people see it right now - they are our leaders. It is so important to have access and connection back to Country, both in the natural and on a spirit level. They need to start finding funding for more First nations Rangers, to care for and nurture their land, giving them the opportunity to take care of and control their God given lands. I think this is a really important process that needs to be implemented for our Aboriginal children of today and future.

Brooke: And the final question... what is your future hope for the church in Australia?

Davena: Well, I honestly feel...I hope, and I pray for unity. If many mainstream churches could witness where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people come together, like our college and our space at Wontulp. It is where all denominations come together as one and it’s amazing to see the worship and praise. It’s so powerful and the presence is so strong. I sometimes feel that the church has not got the full revelation or not the full understanding of the impact that this can make on the whole of society. I know there’s a lot of churches out there, trying to network. However there remains division, which creates barriers. There is awesome power when students come from all around Australia to study theology together. The doors and windows are open wide when all people from different denominations, and cultures come together. It creates multiple blessings. But I don’t see it very much.

Even though I feel comfortable within myself to visit any church, I truly understand why it would be still very hard for other First Nation People to connect, let alone in other denominations. There has been fear placed upon God’s people and fear of diverse doctrines. This is a real barrier with churches of today and not wanting to interlink or interconnect. I believe it is due to fear of stealing other church members. At the end of the day we just need to

reinforce that Jesus - is the head, we are [all] the flock and the body. We don't necessarily need to belong to one particular church, and we do not belong to a man or a pastor. We need to see ourselves as the church in Australia, being one body!

I think there are a lot of things that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people can show the mainstream churches. But they need to trust that we have skills. We also have wisdom, and knowledge, which we can contribute. Unfortunately, in many churches today there is underlining fears and racism. The scary business is the way in which the enemy has come into all areas of society, like a wolf wearing sheep's clothing... The spirit of Pedophilia has raised its ugly head, this type of horrific stuff has not only been revealed in the whole of society but has been running rampant within the church. It has and still is affecting people through all cultures and in turn, people are becoming anti-church.

Again, there is judgmental-ness over the nation, and it is affecting everybody, [when] realistically we need to be concentrating on coming together. We need to be identifying ways to filter, or stamp out, the enemy of our church! We can do this through unity and coming together as one. We can stay in our safe spaces or hide from the fight, but the only way is stand true and strong to overcome and to fight the enemy in name of Jesus' name! We need to stand on the enemy's head. We need to join forces and make the enemy flee, with the strength of the Lord. That is what will happen if we come together. It is written, that where there is two or three gathered in his name, the impossible will be made possible.

Brooke: Can I ask a question... what does that unity look like? Physically look like?

Davena: I believe it is all about ...relationality. So, good relationships between people and churches... I don't have the answers, but God does. How do we start? Well I believe we need to either meet monthly or fortnightly. Just ensuring that we come together in one way or another. It may only start with a few different denominations, first of all, but it's a start. I know there's still that division within the churches. There needs to be no judgmental-ness, no one looking over someone else's fence. We need to take that into consideration - pull that log out of our own eye before we go pointing the finger.

We need to all step back and support the minority groups more. We need to understand that God gave us diversity in all areas of creation. We all need to accept each other for who we are. We need to admit our past wrongs and except our futures, but we need to be prepared to walk with the downtrodden and underprivileged. We as the church are required to be the leaders and

this also includes our politicians. I speak again of First Nations People of Australia, and their promised land, which stripped away. This is also with little recognition and acknowledgement.

I recall years ago, when I first started my grown-up walk with God. I attended a service whereby hundreds of people came to watch and listen to a guest speaker. The majority of people were non-Indigenous, with the exception of myself and aunty Aileen. Everyone was standing and singing, "we are one, we are Australia,". It was in this service that I felt my first experiences and the disconnection of the body the Christ. It was after a full sermon on how non-Indigenous people, or as we know them, the first settlers, came to Australia to do the Lord's work, by reclaiming and by destroying all the Amorites, to gain the promised land. So, it was in the service that the Pastor was identifying Aboriginal people as the Amorites. I believe there is still this mentality within some of the churches today. We need to seek the truth and with the fact that the land was not actually promised to the settlers but to the First People of this nation. God gave custodianship prior to colonisation. This is an important discussion that needs to be addressed within the Church.

I feel that we as Indigenous people, are not able to take over everything and the powers within this land has made this impossible. However, I feel it [starts with] acknowledgment. True acknowledgement of Australian's First People as being the custodians. It needs to be given back, not just through native title, there needs to be more identified positions in the running of this Country. Whether it be identified elected positions, not hand-picked or tokenized. I recall watching a series of transformation stories which had been documented and collected from all across the world. It gave insight into the power of God and our prayers. Many communities have prayed for renewal and transformation. They are to this day so powerful, as it brought healing and renewal!!

There is one story that stood out for me. It was pictured on this beautiful island, and for a couple of centuries there were no fish, nothing could grow on the island, it was just... really devastated. But there was a secret, which had been harboured for a couple of centuries, [although] it was still very untouched. Historically there had been a killing of a missionary in the community and there was no true revelation or chance for apology and forgiveness. It was only until there was true forgiveness of peoples and family, and the handing back to God in repentance. The process of Sorrow and Forgiveness opened the door... for God to transform that whole community. The fish returned to the waters. The vegetation and the plants grew back. Everything was revitalised and restored.

It's like in His word, "if my people will humble themselves and pray, I will heal their people and, I will heal their land." It's exactly the same thing. Until this occurs with the right spirit, Australia will not truly heal. We will not fully unify ... God said, let my Kingdom on earth be done as it is in heaven, then He will come. Now, I think, and in all honesty and believe our Lord is at the door and waiting to enter but is holding off as we as the church have not reached the full revelation.

As Christians we need to come together and strive to humble ourselves. It is a necessity to pray, and ... we as Aboriginal people need to forgive, as many times there is still harbored unforgiveness. There is also the fact that many non-Indigenous people do not believe that they should say sorry, due to them not personally playing any part in the atrocities afflicted on First Nations People centuries ago. Which is a fair statement, however, the word of God outlines the spiritual connections and binding that needs to be broken, from the sins of all our forefathers, and that by denying the truth, things will fester to the point they are at now.

I attended a conference recently and there was a lot of talk around unity and reconciliation. Through a group discussion I met an older lady, she might have been about seventy or eighty. Our group was discussing situations around disunity in the church today. It never surprised me when the dear older lady stated, "we do not have disunity, as we have a family of Aboriginal people and they come every week and we all accept them into our church." But again, unity is not only about being accepted, and I actually tried to explain my thoughts [on this.] She did not seem to grasp or understand what I was trying to get across. Then there was another gentleman... who spoke about a choir from the community of Hermannsburg, in the Northern Territory ...he shared how amazing, it was to gift back to society especially Germany. This was through song, which the community was taught and was given the opportunity to sing gospel in the German tongue. Again, this is only my opinion, but I must admit this was a beautiful gesture, however, it still does not address unity in this country. For me, that does not show unity, it still indicates that we as First Peoples are required to accept everything at face value and except what we are given, and that is acceptance. Our First Nations People are continuously taking on western and other cultures. Many that were in attendance at the conference were leaders. They too had issues with grasping, (whether through lack understanding, or lack of responsibility) that even though there were physical acts, there also remains unseen issues that need to be addressed. I'm thinking, well, that doesn't reflect the *unity* that needs to occur. Unity is coming together and loving each other and excepting everyone for who they are and their purpose, gifts and talents. It's like a relationship, with a husband and a wife when they have a disagreement or quarrel. Only when [they find] true forgiveness to break any type of cycle and express *sorrow*, then that is when God can come through and work.

It is a hard journey sometimes being First Nations People, because realistically we too can also be very constricted, by our own mob. There is a crab mentality, which is still happening in the community and also within the church. It is very sad but very true that some people just do not want others to succeed, and this type of behavior needs to stop. We need to love each other like we love ourselves. God's first command is to love God, then to love each other. So, more love, more understanding, more compassion, is going to take us a long way. Forgiveness, and understanding is the key in this situation and how I believe unity will and can happen.

Brooke: Thank you. Do you have any final thoughts about Dreaming and Spirit-filled Christianity?

Davena: I think we as First Nations People need to push in and ensure our culture lives on. If not, we will leave so many of our people behind. Many of our people are hurting and they need to understand that Christianity is not there to hurt them. The enemy has come into this country, like a wolf in sheep's clothing, and there have been horrific acts imposed on our beautiful people, who were raped and pillaged. This is also an excuse for a lot of our people to say, "nah that's not our culture, it's a white man God." The enemy has had a field day with our people both past and present. So many have been hurt by the church in the mission days and they continually push Christianity away.

But that's why we as First Nations People need to show our people out there that Culture and Theology go hand in hand. Aboriginal theology is a key...there has been so much colonisation throughout the world. The Israelites have also experienced this, as they too were dark skinned people and it is written clearly in the word. However, similarly to many cultures colonisation happened... the structures and the systems have been damaged and dismantled and the powers that be, have been colonized to the point where people over in the Lord's land, are also needing to come back to their promised lands.

So, at the end of the day we need worry less and ensure that we keep our culture alive... More Indigenous theologians need to rise up and undertake research and contribute to piecing together the missing pieces. By giving their snapshot and particular lense into our theology... by also giving their thoughts into the findings and interpretation of the Word. This will help our First Nations People and hopefully their future and expectations of the church of today.

One important aspect our First Nations People need to grasp is remembering that our God is a living God, and He has been there since creation and the dreaming. He is our creator God who was also known as Great Spirit/Creator Spirt. Our God has many names, especially within First

Nation's dialect. Our giftings and our talents come from God the Creator... even a lot of our traditional knowledges. Many of our cultures have been pushed down by the western churches. With many suggesting that our ways are evil. Many subcultures have also formed, which I discussed before. It has come into this nation through the gates of colonisation. There is a lot of culture that God gifted First Nations People with, and they survived for thousands of years.

I sometimes reflect and wonder why it would be so hard for First Nations People to understand, or even comprehend or believe stories in the bible? It spoke many times in the word of the connection and relationality it had to humans and animals. One story was when the donkey spoke, and other animals had their part. It also talks about supernatural occurrences in the times of old. In saying all that, many people could not even comprehend or actually believe it can happen or is still happening today. So, if we cannot believe the scripture, which are the oldest and most sold piece of literature ever, which is always under condemnation, what can we believe?.

Personally, I have and continue to see the scriptures lining up with my life, past, present and future. Our culture lines up and one was the fact in which our people talk to the animals. Our people co-existed with the animals, but to others outside our culture see and suggest... it is the enemy. There are people in the church today that believe we worshiped the enemy. We need to find ways to steer people right away from that sinking thinking. We need to also reinforce to our First Nations People that our culture is not an evil culture. Our culture is good. Our culture is healthy. That is what we are required to instill back into our children... not just our children but people from all walks of life... their identity is important. And without identity, without Country, land and spirit, I reinforce that we are nothing. That's why the enemy needs to rob us of our Country and connection. It is the enemies plan to rob the humankind of their connection with the true and living God. As it is written in the word, the God's Spirit resides in every bit of creation and every living thing. It is through the understanding and a strong Indigenous Theology that the First Nations People have survived for thousands and thousands of years, hence the importance of reconnection to Country and land, which is the Spirit of God.

Brooke: Well thank you very much.