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You're listening to Earth Matters, produced in the studios of 3CR Community Radio down in the unseated lands of the cooler nation and broadcast across the Community Radio Network.

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My name is Kieran Stewart Assherton, a proud Wani-Wandian man of the Yuin Nation and today I want to begin by acknowledging that I am speaking to you from the Yuin Country.

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A land that was never ceded.

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This always was and always will be Aboriginal land and right across this continent.

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The lands, skies, waters and all the life within them still belong to the First Peoples, no matter what the settlers write on their maps or in their laws.

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Today's show is titled Genocide plus Ecocide equals Suicide.

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Now I want to just quickly take a moment to to just forewarn some of the listeners that today we are going to be touching on genocide.

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We are going to be making references to suicide and self harm.

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If you are struggling with mental health issues, if you're going through a crisis, if you struggle with suicidal ideation, or if you are triggered by anything you hear on today's show, Please remember to reach out for help.

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Reach out to your family, reach out to your friends, reach out to your comrades.

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Reach out to Lifeline.

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You can call Lifeline on one free 1114.

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And if you're a mob, you can also reach out to One Free Yarn.

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The number for that one is 139276.

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Now both of those numbers, again, in case you missed them, 13 1114 to call Lifeline and 13 9276 for One Free Yarn.

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That last one's just specifically for First Nations listeners.

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On today's show, we are going to be talking about the deep connections between colonial violence against First Nations peoples and the destruction of the natural world, and why this is not just history, but something that is happening now right in front of us.

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Now, First off, I want to just touch a bit on the definitions and terms we're using here.

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So when we say genocide, we are not just talking about the killing of individuals.

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Genocide also means the destruction of our people as a people.

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This includes erasing our cultures, our languages, our governance systems and our relations to the land.

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Is it is the attempt to sever us from country, from the ways we care for and live with this land.

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Now when we say ecocide, we mean the large scale destruction of ecosystems, the poisoning of rivers, the extinction of species, deforestation, climate chaos.

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Ecocide is the killing of country.

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These two forces, both genocide and ecocide, are inseparable in so called Australia and around the world.

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The process of colonisation is both a human and an environmental catastrophe.

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The two cannot be separated.

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To destroy the people of the land is to destroy the land itself, and to destroy the land itself is to destroy the people.

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First, let us talk about how this came to be, how colonisation itself is an engine of ecocide.

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When the settlers first came here, they brought with them a way of life that was completely at odds with this land.

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A system based not on balance or relationship, but on exploitation.

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An economy that treats land as property, water as a commodity and life as something to be controlled or destroyed for profit.

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The colonial state that was established here, what is now called Australia, is built on land theft, resource extraction and endless growth.

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Every part of it, the legal system, the economy, the infrastructure, the very idea of the

nation, all of it, rests on the ongoing theft and exploitation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lands and waters.

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From the very beginning, the so called settlement was not about coexistence, it was about extraction, taking timber for export, digging for gold, grazing sheep and cattle on a stolen country, introducing foreign crops, diverting rivers and of course mining.

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A violence against the land that has only accelerated over the centuries.

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Industrial agriculture, mining, logging, water diversion, all of these industries are rooted in the dispossession of First Nations peoples.

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They are not just economic practises, they are acts of colonisation.

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Every mine pit, every cleared forest, every damned river, every poison waterway is a mark of colonial violence on the body of this continent.

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We see this in the destruction of sacred sites, places that hold deep spiritual, cultural and ecological importance.

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We see it in the draining and polluting of our river systems that have sustained life for millennia.

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We see in the loss of species, birds, animals, plants, insects, all of which are more than just biodiversity.

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They are kin to our people.

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And this is all very much still happening right now, today.

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It's not a thing of the past.

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The bulldozers and the drill rigs are still moving.

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The forests are still being logged.

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The gas is still being fracked.

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The sacred places are still being desecrated.

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The waters are still being poisoned.

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What we now call the climate crisis, the rising temperatures, the wild weather, the extinction of species and the collapse of ecosystems.

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This is not a separate issue.

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It is the inevitable outcome of 500 years of colonialism.

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A system that treats the Earth as something to conquer will in the end, bring ruin not just to the land, but to all who depend on it, which is every living being.

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But despite this long and ongoing war on both people and country, we are still here.

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Our lands still live, and our resistance continues, not just for ourselves, but for all life.

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The very fact that First Nations people still exist on this continent today is a testament to resilience and to resistance.

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We are still here and so is our deep connection to country, even after two centuries of attempted erasure, forced removals, massacres and policies of assimilation.

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And make no mistake, this resistance has always been about protecting the land and the waters.

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It is not separate from the so called environmental movement.

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It is not new.

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From the earliest days of invasion, our people fought for the right to remain on country, to continue our roles as custodians and protectors of our lands, to care for our non human kin, to maintain the cycles of life and to pass our knowledge and law.

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Many of our old people say if country dies, we die.

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This is not metaphorical, it is a deep truth.

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Our health, our spirit, our languages, our culture, all are bound to the health of country.

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The soil, the waters, the animals and plants, the winds, these are all parts of the same living system which we are a part of too.

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To harm the land is to harm us, and to heal the land is to heal us.

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This is why so many of the frontline fights today against fracking, against new coal mines, against logging of Old Grove forest, against the destruction of our sacred sites are being led by First Nations people, because we understand that these struggles are not just political, they are survival.

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When Aboriginal communities fight to stop gas fields from being opened on country, we are fighting to stop further greenhouse emissions, to protect the climate for all beings, human and non human.

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When we fight to stop the destruction of rivers and wetlands, we are fighting to protect the life that depends on those waters.

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When we stop logging of Old Growth forests, we are defending vital carbon stores and biodiversity.

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And this fight has always been carried on despite enormous repression through criminalisation, police violence, government betrayal and corporate capture of political processes.

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But we continue across this continent and across the globe, Indigenous peoples are the ones putting their bodies on the front line, the halt, the march of destruction.

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Because for us, this is not an abstract crisis.

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It's not about metrics or carbon markets.

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It's about life itself.

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It's about our lands, our families, our cultures and our futures.

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And ultimately, it is about the survival of the Earth's living systems.

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And here is the thing, despite everything, despite the violence, the theft and the destruction, where First Nations people still have connection to land, the land is healthier, the ecosystems are stronger, the climate is better protected.

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This is not a coincidence.

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It is the result of generations of knowledge, practise and responsibility.

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Now, globally, it is a fact that more than 80% of the world's remaining intact ecosystems are found on just 20% of the world's land, the land that is stewarded and managed by Indigenous peoples, 80%.

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That is no accident.

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It is because our ways of relating to land are not based on ownership or extraction.

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They are based on responsibility, on reciprocity, on understanding that humans are part of an ecological community, not rulers over it.

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On this continent, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples practise and continue to practise highly sophisticated Land Management.

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It is only now, after so much damage has been done, that some non Indigenous scientists are beginning to grasp what we have always known.

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Take fire for example.

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For 10s of thousands of years our people have used cool burning, low intensity seasonal fires to maintain healthy landscapes, regenerate native grasses, promote biodiversity, reduce fuel loads and protect against catastrophic Bush fires.

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This is not simply traditional knowledge in the romantic sense, it is active evidence based management of ecosystems.

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Or look at sustainable harvest, knowing which plants to take, when to harvest them, how much to leave, how to propagate, how to maintain abundance for the future.

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Or look at the water management, understanding the flows of rivers, how to maintain our wetlands, how to ensure the survival of fish and aquatic life across long dry



periods.

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Our cultural knowledge includes close, detailed relationships with thousands of species, birds, mammals, reptiles, insects, plants, fungi, fish.

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To us these are not just resources, they are our kin.

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And through these relationships we maintain balance and abundance.

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And it is not just here, around the world, wherever indigenous peoples still maintain land rights.

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Biodiversity is higher, forests are more intact, carbon is more effectively stored, the Amazon, the Congo Basin, the Arctic tundra.

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It is indigenous stewardship that has kept these places from collapse.

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Meanwhile, so called conservation efforts that exclude or displace Indigenous peoples nearly always fail.

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National parks established without Indigenous governance have led to environmental decline because the knowledge and practises needed to maintain those landscapes are not there.

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The idea of separating nature from people is itself a colonial mindset.

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Here in so called Australia.

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Many of the government's so called climate responses still ignore all of this.

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They push for carbon offset schemes or market based solutions or big renewable projects that yet again dispossessed First Nations people and damage the country.

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Even so called green energy can be another form of colonisation if it is imposed without our leadership and free prior informed consent.

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What is ultimately needed is decolonisation, not token inclusion, not advisory bodies with no power, but real land back, real First Nations governments, real control over land and water so that we can care for them properly in ways that benefit all.

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Because the reality is First Nations people are already leading the fight against climate change, deforestation and extinction on the front lines, in the courts, on the ground, in our communities, not just for our own sake, but for the sake of the entire planet.

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You're listening to Earth Matters and today we are discussing the connection between colonisation, genocide and ecocide.

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And this is not just a local story.

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The pattern of colonisation, genocide and ecocide is global.

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It is playing out in every corner of the world and wherever indigenous peoples are resisting, there is hope.

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Wherever they are being attacked, the crisis deepens.

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If we step back and look at the global picture, we see the same forces playing out again and again, whether it's in the Amazon, in the Congo, in the forests of Southeast Asia, across Turtle Island, through the Pacific, and of course, right here at home in the Amazon, for example, one of the most important ecosystems on the planet.

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By the way, the areas of rainforest that remain most intact are those still controlled by indigenous peoples.

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In fact, scientific studies show that deforestation rates inside indigenous territories are dramatically lower than in surrounding lands.

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But indigenous defenders of the Amazon are being murdered in record numbers, attack by loggers, miners, agribusiness and the corrupt governments.

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The genocide is ongoing and so is the ego side.

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The Congo Basin, the second largest rainforest in the world, tells the same story.

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Colonialism carved up the land, imposed brutal regimes, and today international corporations continue to exploit the region's resources while displacing indigenous communities who have cared for those forests for generations.

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In North America, First Nations and Native American peoples lead resistance against pipelines and extractive industries that threaten not just their lands, but global climate stability.

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Movements like Standing Rock showed the world that indigenous led climate resistance could actually look like.

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Across the Pacific, rising sea levels already threaten the homelands of indigenous peoples of various island nations.

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In many cases these communities contribute almost nothing to the climate crisis, yet a suffering its worst impacts.

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Again, genocide and ecocide both are inseparable.

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This is not just about so called developing countries either.

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Here in so called Australia right now, the Northern Territory government is pushing fracking projects against the will of Aboriginal communities in places like the Beadalong Basin, which if developed would blow Australia's climate targets and contribute massive greenhouse gas emissions.

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And right across this continent, sacred sites continue to be destroyed, from the Juukan Gorge disaster by Rio Tinto, to the bulldozing of trees for highways, to the theft of water from the Murray Darling system.

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Everywhere we look we see that we're Indigenous peoples are dispossessed.

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The land suffers as well.

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Where indigenous peoples are empowered, though, the land has a chance to actually survive.

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Because the truth is this genocide and ecocide are not separate crimes.

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They are the same system.

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A system of colonial capitalism that treats both human lives and the living world as expendable.

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And if that system continues unchecked, it is not just indigenous people who will suffer.

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It is not just our lands that will be destroyed, it will be the whole planet.

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This is why we say genocide plus egocide equals suicide for everyone.

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So what do we do with all of this?

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How do we actually move forward in the face of these deep, connected crises of genocide and egocide?

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First, we need to face the truth.

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The current system, colonial capitalism, cannot and will not solve the climate crisis.

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It is the cause of the crisis.

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A system built on theft, on endless extraction, on dispossession, on genocide cannot be reformed into something that sustains life.

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Greenwashing carbon markets, so called Net Zero by 2050.

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These are distractions.

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Meanwhile, the bulldozers keep moving, the gas rigs keep drilling, the Old Growth forests are still being cut down, sacred sites are still being blasted, and indigenous lands are still being stolen and poisoned.

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Decolonization is not an optional add on to climate action.

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It is the only path to climate survival.

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If the lands are to live, then First Peoples must have land back.

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We must have governance, we must be empowered to care for country in the ways that have worked for thousands of generations.

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And this is not just for our benefit as indigenous peoples.

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It is for the benefit of all life on this planet.

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Because if the colonial system continues to destroy lands and waters, we will all of us go down with it.

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But there is another way.

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Across this continent and across the world, First Nations peoples are already leading the way on the front lines of resistance, in rebuilding cultural knowledge, in Land Management and climate care, and in reimagining economies based on balance, sustainability, and reciprocity, not based on greed and power.

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For those of you who are listening today, if you care about climate, if you care about justice, If you care about life itself.

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Then you must stand with us in this fight.

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That means more than words.

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It means action.

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It means supporting land back movements, not just symbolic gestures, but real return of lands to First Nations people to manage and to govern.

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It means supporting campaigns against extraction on indigenous lands.

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It means opposing projects like fracking, like new coal mines, like destructive logging, like European methods of agriculture.

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Amplify First Nations voices in the climate space not by speaking over us, but by listening and following our lead.

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Push governments at every level to hand back decision making power, not just advisory bodies or token seats at the table, but actual real management and governance.

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And most importantly, understand that climate justice is impossible without indigenous justice.

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The two are bound together because as we say, genocide plus ego side equals suicide for all of us.

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But decolonization, restoration of land and life, That is the path to survival.

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That is the future we're fighting for.

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You've been listening to Earth Matters, produced in the studios of 3CR and broadcast nationally across the community Radio network.

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Stay strong, stand with us, fight for life.

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We've got a couple more minutes left on the show and before I let you all go, I wanted to give you a quick quote, a bit of a quick saying that we have here as well as that quote and finish it up with a song.

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So First off, this quote is from John Trudell, who was a First Nations activist, organiser, author, poet, actor and musician from Turtle Island.

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The quote is no matter what they ever do to us, we must always act for the love of our people and the earth.

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We must not react out of hatred against those who have no sense.

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Now this ties in very much with a saying that we have here in so called Australia.

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So no doubt most of the listeners probably would have heard the expression caring for country at some point or another throughout their lives.

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It's something that we talk about a lot as First Nations people.

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Now what most listeners might not realise is exactly who and what we are talking about when we talk about caring for country.

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For us, caring for country is, you know, obviously about looking after the land and the water and the air.

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But it's more than that.

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It's about looking after all of the life that exists within on that land and within that water, in that air.

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All of the life, including humans, all of the humans, including non indigenous people as well.

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For us, caring for country is about looking after everyone and everything that makes up the ecosystem that makes up the country that makes up all of the life that we have here.

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That is what caring for country is.

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So when you hear us talking about caring for country, we're also talking about caring for you if you're a non indigenous listener.

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At the end of the day, what we want is to live in a healthy, happy, wholesome, intact, sustainable environment.

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We want to be able to live in a world where we don't have poison air and poison waterways and poisoned food, where the land isn't being destroyed around us and where we can actually hand something on to the next generation and the generation after that and after that.

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Something that is intact, something that is healthy, something that is looked after, that is caring for country.

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So if you've been listening today, if you feel any sort of way about you know what you've heard me speaking about, especially as a non indigenous listener, just remember we're not against you.

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We're actually trying to help you as well.

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And when you hear us talk about things like land back, we're not talking about deporting non indigenous people.

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We're not talking about becoming landlords over the non indigenous population.

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We're not talking about any of those things.

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All of those issues, all of those problems and all of that propaganda is all a reflection of the way that European colonisation has enacted throughout the world.

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It is not a reflection of us and of our values.

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When we're talking about land back, we're just talking about being able to manage and steward that land in a sustainable way, the same way that we have for 120,000 years or more now.

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That's what we're talking about.

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We're talking about breaking the stranglehold and the monopoly that these big corporations, you know, these mining businesses and logging and agricultural businesses, breaking that stranglehold that they have over the lands and the waterways here.

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We're talking about creating a better future for everybody, not one where a handful of people are profiting ridiculous amounts of money from the destruction and the extraction that is happening not just here, but right across the entire world.

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Now before I let you all go, I just got to give one more quick announcement as well.

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Earth Matters is produced in the studios of 3CR as you know.

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But down here at 3CR June is our big fundraising day where we ask listeners to support independent community owned media.

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So if you love what we do, please consider donating to Earth Matters or donating to the local radio station that you are hearing this our broadcast on.

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We have a tax deductible donation.

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Quick shout out to Community Broadcasting Foundation as well as the 3CR down in Narm where this show is produced.

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I'll be back in a couple of weeks.

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Until then, have a good one.