# Country Handle with Care

# Episode 5 – Rangers transcript

Dirtgirl:

I’d like I'd like to acknowledge the traditional owners of this land

Care of country is in your hands

Your knowledge

From the beginning

until now

Know how

Traditional ways

Of night skies

and days

Animal ways

The Sea

The desert

The forest

Rivers and trees

The islands

Terrains.

Spirits remain in this land

To understand connection

Protection

Watch for the stranger, and the known

Indigenous Ranger

Its what’s in your heart

So listening is where we start

Community Liaison Officer: I work for the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources. I’m a Community Liaison Officer. We’re kind of the conduits between the scientists and the community and the rangers as well. So what the scientists want, we go out and work with the rangers and community to get information. The rangers are good because they’ve got heaps of different skills to go out there into the environment to get the information for us.

Costa: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities have been protecting food sources, including significant plants and animals for millennia.

Title Map: Pender Bay, Western Australia

Costa: somewhere there, that’s where we’re going.

Title: Kimberley Ranger Forum, Gurrbalgun (Pender Bay)

Dirtgirl: so, which one do you want to go to?

Costa: there’s so many great choices. I reckon I’ll start with break em, fix em.

Dirtgirl: yeah., I’m going to go to that one.

Costa: yeah then, Biosecurity and Country Tours

Dirtgirl: and boab tree

Costa: yeah lets go there

Indigenous Ranger 1: I’m a big convert of the ranger program. Because it’s a program that really does tackle a lot of the social norms in Aboriginal communities. A lot of the co-benefits that you get out of the ranger program are significant.

Indigenous Ranger 2: I’ve been a ranger for three years now.

Indigenous Ranger 3: I was a health worker for 30 years, so it’s a big difference. I think rangers are the best.

Indigenous Ranger 2: I love it. It’s my dream job.

Indigenous Ranger 4: yeah, it’s been nearly two years now and I love it. I love the work.

Indigenous Ranger 5: I used to work with natural resource management stuff with lots of different companies in the past. I always wanted to be a ranger.

Indigenous Ranger 6: I had been looking into getting into either parks and wildlife or ranger program for quite some time. I saw the opportunity pop up and I went for it.

Indigenous Ranger 7: I started out in reception and watching the guys walking in and out, in and out, the interest really started to grow. I asked a lot of questions and they saw a need for female rangers so the government agencies that we were working with at the time said “hey you need to keep her on” and so it’s just opened many doors for me. I’ve been a ranger five years.

Indigenous Ranger 8: I’ve been a ranger for going on to six years now.

Indigenous Ranger 9: I’ve been a ranger for nearly four years now. I started out as a casual like every other ranger, and I made my way up and I’m now the head ranger of my ranger group.

Indigenous Ranger 8: it’s one of the greatest jobs to be doing, especially on your own country. And working and protecting the wildlife which you grew up around. And your grandfather and your ancestors, who was looking after it before us. We became managers.

Indigenous Ranger 10: I’m a senior ranger at the moment so my role is to help the younger generation, come in and hopefully they can get ranger jobs and show them what they can do and show them the ropes, if we’re not there or not around. It will be good to see them do stuff like that.

Indigenous Ranger 11: my favourite part of the job is probably being out on the water. I like being on the water. I like being a marine ranger.

Indigenous Ranger 12: what we’re doing here is just checking the sea grass. We have five different species of sea grass here. The aim is to see how much sea grass is down the bottom and we can record it and take photos. There it is. By this screen here you can see the bottom of the sea bed and see if there’s any sea grass. And you can see some, so I will take a photo. Video it as well. So after Cyclone Yassi we had a lot of turtle and dugongs washed up on our beach and the sea grass had been gone as well and we’re just monitoring to make sure the sea grass is back for the dugong and the turtle.

Indigenous Ranger 1: we’ve got a couple of local guys from the Bardi ranger program. They do the dugong tagging and monitoring. A couple of those guys were actually seconded over to Dubai and actually went over there and did some tagging for the dugongs around there.

Indigenous Ranger 13: I flew to Abu Dabi, flew to Dubai, then drove to Abu Dabi. We stayed there overnight and the next morning we went out to one of those Sheik’s islands, stayed there for five days.

So I taught this Arab guy how to jump in and grab the dugong and told him all about what you have to be careful for and he ended up grabbing it on the third jump and tagging it. I was more than happy. The government was stoked. Everything was a success.

Indigenous Ranger 1: all of a sudden you start to see the international appeal. You start to see the skill set that these guys have from a local area being applied thousands of kilometres away in a foreign country. I think that’s quite refreshing.

Community Liaison Officer: Being born on the land helps a lot. You know what’s not meant to be there but also there’s that cultural connection so there’s songlines that go through that country. We understand that there’s strong connection to that country so we don’t want anything to happen. No ferals, diseases and things to go into our country.

Indigenous Ranger 2: most of my cultural knowledge I got from my grandfather. Which his name is Pauly Cox, one if the elders living up in my community. He was born in 1930 in Begal Bay and I got most of the knowledge off him. Teaching me on hunting, gathering, on certain tree names, language names and place names also and I really got interested in that. So when I joined the ranger group I came in to the work office and I found that we’re trying to look after that stuff and trying to integrate it with Western science and that’s where we started learning the two way learning for western science, our cultural knowledge, so we are combining it with two way learning, so that’s one thing great. S othat’s why I became fascinated about some of the knowledge. But it’s also every day is a rain day, you’re learning new things too.

Indigenous Ranger 14: I got my chainsaw ticket, I’ve got a drone licence now so that’s pretty cool. I would probably crash them anyway. I’ve got Cert lll in Conservation Land Management, also doing a coxswain ticket, half way through that, half way through doing my Compliance in Cert IV. I have front end loader, bobcat, excavator. All these tickets that I have that I never imagined I would have, I’ve got them.

Indigenous Ranger 15: we’ve been using GoPros lately in Rapid Creek. Put them in the water for about five or ten minutes. See what comes through while swimming around down there.

Indigenous Ranger 16: the tablet is a real simplified version of GPS and it’s got a whole bunch of programs on it where you can mark out points then you can upload them onto a computer so you can see what you’ve done.

Indigenous Ranger 15: you can also see photos of places you’re at.

Indigenous Ranger 7: Gone are the days of paper and pen. Still works but sometimes we do need to rely on it. But it’s just so much easier. Just being able to take that information on a tablet, go back into the office and just sync it. So every day we just sync it before we head out into the field and sync it when we go back in. It helps us with our reporting as well and I think data is really important to collect because it shows us what we’ve done and you can see the progress over the years.

Costa; I don’t think any words could explain what it feels like to be in the presence of this tree. I could tell you it’s a West Australian Boab an iconic tree of this region. I could tell you that it’s very very old. Its got stories. Stories to tell. Of this landscape over centuries. I could tell you I’ve been here for a very short time as part of a Kimberley Ranger’s conference. But I know this tree is significant. You feel it. It’s presence is here. Its presence has welcomed everyone. And it makes us feel safe to be on Bardi country. To be part of the people past, present, and to be under this tree and it’s shade long into the future.

Parks and Wildlife Officer: Within parks and wildlife Northern Territory commission, they’ve got a junior rangers program. Its for nine to twelve year olds and my son is ecstatic. He loves the work I do. He has said to me quite a few times he would love to grow up to be a ranger, looking after country and looking after wild life. He is so pumped to be a part of a junior ranger program. They do a lot of animal handling, animal feeding.

Dirtgirl: sounds like the best time ever.

Parks and Wildlife Officer: they get to go there at night as well as during the day, so they’re going to have a day time, night time experience. It sounds really awesome.

Indigenous Ranger 7: it’s good to get the kids out into the community, out on country doing stuff then it’s also good to get the kids from out of the city, out in the bush so they get connected and they get to grow up and appreciate the things that we got to do as kids as well.

Indigenous Ranger 2: I get to go into the school and teach them about what rangers are doing and bring them out on country and show them some of our historical fish traps that are still maintained by some of us rangers. The kids are liking it. They have their own ranger logos on their own uniform.

Indigenous Ranger 13: And almost every one of them want to be me. “I want to be a ranger”. They want to do the things I do. They want to go to Abu Dabi, they want to tag the dugong, tag the turtle. It’s just what we do and it’s fun. It’s our normal life. What we normally do.

Indigenous Ranger 16: They look up to us because I think it’s a pretty sweet job. I know when I was a kid I didn’t like being in doors. I didn’t see myself having an indoor job. So I get to work outside and get to see a lot of things. Always learning. So, yeah it’s pretty good.

Indigenous Ranger 3: My grandson, he loves to see me as a ranger, seeing me as a mentor and he wants to be a ranger as he grows up. So our goal is that we want our generation to do the same thing. Care for our land. Look after our land. Be rangers and do what we’re doing now.

Community Liaison Officer: for us Yolngu people back in north east Arnhem, we have a really strong connection to the land and it sustains us. It’s our culture, it’s our everything so we look after it really well and our whole life is based around the land and the sea so if we don’t’ look after it, it’s not going to look after us.

Parks and Wildlife Officer: I’ve got a nine year old son so I would really love to be a good role model for my son as well as the rest of my family and my dad, and my mum. They are all just so proud of me and I’m so proud of myself. I honestly didn’t realise I could get into a position like this.

Dirgirl: that deserves a high five

Parks and Wildlife Officer: Thank you.

Indigenous Ranger 8: the extended family of each of the rangers, their whole life is lifted. They feel a lot better because of this one family member that’s on the ranger group.

Indigenous Ranger 3: Us rangers are doing all of this to protect our land. And that’s the reason all us rangers love our jobs so we look after our land.

Parks and Wildlife Officer: as the saying goes, from little things, big things grow. I agree with that so much.

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Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources

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