Q1: **Ngai pirrku mankulankula. Ngai nari Kumatpi Marrutya. Ngai wangkanthi marni naa pudni. Kaurna yarta- ana. Irdi yarta. Hello, it's Mickey O'Brien here, Ambassador of the Kaurna people. And today we're on Kaurna country. And I'm known as the impatient one. So Ngadlu wangkanthi and Naa marni naalitya, Marni naa pudni parrku pirrku Warra mankunthi, Kaurna yarta. So we can say hello to you and we also welcome you to this podcast recorded on Kaurna Country.**

Q2: **Hello and welcome to the South Australian Museum podcast, and welcome to NAIDOC week, a celebration of the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This podcast is recorded on Kaurna Country. I'm your host, Meg Lloyd, but after this brief intro I'll hand over to Rebecca Richards, while she chats with Dr Jennifer Caruso. Rebecca is an Adnyamathanha and Barngarla woman. She was Australia's first Indigenous Rhodes Scholar and completed her Master's at Oxford. She is a PhD candidate for the University of Adelaide, an early career researcher at the South Australian Museum, and curator of the museum's upcoming exhibition Woman's Work. Jennifer is an Eastern Arrernte woman and an academic working at the University of Adelaide. Her PhD, Dream Phantasy of a Utopia, the making of the Methodist overseas half caste Mission of Croker Island personal history, tells her experiences as a member of the stolen generations. Women's Work is open daily at the South Australian Museum from 6 November to 6 December 2020. The exhibition features the black and white portraits of several Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, including Jennifer. Prints of the portraits are available to purchase from the Sparkke online shop, at womenswork.sparkke.com. Rebecca and Jennifer talk about colonisation, being political, perceptions of Aboriginal women and resilience. This episode also contains some discussion of stolen generations, childhood trauma, and deaths in custody.**

P1: I am Rebecca Richards. I am an early career research at the South Australian Museum, and I am a Adnyamathanha and Barngarla woman, and I'm the Curator of the Women's Work Exhibition, which will be on, on 6 November until 6 December at the South Australian Museum.

P2: Hello, my name is Jennifer Caruso. I am a Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of History at the University of Adelaide. Also an early career researcher. And I am an Eastern Arrernte woman, on my mother's side and Waanyi on my father's side going up into Gulf Country in the Northern Territory. I also have Afghan heritage, so we're Afghan Aboriginal mob and family.

P1: So Jenni, thank you so much for doing this interview and podcast here today for the South Australian Museum's Women's Work Exhibition. Really appreciate it.

P2: Thanks Rebecca. I really look forward to seeing the exhibition and I'm really quite excited and thrilled to see that there is further life to the exhibition that was used at the beginning of this weird year for the Australia Day and the alternative to Australia Day discussions that were held at Sparkke on Whitmore. Congratulations on your curating of this exhibition. I'm really proud of you and the approach that you've taken. Your persistence in your research and your study. We've known each other ever since you enrolled at uni. And also throughout all of that period of time, you have never tried to put on the cloak of being anything or anyone other than an Adnyamathanha and Barngarla woman. And that your Aboriginality is the lens that you view your work, and it's embedded in your work. And I think that is a very hard thing to do, and it's a very hard space to work into in such places like museums – I mean, I'm aware that the museum is changing in the way that it views Aboriginal peoples, Aboriginal artefacts. But it's not an easy road to maintain that. I really congratulate you on doing that. And what I find interesting is that the title of

the exhibition, and you have a number of us women who are up there who have I suppose a little bit of a story around who we are and why we have been chosen, the work that we have done and the work that we do do. But you yourself are also an example of an Aboriginal woman who works into those spaces and those places. So while there are a number of us whose photographs are up there, I hope that other Aboriginal girls and women will see themselves reflected in those images.

P1: Yeah, that was one of the reasons why I started to do this exhibition in the way it was done, to celebrate Aboriginal women leaders in South Australia. You know, often us Aboriginal women who are in these leadership positions are often put on pedestals or put up as an individual. But I wanted us to be able to be as a group to be together, and to be able to support each other. And honestly, just to bring those Aboriginal women that I found so inspiring around, into one exhibition and to say something about loud diverse views, not so that we're alone up there on those pedestals, but we're all there together and that we can support each other.

P2: Yep. What I like about it too is, because I know you, because I know your sister, because I think your sister might have made a marriage connection to my family as well, and your mum; one of the problems that happens is that we are seen as exceptional and yet we're not exceptional. Actually, what we are doing is simply what we do. We are doing what we feel needs to be done for community and for culture, and for reclamation of culture for those of us who are from the stolen generations. To be included in such an exhibition is really very affirming for me as an Aboriginal person, because one of the interesting things about looking at the image of myself is that it allowed me or opened up my mind to understanding and seeing myself as a woman, a grown-up woman, in the here and now, and not so much the little girl who was taken away. Because that image of the little girl who was taken away has always been in my mind, it's been sort of like a defining narrative. And then to see myself presented as a

woman is extremely powerful to me. Yeah, I'm looking forward to seeing the image again. But the other women who are there, I don't see them as little girls. I see them as the women that they are. It was just my own thing about being able to realise that this woman who I am is here and not dependent on the little girl that I was. So that's a really healing process for me, in that.

P1: Yeah, that's really good. That's really touching, definitely, to know that. Yeah. Yeah, because often we just think of – there's certain parts of that trauma that must be, kind of keeps you stuck in that place. So yeah, it was good to know that you're saying that, because that's not what anyone sees, we see a formidable Aunty who - - -

P2: Aww.

P1: - - - is out there doing amazing work for our community. Definitely. And that you deserve a voice and to be celebrated, but also deserve a voice in saying political things as well, about things about what do you think about Australia Day, or what do you think about Australian nationhood and having that respected as well. Definitely.

P2: As I tell my students, that over the years I've come to realise that I have to be political. In some ways it as personal choice. In other ways it's not a personal choice, because we as Aboriginal people have been politicised since first day of colonisation. We were subjectified, and by that I mean made forcefully British subjects. And the moment that that happened we became political entities, both individually and collectively. We didn't do it to ourselves. It was non-Aboriginal people. It was the colonisers. It was the legislations. It was the ideologies. It was the Western systems of law that were brought over and were imposed as the better ways of living and being, and the ideal, what we should ideally strive towards as a people, which completely negated the fact that we had political systems. We had legal systems. We had education systems.

Systems of spirituality. Connections, those interconnections between individuals. Places, land and the cosmos. And that still exists today. And the naivety of the colonises and then post-colonisation into the twentieth century with the eugenicist notions of how to breed us out, and the beliefs that Aboriginal people were going to die out. What a naïve and self-serving position to take. Why would you even not think to yourself, that here are a peoples who have survived successfully – and it had to be successful otherwise we would have died out 59,000 years ago. Why would you assume that we were going to disappear in the face of your presence. When we look at exhibitions such as this. When we look at images of Aboriginal people. It is because we knew we were never going to die out. We knew and have an ongoing absolute deep conviction that this culture won't die out. Maybe those 60,000 years beforehand gave us the resilience to be able to maintain ourselves and to continue in the face of these devastations. And that's why when we look at an Indigenous woman, we look at Aboriginal art, and we look at the depictions, images as I said, Aboriginal children, Aboriginal women, Aboriginal people weaving and Aboriginal people dancing, that's just evidence of our resilience. It's not something that we should be congratulated for in a patronising kind of way, it's actually what non-Aboriginal Australia needs to recognise, is that we were resilient before you came along and that resilience has kept us in good stead over the last 250 years.

P1: Yeah. I think that that's really true, definitely. What I'm excited about is that having this exhibition in the foyer of the South Australian Museum before people go into the Aboriginal galleries, I think is going to change how people see those photos of those women in those galleries. Because when we as Aboriginal women see those photos, we don't see just some random Aboriginal people just in a box. These are all black and white photos, but we see Aunties there, we see resilience. And we're highlighting that resilience in these Women's Work photos in the foyers, and then that is going to go on into the

other galleries there and give it a completely different meaning, which I'm excited about.

P2: And you know what I like too, I like that is our faces. Because it says to people, look at our faces. These are faces of people, they're not a whole-body image. But it actually invites people to look with greater depth at our faces. And in that, hopefully begin to carry a different understanding or view what is in the gallery through a different perspective and connecting what is in the gallery with living/breathing women, I think is really powerful. Yeah.

P1: Yeah. Living/breathing opinionated and strong - - -

P2: Stubborn.

P1: - - - yeah, women. Which is really important. Because they're all in there already, those Aunties of old are there.

P2: Absolutely.

P1: And they're just waiting for us to tell their stories. And I'm so happy that having this exhibition on will start to bring those stories out more and more, I think.

P2: Yeah. For me also, when I look at my sister-girls up there, we actually are representative of a whole range of stories that seem to be separate but they're not, they're all connected. And the fact that we are from different language groups and we are from different experiences. My experiences, being a child who was removed multiple times, because that whole thing about assimilation was, as you know, the separation, not just from parents but from brothers and sisters, from grandparents, from Aunties, Uncles, from language. A loss of language. When I look at those photos a question that I ask myself is do you know language. You know, because I don't know language. That was through

no doing of my own. And another question is that, how do I return to that, those systems and practices are not that are in place now, in Aboriginal policy, are not designed to assist Aboriginal people to return to that. There are places like Link-Up, and places like Aboriginal Health. It's not just about family reunion. It's not just about meeting the people. It's also about having the time to sit on the ground and to hear the music of the language and let that seep into our pores, so that we can have a greater sense of return. All of this kind of stuff is embedded in why Australia Day should not be celebrated on that day. Absolutely should not be celebrated on that day, because it's just continuing the process of denial to be able to do that. And what the heck, Australia Day was celebrated on X number of different days over the twentieth century. We can't change the date that colonisers came and began to dismember and gut Aboriginal people's lives and existences, we can't change that date. But you can change a date to celebrate what it means to be Australian under a collective umbrella that's defined by all communities.

P1: Yeah, like why would Australia want to define themselves based on the oppression of Aboriginal people? Why do you want to have that day? That's just a bit strange. Yeah. And to even think that Aboriginal people would want to celebrate that, is just an alarming lack of empathy as well. Definitely. Because that was one of the reasons why I wanted to do this was that, as Young South Australian of the Year, I've often been asked to do stuff on Australia Day. But this time it was like, I am becoming a woman, I want to have Aboriginal women around me and just to say what I want to say on this day, rather than to be quiet and not to say anything about this day.

P2: Yep. And I think you shouted that out loud with that exhibition. And as I said, I've known you for a long time and you've always been relatively quiet and unassuming, but with this exhibition your roar is very loud and it's very clear. You're not doing this study to appease or to fit into whatever political position an institution might take. You are there to represent Aboriginal women in that

space. That's a power voice to actually be able to say that. We do have our power voices in different ways. I mean there are some women who – I'll name this one, Marcia Langton, scares the bejesus out of me and you will listen to her and I look at her and I have the greatest admiration. Because, while I may not always agree with what it is that she says, or the position that she's taking, she is through and through an Aboriginal woman who fought right there with the flags and on the streets, and that has transitioned into the work that she does. And first and foremost she will always and only ever be an Aboriginal woman. I do have great admiration for her. And then there are Aboriginal women who I know who are just working quietly away and going out making sure families are fed, making sure that families are surviving, kids are being helped to go to school. They're doing the work too. Well, also, it actually shows the strength that we have, because if you can imagine one woman pulling one of those blocks that it took to make up the pyramids and one woman is pulling one of those blocks and making it move, that's what Aboriginal women are doing.

P1: Yeah, going up against stereotypes and also just going up against this society who sees them, that they're going to fail, or just trying to take the kids away again, you know?

P2: Yeah.

P1: Just having a family is a huge political statement for an Aboriginal woman. So that's a big fight. Everyone always talks about their families. I actually asked people in their interviews; so what was your greatest achievement, and they will just say family, family, family. Yeah.

P2: And it's like you look at my little group there, with my grannies and my children, and my greatest fear when they were little was that they'd be taken away. And I can remember sitting in the loungeroom just crying, and my hubby said to me "Why are you crying?" I said, "I'm worried that they're going to take

the kids," and he said to me ,"They're not going to take your kids" and I said, "You can say that, they didn't take Italian kids, they took Aboriginal kids." I used to go to school every single day of my children's schooling, through primary school. I was there, I was in the library, I was in the canteen, I was covering books, I was doing whatever it took. Because, I needed to be close enough to my children that if I heard any words like welfare or authorities, I could get my children and put them in the car and run away. I didn't know where I would go. I knew no other Aboriginal people, just part of assimilation. Not until my daughter was born and I started working in education, at the age of 38-39, was the first time I had a conversation with an Aboriginal person since the age of five. I didn't know any Aboriginal people, I didn't have any Aboriginal family. And I miss that even now. I read Facebook, and I read the Facebook posts of friends, and they're going up Port, and they're going to Whyalla, or they're going here, and they're catching up with their brothers and they're catching – and they've got a history together, and I don't have that history. My brothers and sisters live interstate. I didn't have them until I reconnected with mum when I was in my early 40s. And the fact that I was in my late 30s before I had a conversation with an Aboriginal person. So those notions of family, I still look at Facebook and I go, I wonder what that feels like, because I didn't have it. I have it to some extent, the South Australian community knows who I am and they've accepted me in ways that they probably don't realise how important that is to me, because I don't know when I'll ever get back to my own community. Walk around in Alice Springs and bump into family that's mine. I'll go to Headland occasionally, so it's only done on holidays, but I don't have that constant thing of – there's a group of sisters in Port Augusta who are related, and they talk to each other on Facebook when they're in the same room, and I absolutely love it, and it cracks me up and really makes me laugh. And it's like, yeah I would do that, if I was sitting in a room with my sisters. And then it's like, well, I'd like to be able to do that. And I wish I had a photograph of my sister (? Denise) [00:27:16], she passed away during COVID lockdown over in Sydney, and I couldn't get over there. And I

sort of know where she's buried, but my sister's face, etched in my sister's face is the experience of being a member of – being a stolen child. So when I teach, when I research, when I write, it's those faces and those people that I'm doing it for and it's for my children and it's for my grandchildren, but it's also for the broader Aboriginal community. Because we're embedded in trauma in different ways, it's expressed in different ways. Part of the trauma is not having a clear set of information, particularly for the stolen generations, a clear set of information about why they were taken away. And maybe what they do is that they blame themselves, like I did as a five-year-old, I must have done something really wrong. And so my work and my research is to give Aboriginal people a set of information that they can refer to so that they know that it wasn't them. Today, with my students, we were looking at the Uluru Statement from the Heart. And there are some words in there that talk about Aboriginal people having the highest incarceration levels in the world. And there's a sentence in there, it says why is that so. We are not an innately criminal people. That is a line that is going back to 1934 from a petition that was put forward. So if we were saying that in the mid-1930s you can begin to have an understanding of the trauma around that if we're still saying it in 2017, in 2020.

P1: Yeah. It's definitely an issue. I can't believe how much has happened even since we last exhibited this exhibition. That exhibition lunch was the last time I went to any big lunch thing, so that's the last one I remember doing, and then we had COVID happen, then we had the Black Lives Matter movement, and going and doing the marches with the masks on. Yeah, there's been a lot happen this year. But, we're saying the same thing and we're saying it all together, we just have different ideas on how to get there. What's the path or how we can have a better experience between Aboriginal people and white Australia.

P2: You know sometimes with non-Aboriginal Australia, no question about the genuineness that comes with it, where the question is; what can we do? We've told you what you can do. We've put it out there. We've got it in documents.

We've got a whole range of documents going back right across the twentieth century and now into the twenty-first century. We need you to pick up those documents and action them, because those documents are not there just to hang on the wall. They're actually mandates for action. Your reconciliation statements, your reconciliation action plans are mandates. And sometimes I get a little bit frustrated because it's like, I don't want to have to keep thinking for you, you do the thinking then put it to me and say what do you reckon. And then I'm likely to say, yeah that's bloody brilliant, how are we going to action that? Yeah, so I still find that an interesting phenomenon that as I said, in all genuineness and people are asking the question because they don't want to be devising or doing something that they feel they might be imposing on us. But it's like, show us what you think, give us your mud map and then we'll talk to it, and then we'll work through it. And then you can have ownership of it because that's part of creating change, isn't it?

P1: Yeah. It can't just be Aboriginal people who have to devise these things and to put them into practice. We need white people as well. Definitely. Yeah.

P2: That's right. I think there's been change, and we have always measured our change I suppose by significant events, like the referendum. Like the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. Like the bridge walk. Like the recognition of massacre sites. Like Rudd's apology. Significant points in time. The Bringing Them Home Report. The reparations schemes in different states. And I think that one of the significant events right now is what is happening in the Northern Territory in relation to the killing of the young man, and that the police officer is being brought to trial.

P1: Yep, Mr Walker.

P2: And I think historically it is the only – I mean, I can go back to William Wilshire who was in the Northern Territory in the late 1800s and pulled into line for the

way that he was just randomly going around shooting Aboriginal people, as a police officer, and he was pulled into line. But I don't recollect, and I may be wrong, but I don't recollect historically any other time where a police officer has been charged with murder of an Aboriginal person. So they are points in time that we'll remember, and they are points in time that show us that we keep moving forward. I mean Uncle Lewis O'Brien, he just says "Oh, we're just waiting for the white fellas to catch up." And in some ways we are. Yeah.

P1: Yeah. But in other ways we're leading the charge. Definitely.

P2: Yeah. And part of our political acumen is that we are leading the charge, but non-Aboriginal Australia doesn't always realise that we are leading the charge, which is kind of, it's like, yeah, that's a good idea that you had. Even though that it was our idea. But we managed to work it so that it felt like their idea. That's that whole thing about ownership of change and deeper engagement with the processes of change. So exhibitions such as this one brings people to a point where they have an epiphany, they go, I can look at this and I can read about it and I can talk about it, but what can I do about it? That's where such exhibitions are really, really important.

P1: And has any of the museum collections been useful for you personally or in your academic life at all?

P2: They have been useful, in that, I don't necessarily take students over there, I invite students to go over there. I give students a set of information so that they go differently informed, when they go have a look at the museum collections. In some ways, when I go there, I'm an Eastern Arrernte woman, so if I'm going to be looking at the various collections and that kind of stuff, I prefer to have somebody with me who is from one of the language groups who are in there, protocol wise.

P1: I get what you mean; would you be able to explain that to our listeners as well?

P2: Well, I don't come from this country and from this language and culture place. And so my feeling is that if I'm going to go and look at items, images, et cetera, from the old people who are from here then there needs to be somebody from here who is with me, and so I can repay my respects in that way to the old people and to the items. And I'm always conscious that I'm on Kaurna land. And every Christmas we go to Wallaroo, have a good time up there. But, every time we drive up there, and we drive up to Port Wakefield, I go through my head the story of Spencer Gulf, and when we go and head off to go onto Yorke Peninsula, every year I always thank the Kaurna people for allowing me to live safely, and the Kaurna ancestors allowing me to live safely on their land, and my family to live safely on their land, for the past 12 months. And then I ask the Narungga ancestors, and introduce myself to the Narungga ancestors and say, it's me, I'm back again, we're going to come here, we're going to go up and down Yorke Peninsula and thank you for allowing me to come. I just say it in my head. Because it is about place and space, and it is about feet on the ground. Somebody asked me, I was asked one day about an individual's connection to this university, and they asked what was the connection for these women to the university. And I just looked at them and said "The university's on Aboriginal land. So it doesn't matter actually which language group they come from, collectively they are Aboriginal, and this place is on Aboriginal land. So they become before this university." And that's not always recognised, this whole idea of coming before. Coming back to the community in my 40s I had to be educated in community and how community works. A lot of stuff I actually knew but it had been pushed down. But that recognition of our language diversity is really – well, it's crucial, crucial protocol.

P1: Can you tell me more about your curatorial practices and how you got involved in curating and history as well?

P2: Well, my interest in history goes way back to school. I was interested in Greek history. So I always loved history from there. When I started working here, in particular there was a colleague who lectures in history, who had two courses in Aboriginal history. And I was working in Aboriginal programs, in student support, not in academia. And this colleague said to me that he did not really feel comfortable lecturing as a non-Aboriginal person in this space. And he invited me to coordinate the course with him. And it was here in history, and that was fine with me because like I said I already loved history, and in a generic kind of sense. I started doing that and I brought with me a lot of knowledge, and a lot of reading, and some study and research that I'd done. And then I was invited to actually take up a lecturing position here in the Department of History, I just jumped at it. The reason why I love history is because you can't make shit up. If I can use that word. You look at the documentation. You look at the facts. And you look at the narrative that emerges from that. And what I found, and continue to find, is that those narratives that emerge out of non-Aboriginal archival documents and records, are the narratives that Aboriginal people have been telling anyway. In my research and in my work, the position that I took, I'm a historian and I'm an Aboriginal woman, and I can choose one of those but I can't choose the other. I can't choose being an Aboriginal, I am an Aboriginal woman. In looking at history the lens and the position that I bring is, that the Aboriginal voice is the dominant voice. And the non-Aboriginal documentation and archival materials – well, what I've done in my thesis is positioned those primary sources as secondary primary sources. And I as an individual have positioned myself both personally but also as representative of Aboriginal Australia, as the primary source. So I've devised a methodological position where the individual is the primary source. The primary source documents, archival, et cetera, are now secondary primary sources, and then you have secondary sources. And what I've done is to analyse and to interrogate the non-Aboriginal sources from the bottom up and from the top down and in-between in the layers and to position the Aboriginal voice as the voice that needs to be taken notice of, because they are the same narratives that

we've been telling for decades and decades. So it was not easy to do that, because institutions expect that you're going to follow conventional patterns. Aboriginal people go, what conventional patterns, what are you talking about? And this is where we can get stuck because we try to fit into the white conventional patterns framework, and then we feel as though we are failing, but in actual fact we are not failing, we are sitting and looking at a body of work that is not formed by Aboriginal people or Indigenous peoples. I came to that conclusion through my trying to define and frame my methodology and I was there and I suddenly realised I was in the wrong room in the library, if I can put it that way. Because, all I was looking at were theoretical frameworks and ideas by mostly dead white men, European, and it didn't work, and it didn't fit. And that's what you're doing, that's what you're doing in the institution of the museum. You're saying this doesn't fit and I'm going to put my energies along with you to rewriting that space into something that does fit.

P1: Yes. It's taking people's oral histories and personal stories to the same extent and as seriously as people in anthropology and history do with written sources from the archives, from old white men. Because it is important to have that as the primary thing that we're looking at as historians and as anthropologists look at how our stories are told but from our own perspectives. And for the people from a Western perspective, that's going to look like art. But it's a completely different thing.

P2: Yes. Yeah.

P1: It's very rigorous. Like Aboriginal histories and stories, they're not made up, they're all very, very rigorous.

P2: Exactly. Exactly.

Q2: **Thank you for listening to the South Australian Museum podcast, recorded on Kaurna Country. This episode was hosted by Rebecca Richards and featured Dr Jennifer Caruso. Thank you to both of you for sharing your stories and thoughts. Original theme music was by (? Peter) (? Saunders) [00:46:23], audio production by (? Jake) (? Holmes) [00:46:25], and Kaurna welcome by Michael O'Brien. This podcast has been made possible by the support of NAIDOC week. See their website naidoc.org.au for events happening online and all over Australia. Women's Work is on display in the museum foyer from 6 November to 6 December 2020, and prints are available for purchase at womenswork.sparkke.com. That's womenswork.sparkke.com. For more information about our museum and the Women's Work Exhibition, please visit our website, www.samuseum.sa.gov.au or get in touch by emailing, programs@samuseum.sa.gov.au. Ngaityalya Nakutha. Thank you and see you later.**

END OF RECORDING: (47.09)