



(View of the Canberra region with Mount Majura in the foreground, from Old Joe Hill, Goorooyarroo Nature Reserve, Ngunnawal, Ngunawal and Ngambri country. Photo: Steve Bittinger)

Dear Friends,

Megan Williams has asked me to remind you that registration for the ‘Walk on Country’, organised by our CBC Weavers, closes today!

Register [here](#) if you would like to be part of this experience led by local Ngunnawal elder, Uncle Tyronne Bell. The walk starts at 2pm on Saturday (16 May) in Stirling Park, Yarralumla. The cost is \$60 per person, but students and those with low incomes (part-time or unemployed) can attend for half price.

I am looking forward to expanding my understanding of what it means to ‘walk on Country’ and to ‘be on Country’.

I have a vague sense of ‘belonging’ in Canberra. Canberra is my home and Canberra feels like ‘home’, and I know that when I am away for extended periods there is a rush of welcome recognition when I see the sky and trees and topography of Canberra again, but I know this sense of connection is only a very very small part of what ‘Country’ means.

I also know my connection is only a brief thing of seventeen and half years! I do not have parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents who lived in this place before me, and all their stories that connect me to this place as well, let alone connections and stories that go back thousands of years!

I also don’t really understand, apart from a concern for environmental issues, and a little bit of dabbling with gardening (dabbling being the operative word!), what it means to care for the land.

My grandmother tried to establish a small farm during the Depression years, which was largely unsuccessful, but apart from that generations of my family have lived in cities, dependant on others with closer connections to land and land care.

And I also don't really understand, having been shaped by a Western worldview, how all these things might come together!

Dr Danièle Hromek, a Budawang woman of the Yuin nation, writes, *"Country is a holistic worldview that unites all those who share Country."*

This worldview encompasses a sense of belonging and shared identity and a responsibility to care for the land. But more than being responsible to care for the land, it is also about being in relationship with the land, and how that relationship looks after the people who are part of it as well.

She writes, *"Walking Country allows you to know Country intimately, to experience every sense, smell and sight; what parts of Country feels like to touch, its soundscapes and the tastes that come from the gifts of the land. Other senses, such as balance, which gives spatial orientation, and body position, which controls body awareness. They come alive when walking Country."*

And it is a relationship that invites others in as well.

Hromek says, *"We all live on Country and all have a responsibility to know and care for Country. Spending time walking Country, tapping into each sense, using every feeling to read the environment and allowing Country to infiltrate us is important to our wellbeing. These connections foster belonging and healing..."*

I am looking forward, from Saturday's walk on Country, to feeling more connected to right – and healthy - relationships with this place and people.

If you're able to be part of this – don't miss out!

Belinda