

Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome by Glenda Cloughley

Welcome dear women. At this frightening time of catastrophic fires and extremely weird weather events, we women gather to find ways towards uniting action on climate change.

Amid so much destruction, it's hard to imagine a more urgent time for the purposes we all share!

In this beautiful country we begin by acknowledging Aboriginal sovereignty, which has never been ceded.

We acknowledge wise Indigenous custodianship during tens of millennia before the destructive changes of the past two centuries.

We acknowledge First Nations people's continuing immense, detailed ecological knowledge about how to maintain country and all the forms of life.

We respect the practical and spiritual leadership of the elders past, present and future.

We remember too that there is wisdom in all the traditions we women have come from. Tonight we gather to raise and activate wisdom. Among the traditions, we remember the wisdom of the indigenous Europeans whose elders and poets and singers maintained the laws of proper relations between people and between the cities and the sacred Earth. In A Chorus of Women we have been consulting that wisdom and singing it up for 17 years.

Janet's paper and all her impulses towards mediation of conflict can be mapped into the continuity of wisdom traditions.

She will introduce you to her work and the pathways to her hopes, which we all share.

Now, about Janet and about a particular lineage she stands in.

Introduction to Janet ...

PhD cell biology.

Biotext ... science communication and superb editor

Fell upon A Chorus of Women ...

Meeting of science and arts:

- Links with science community, including around the matter of climate change.
- Big contribution to productions for Science Week that we put together with titles like 'On the Edge of Silence' and 'Longing for Wisdom on our Changing Climate'
- Initiated and facilitated A Chorus of Women's long series of Canberra Conversations, bringing people with opposing views into dialogue.
- Inspiration from Julia Grace Wales in the well-studied archives of the 105-year-old Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) ... 'spiritual great grandmothers' of A Chorus of Women

WILPF was founded at the largely unknown 1915 International Congress of Women held at The Hague in April 1915.

The remarkable achievements of these women in setting a human rights agenda for the 20th century and beyond had much to do with the way the women *related* to each other. I spent a long time in their archive while I wrote *A Passion for Peace* and *The People's Passion* — major choral and narrative works performed by A Chorus of Women. Across cultures, languages and immense international tension, they maintained very civil relations. There were no narcissistic power struggles. Their focus was on purpose. We've been listening into their methods ...

These follow from an axiomatic statement the congress president, Jane Addams, articulated, which I wrote into song for the *Passion*:

*Peace is not merely an absence of war
Peace is the nurture of human life.
Yes, peace is the nurture of life.*

Thinking of Jane Addams, Janet recently wrote:

'Environmental sustainability is not only reducing, reusing and recycling; sustainability is social equity, respect and love'

Women at the 1915 Congress set ground rules, mapping preconditions for generative conversations into meeting design. The congress was bound by two ground rules that made a great container for their serious conversations. ...

So Janet has set ground rules for us, which we have all accepted. These include:

No blame for where we are now

Women can play an important leadership role.

There have been many responses to Janet's paper from you and others who couldn't be here tonight. Many responses to 'the natural thing to do' ...

One comment:

"Thank you so much for your wonderful paper - it has the story of the Congress of Women's gatherings running through it like a river of life! "