



TRANSCRIPT OF RECORDING

RICHARD FRANKLAND

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<THE RECORDING HAS COMMENCED

RICHARD FRANKLAND: Okay, I see the red light.

5 **INTERVIEWER:** You let me know when we are good.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: We are recording and we are good to go.

10 **INTERVIEWER:** All right. Thank you. Do you want to start by telling me your name and mob?

15 **RICHARD FRANKLAND:** So my name is Richard Frankland. I'm a Gunditjmara fellow and I've got a few different cultures in me and I celebrate all of them as best I can. One of them is Scottish but I don't look good in a kilt because I have got skinny black ankles.

INTERVIEWER: Nice, nice. And why did you decide to share your truth today, Richard?

20 **RICHARD FRANKLAND:** One of the things about Australia is when colonisers come they drop a cultural bomb on us. And this is quoting Ngugi wa Thiong'o. And then they convince everybody that any history before that was a cultural wasteland. And what that does to us is it annihilates our belief in our culture, our cultural authorities, our voice. And we lived under that dominant culture without having a
25 voice for such a long time. And most of my life has been about advocating for that voice in some way, shape or form. So I think in the truth being heard at this level it is a great opportunity to get a couple more rungs up the ladder towards equity and justice. We need - the nation needs to hear the truth so that together we can unravel the very cultural tapestry of this nation, analyse it, and then weave it back together
30 for a place that we can all call home in relative safety. That's - I think voice is vital.

INTERVIEWER: Beautiful. Thank you. I thought we might start by talking a bit about your long, extensive life as a storyteller. So your experience in filmmaking and playwrights and writing and songwriting. How did you start off? How did you first
35 think to become an artist or how did that happen for you?

RICHARD FRANKLAND: When I was a boy there were always uncles and aunties playing the spoons, playing guitar, telling stories around the kitchen table. And we would eat and drink, and I would always be the fourth hand in Euchre, and I
40 was sort of proud of that. And stories will be running back and forth. And I thought that's how everybody lived. Then a couple of - we stayed at this non-Aboriginal lady's house and she gave me a guitar and I wrote my first song. I was probably 11 or 12. And, yeah, I hitchhiked around when I was about 14 or so. And the stories always rang - rang through me. But everywhere you went back then when you were a
45 blackfella hitchhiking around you got a bed and a feed pretty easy and those old girls - "does your mother know where you are!" And I came back from the military - in the military I was an infantry soldier in the first stint and then an infantry soldier in

the second stint. And I joined the military band to study to become an officer. I wanted to follow my Uncle Reg's footsteps. And I jumped back and forth to infantry type of things. And I chose to play the flute. The military was really racist in those days in Townsville. They would go boong bashing and coon kicking. And I - these

5 are blokes you are meant fight and die with. I made a few good mates in there but it was pretty heart-rending to see that level of discrimination. And I came home and I learned to play flute and saxophone. I ended up on the trawlers and then ended up at the Aboriginal Legal Service where I played saxophone in a band called Interaction.

10 I got appointed to the Royal Commission. That was the hardest job I have ever done. There was no training and no debriefing, and the contract was renewable every three or six months. And you were at the whim of the powers to be, so to speak. And a few of the deaths were sort of like extended family.

15 **INTERVIEWER:** Is this the Royal Commission into deaths in custody?

RICHARD FRANKLAND: Yes, that's right. Yes. The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. And I was still writing. I started a band called Djaambi and we opened for Prince but in reality we were on this little side stage but

20 everyone holds us up here. Anyway, I remember writing a song Malcolm Smith, which - Tiddas started off in my band, or our band, Djaambi, and they went off and had enormous success. Which is incredible. It was heart-rending because they moved on, because it was so brilliant at the same time. You know, three - originally four Tiddas, but only three of them stuck - stuck together. And I kept writing music. And

25 after the Royal Commission I remember one day lying there. I was really, really tired, I had done four years. And I wrote all this poetry, like I don't know how many, just on scraps of paper. Some of it is still in the attic. Chinese menus, pizza boxes; I couldn't stop writing. And it was all about deaths in custody and being oppressed. And then I went down to - a few years later I went down to La Mama and showed

30 Liz Jones, and she said, "Oh well, you know, here is a ticket to a play". And I had seen a play once or twice but never seen it, if that makes sense. I went and seen this play and then I went and wrote Harry's War and No Way to Forget as plays. And Conversations With the Dead which I wrote in two days and assembled from other writings, the poetry and stuff. And I guess why I kept writing, though.

35 I was on the way to a dinner party and pulled into a service station and this non-Aboriginal fellow was glaring around at me and I ignored him and then he started yelling some racial slurs. And I kept ignoring him but my blood was getting up. And then he touched me.

40 [REDACTED] And I got to the dinner party and a non-Aboriginal woman said, "So tell me, why do your people kill themselves in jail". And it was a bit of a moment for me. When "your people". So in the words of Marcia Langton we were the undifferentiated other. And the second point was the assumption that everyone killed themselves. But there were people dying from all sorts of reasons:

45 Chronic illness, maltreatment, neglect; all sorts of things. The third thing was her tone of voice and where that comment came from. It came from a place of safety and

our misery was making her unsafe, her safe world uncomfortable. So we were a problem and a problem people.

5 And I remember thinking I could punch out these blokes in service stations and these racists for the rest of my life and not really get anywhere. And I still had a belief that if we could get into non-Aboriginal people's lounge rooms and show them the truth, and I thought we could do it through art, through music and film and theatre, and I did it. And it made me recollect what Uncle Reg Saunders, my mum's eldest brother, who was the first Aboriginal commissioned officer, said in his book. He said if he
10 had his way now he would - he would make films and art and music.

And then my brother was, Wal, was running the Indigenous branch of the Australian Film Commission and he said we need to tell our stories through our eyes. So he got me to do the cross-cultural and off we went. It was sort of the start of it all for me. I
15 had made a few community films, but to me they were just projects. Like - but they were really - you know, about burrays and kids smoking cigarettes and being incarcerated, maltreated by the system. And they were important films and the budget was incredibly low. But it was good, you know. And the community appreciated that voice coming through, the facilitation of that voice.

20 **INTERVIEWER:** You have made a lot of films and plays and songs, and the kind of common theme between a lot of your storytelling is stories that haven't been told before or stories in - of injustices in land or at war or prisons. Why have you told those stories and why are they important to be told, do you think?

25 **RICHARD FRANKLAND:** I think for a long time we were the hidden people, and when you look around the world there is lots of hidden people. There is lots of oppressed people. And it's finding out what is oppression and what shape does it take and how does it play out. And you can have as many academics as you want writing
30 about people, but having those people tell their stories is one of the most profound things I have ever come across. Like in the Royal Commission and work I did after it in Australia, you got to see the world through a mother's tears, which is a bizarre sight for a man. And you only had a small glimpse of it of course, because a man can't see it totally. When that woman feels a baby come in but she also feels a spirit
35 come in. A man doesn't get that, you know. We get to be - and we should be - not all the time, but we should be the protectors and be honouring that whole process.

I got to see those same tears in a couple of war zones I went to. It made me realise that grief is love, these are mothers of lost kids here in Australia and overseas, and
40 they are mothers who are matriarchs of their families, who - of their people, who fight for their people and the voice of their people. And there is - so there are all these voices like that that just weren't out there. And then there is the voices of the dead. The people who died in custody, or in wars, or in horrific situations. And I think when you have got art you have got voice. And with voice comes some
45 semblance of freedom. And with freedom - everybody who has got any aspect of freedom has a responsibility to be responsible with that freedom and facilitate the voice of others.

And it's a bit like this Commission. It now has a huge responsibility. A huge obligation to facilitate this voice, these voices as far and as wide as they possibly can.

5

INTERVIEWER: You have felt that responsibility as a playwright and a film maker?

10 **RICHARD FRANKLAND:** It's the only reason I do art. If I had the luxury just to be an artist, to make something purely just for the beauty of it or the aesthetic of it, that's a different thing. It's starting to happen. I sometimes take a few photographs and I write stuff. Like yesterday I was out on the shovel and my flat-nosed shovel or spade is busted, and it is one of me good mates, you know. Even though it's had 10 handles and two shovel heads, it's still the same. I wrote a little bit of a poem about
15 that for some reason. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And you spoke before about the power of - the power of art. Do you still believe in the power of the art and the art that you have made to kind of make change?

20

RICHARD FRANKLAND: I do, but less so since AI is involved. And I think social media, while it's got some positive impacts it - it's creating a lot of problems for filmmakers, for songwriters, for performers generally. I'm very concerned that the critical thinking aspect of the creation of art is going to disappear in a whole host of
25 ways. That - that worries me. At the same time I see some incredibly beautiful philosophies through art out there and that's exciting. And I'm very interested in - I had some success in Black Hollywood and around the world with films. But I chose to come home and work with community groups, and that was working with kids here - and this is well before social media. Their art was incredible, like their stories.
30 And there is real talent there. And you could see - when they were writing and directing you could see the weight on them, you know. And I would deliberately just hover and support, not intrude too much. And they were just - they were pretty amazing people, you know.

35 **INTERVIEWER:** And what about like most of our industries, the theatre world, film and TV world, the narratives there are largely, you know, the white culture and most of the powerful people in those systems usually are non-Aboriginal as well. What has your experience been like as an Aboriginal storyteller moving into those spaces?
40

RICHARD FRANKLAND: Well, I think I was the first - first Australian to win an AFI award directing, and - and I was at Cannes and got inducted into the Black Hollywood Hall of Fame and a few things like that. But in Australia you would only get sent scripts with Aborigine content. I am using the word Aborigine because they
45 what they said. "Just read the Aborigine bits". So you were still - you weren't employed as a human, you were employed as a brown human or a black human. And so you couldn't get through the door. And it was quite amazing, you know. Like - but

it was what I was ready for subconsciously. I knew that that gateway was closed to me and to First Nations people. And then one day a bloke called Gus Howard of Blue Heelers said, "I want to hire you as a director". And I said what's the First Nation content? He said, "there is none, we are going to hire you as a director". And I was in shock. And I think I was literally in cultural shock - culture shock for that whole first episode I directed. I didn't know how to relate to people or - I directed it, but I just wasn't - I was hired as a human. And I did quite a few episodes for them. I still had the immense cultural loads that a First Nation person has; deaths and grief and, you know, big happenstances in community. But I got to direct it as a human and I - I couldn't fathom it. I just could not comprehend. And then - but even now you still - people still approach you to be a cultural consultant. And they need you but they don't know if you are a good enough writer, they don't know if you are a good enough director.

I had a bloke when I was working at Melbourne uni who was telling me, "I know a really good director", because I had this story concept. And I said, "oh yeah". "He has directed TV and everything". I didn't say anything. You know. And then he found out - and years later he said, "do you know they have posters of you in the Houses?" I said, "Do they?" So it was a - I don't know, it was just - that's the way the world was. And I don't think it has changed a great deal. I think without places like NITV, without big First Nation production companies and without the Black Lives Matter Movement and the social consciousness of the nation rising I think we would still be in the same boat. But the thinking is slowly changing. It's a pity that I'm in my 60s now. If I was in my 40s it will be whoo-hoo, let's go and do it. But I'm happy to stand back and watch other people do it. I get quite excited. I can't watch many shows at once because some of them are a bit flash for me, but I enjoy hearing the young voices, "oh, we are doing this and we are doing that". I got I don't know how many messages from young people, you know, saying we are making this story, can you help out. And, yeah, I enjoy it though.

INTERVIEWER: And so for young people now that are, you know, doing what you started 40 years ago, is there advice that you give them or is it a different culture that they are walking into?

RICHARD FRANKLAND: It's a bit of both. Facilitation of voice is always the primary thing. Don't forget who you are, don't forget there is a lot of our mob suffering, but also remember that you are an individual and you have every right to make films about anything you want. My brother Wal said - and we might have both said it - that First People will make stories about the plight of our situation, then they will make action movies and horrors and sci-fi and all that. And we will be become part of that tapestry and not just exotic plumage on the side because, you know, we do get hired as exotic plumage and we get - they decorate their stories with First Nations stuff because they have to. And that's slowly changing.

Like I worked on a horror script recently. And while they needed me there, they also regarded me as a filmmaker. So it was - I was a film maker with indigeneity, and that

was fantastic, I really enjoyed it. The only issue I had with those guys is two of them were vegan and I love chewing on a chop. You know.

5 **INTERVIEWER:** Everyone has got their differences.

RICHARD FRANKLAND: Yes.

10 **INTERVIEWER:** I was going to ask you a more specific question about one of the -

RICHARD FRANKLAND: Keep going.

15 **INTERVIEWER:** - big bands that you were part of, the Charcoal Club. Could you tell us a bit about how that started and the experience of being in the Charcoal Club?

20 **RICHARD FRANKLAND:** The Charcoal Club. Well, we used to say it's for burnt out blacks and singed whites. But that was a saying that came about long before me, in fact I think it was from the 1890s where African American and white jazz players would play in a basement in Chicago or somewhere like that. Anyway, it became a -

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

25 **RICHARD FRANKLAND:** Yeah, the Charcoal Club. So we used to call it - like the motto, I guess, was for burnt out blacks and singed whites. But I never thought of that, I picked it up from mob. And then when I researched it I found out it comes from the 1890s. There was actually the Charcoal Club where African American and Caucasian jazz musos would get together and jam. And I don't know if it was a
30 basement or a basement bar. I'm pretty sure if they were jazz musos it would be some type of bar. And they called it the Charcoal Club. And it stuck and it sort of took off. But part of the impetus for doing it was when I did the play Conversations with the Dead, some of the non-Aboriginal members who were part of it felt funny about
35 singing First Nations songs in a first-person context. And they would actually cop it from their non-Aboriginal mates, "You shouldn't be singing those songs". And they would have arguments or heavy discussions, at least. And that was the tone of the country. So I would say to them, well, you know, you white fellas sing jazz songs and you sing blues songs and they are African American, and you sing Reggae. Why
40 can't you sing First Australian songs - or Aboriginal was the word in those days - or Koorie or blackfella songs. And you could see them wrestling with themselves. And I had never heard of anyone - not many people singing First Nations songs at all in the country. So the Charcoal Club was a little bit about that. And it did some great stuff. It - lots of gigs. We had some great incredible musos in it. Monica Weightman, an incredible guitarist and singer. And I can still - that's your dog. I can still hear her
45 singing. When I drive along sometimes I play a bit of music if the phone is not going and - that's my dog. Can you hear that through your ears there?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: I can.

RICHARD FRANKLAND: Have a little cigarette break and have a think about it?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: I think they are done, yes.

5

RICHARD FRANKLAND: Okay.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: It's not like overwhelming. You can hear it.

10 **RICHARD FRANKLAND:** Like a Dougie Young song, you could hear the mission dogs barking in the recordings. And it has some great people in the line-up. Monica Weightman, Andy Baylor. It did some really, really nice gigs around the place. I have had a few line-ups, though. I have done a few tours. I can't remember most of them. I don't know if it is old age or body abuse.

15

INTERVIEWER: Yes, yes. And you still - you still are making music?

RICHARD FRANKLAND: Yes. So what happened, Mark Holden came down, he was doing a book on his family and he come - I said come down, we will have a talk
20 about it. And he camped and we sat out on the veranda there at the table and we drank and talked and I played a few songs for him. And the next thing you know we were doing an album. And my office - Deb had secured some funding to - I was just going to knock down some songs and some language songs just for the kids, really, and immediate family. I didn't intend to release them. And we ended up doing this
25 album. And then I think it was the last song got tens of thousands of views and stuff, which is really strange because I said I'm 60, I've got - you know, I'm a bit old to be doing this. And he said, "Yeah. Yeah, Rich, you are 60. No one wants to see an old bastard on stage, do they?" And anyway, so I have done a couple of gigs and the gigs sort of go off a fair bit which is nice. But I enjoy playing around the table. So we
30 started this thing called the Songs in the Kitchen. So we go to people's houses, the whole line-up, and cook a feed and play music. And, yeah, it's a pretty good feeling.

INTERVIEWER: Beautiful.

35 **RICHARD FRANKLAND:** And then there is the flash videos where you look flash and so on.

INTERVIEWER: I was going to ask you, you know, your music has an impact on lots of other people when they listen to it and hearing, I think, their own community
40 in song and just the power of song generally. What impact does it have on you when you are, you know, sitting around the table playing music? Is it healing, or is it hard, or is it -

RICHARD FRANKLAND: It depends on the song. Like sometimes, like, you get
45 choked up when you sing a song. Like you get - it's pretty hard. If it's a song about someone who passed or you wrote because someone passed or, you know, a kid is shot up in a war or something. And others are feisty, like a call to arms. Not that I'm

into shooting and stuff. And others are about rallying, you know. Like there is a song called the Red the Black and the Gold and I have never been able to sing it right. It's a beautiful song. It's about the flag. And Monica sings on it and Aurora Kurth and Andy Baylor. The way they sing it is so heartfelt. So if I drive along and listen to that and I get a bit choked up. And then there is Malcolm Smith, that has been translated into other people's languages. And then all these African American women and in America they - during COVID they all sung it and then they added these African Americans who died in custody. And I think they might have done it at the inauguration Joe Biden and it just went off. Like, it - and there is a point that I think that every songwriter realises you don't actually own your song. Like you are a custodian of it. And you might earn money from it - like I have never earned money from Malcolm Smith, of course, but you are a custodian. And, yeah, all of a sudden that song went to the next level of custodianship. And sometimes if I'm singing that song, you know, it's hard to get the words out. It stops in your heart a bit and in your throat. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Is in a song or a film that kind of means the most to you or that you are most proud of?

RICHARD FRANKLAND: I think Malcolm Smith, really. I mean, there's - there is different points of - that you love about different things. Like - and sometimes, yeah, bitter-sweet memories about a project. I think a play is Conversations with the Dead, I think. There is bittersweet memories about walking into the bigness because of personal things. But I was deeply honoured the way Wayne and Leah and Chris Mead directed it and the firm decisions they made during it. Conversations with the Dead. And the documentary. I never really made the documentary, although people say I did, Who Killed Malcolm Smith. I guess because of the cultural content and the fact that I wrote the narrative, that facilitated the Voice of the Dead; both of those plays. And what it's like to be a First Nation worker on the frontline with no support. I remember when I - the Conversations with the Dead is about a time when there were bugger-all First Nations government employees. There was no training and you were seen as a problem. And you were interrogated by the system itself in such horrific ways and they chewed you up and spat you out. I was buggered after it. And even now I still have flashbacks when you remember things. I can still feel the hand of some mothers in mine from all that time ago. And the sisters. And it's things you would never - you will never forget. But it had to be done. There is a lot of personal cost in those things.

There is a lot of voices now in Aboriginal affairs which are - there were voices before, but they were smothered but now they are being heard. And that's really vital.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

RICHARD FRANKLAND: You know. What they - people are talking about a whole range of things. There are so many issues now. So we don't have a united front in so many different ways, which is, I guess, one of the apt descriptions I have heard is by a bloke called Steve Biko, which he said the most potent weapon of the

oppressors are the minds of the oppressed. And he was referring to a thing called lateral violence. And lateral violence is when you are on the bottom rung of the ladder you don't punch upwards, you end up striking out at each other. And do you it in a way where you enlist other people. So one of the characteristics is you find the negative in someone and if there is no negative you create one. So you create a lie. And compulsive liars are really experts at this or people with narcissistic tendencies. And then you keep repeating it until that person is labelled bad or wrong. And people do it for all sorts of reasons. In defence or - but mainly that lateral violence is informed by trauma. And there is six primary traumas. In the 30 years I have spent on the frontline - maybe 35 - doing community work and that has been revealed. And it wasn't just me revealing it, it was working with a bloke called Peter Lewis and another guy called John Staley, and training people in that area. And so we have got transgenerational trauma. And I think one of the ways to describe that is we had a whole society. We had a judicial system, health system, all of these things - villages and towns, literally. And they were destroyed. And then we were told they didn't exist. And that reinforced the concept of terra nullius, land of no people. And just an untruth, you know.

That led to the next trauma, which is really discrimination. So we were regarded as subhuman, flora and fauna. And both those traumas exist today, you know. So they echo through time. So in the words of Patrick Wolfe, invasion is the structure. It's not just the one-off event, it just continues to happen.

The next trauma is navigating the dominant culture. So when you are regarded as subhuman, trying to rent a house or get a job, or be regarded as human - the example of me in the film industry - is you are constantly going out of your way to make non-Aboriginal people comfortable. And that's what - John Harding said that in a play I did once. You are constantly going out of your way to make non-Aboriginal people comfortable. I think the next one after that is cultural loads, which is really about the complexities of First Nation life. The fact that there is lots of death. Like - and you can't possibly go to all the funerals. In fact, some of us get so worn out we don't go to any funerals. You are tired, you are exhausted. And grief is fundamentally love and when you are grieving all the time it's horrific, you know. It's - it's very, very difficult.

The next one is lateral violence, which I described earlier. And that means you never know what you are going to get when you talk to someone. Whether you are going to be attacked or whether it's going to be someone grateful, whether it's just going to be love.

The other one is vicarious trauma. Constantly telling the stories and constantly hearing the stories. So those traumas are an anomaly to non-Aboriginal people. Some overlap, but the reality is we are the ones who exist with all of those. When those traumas come together, I call them a compounding trauma, and quite often these traumas are invisible to mental health professionals and western euro-centric society. They are invisible because they don't know about them, because those people have been deprived of the true history of the nation and the result of that true history. And

they have also, because they have been denied the true history, they have also been denied the current circumstances. And they have been trained by the media and social engineering in general to see us as the problem. So the people suffering the problem of colonisation, meaning me and my mob, are told we are the problem, we
5 are the cause of the problem. And it's simply not true.

So those six primary traumas in my opinion are something that need to be analysed. In fact, I think it needs some type of royal commission specifically into the traumas of First Nation people and why they are about, how they are about, what they do.
10 What did they do to us as a nation? Because if there is two primary parties, if one is safe or thinks they are safe and the other isn't, the one that thinks they are safe is certainly not safe at all. You are always going to have that pinprick, that thrust in the side saying they are not safe. Are they dangerous? Are they a problem? You always are going to have the undifferentiated other. Until we make everybody safe,
15 everybody secure; until we recognise the injustices, the inequities, even just by beginning to know about them, then we can't possibly heal as a nation. We will always have some type of strange moral bankruptcy living above us. All of us. And the traumas are - they are not going to end if we don't recognise them. They are not going to stop the bleeding in this country until we recognise them. And once we
20 recognise them we have to work out what to do about them.

There is several reasons why those traumas are more paramount now than they have ever been. One is the lack of cultural authorities in a First Nations shape. So I helped lead a team in creating, developing and implementing in some cases a dispute
25 resolution process based on the Ngarrindjeri one of old, in our cultural shape. But getting it past government bureaucracies, which is where lateral violence exists in my opinion most of all, in those First Nation government departments. And that's not a personal attack on anyone, it is saying that those people are trapped in a system where they are employed by government and struggling to be able to work for their
30 people with a clear cultural mandate, if you like, because they are under the cultural mandate of a government system.

If we have our own cultural authorities we will be able to heal ourselves. If we are adequately resourced with proper cultural solutions then we can heal ourselves. And
35 we are striving towards that in a whole heap of different ways. The only way to achieve it in my opinion is to draw the line in the sand. And whether that's a state within a state, whether that's parliamentary seats - whether it's an undiluted First Nation voice, I'm not totally sure. But I know there has to be a better way. We are still having more deaths in custody than ever. Our children are still being removed.
40 Families are still collapsing under the weight of cultural loads. We have more lateral violence than I have ever seen at the moment. I mean, we have even got a term now called Elder abuse. What the hell is that? And so many Elders that I talk to are being abused. It's horrific. It's worrying. And that's destroying our culture. That's destroying our families. These things have come about because of high trauma.
45 Because of methamphetamines, because of trauma, because of lateral violence; all of those things. We need cultural solutions. And I don't mean dragging people out and flogging them, I mean the worst punishment in pre-contact days was banishment.

Maybe we need to banish some of these people, these drug dealers. Maybe we need to banish these people using drugs and hurting their families. Maybe we need to banish some of these people who use lateral violence as a tool. Maybe that's a solution.

5

INTERVIEWER: And when you talk of being able to address those primary traumas and then being able to establish some form of cultural authority, do you see treaty having an opportunity to do any of those?

10 **RICHARD FRANKLAND:** I was involved in the treaty process early in the piece. The State Government came to me and asked me to facilitate a state-wide meeting. And I did but I wanted to create the agenda. And the agenda was a council of Elders, a dispute settlement process, the Constitutional reform and treaty. And I enlisted the help of Karen Milward. We facilitated the meeting and it was the first state-wide
15 meeting in about four or five years. And the community overwhelmingly voted for treaty. And the treaty can be about anything, yeah. So it was ambient at the time as it what it was. And then I was able to take it to 30-plus communities - I don't know how many - and do community consultations. And it was quite amazing because the treaty wasn't - while it was the primary thing, the main thing was seeing the hope
20 grow out of communities. Nobody really knew, none of us, what treaty was. We knew what it possibly could be. It was a bit like the sorry that happened. When the sorry happened it was like a major part of acknowledgment and - that the war being over like the Redfern Speech. And these things have happened incrementally over time. So for someone in my vintage seeing them happen is quite amazing.

25

Then I got to facilitate the community assembly gatherings and the structure and stuff of it. And it was hard work but it was really invigorating. I was politically attacked at the time, quite viciously by a person I won't name, but I will name them in a book that's coming out. And that was quite - that whole period was quite taxing
30 because I was doing - I was doing four jobs at the time. And I was attacked within the university that I was working for, Melbourne University, as well. That was quite vicious as well. However, the treaty was far more important than anything I was doing, and so I went all out.

35 I was so exhausted at the end of it that I made a conscious decision to step away from the treaty process. They rang me up at the last community assembly elections and I used my name, but I told - and I still - but I told people not to vote for me because I didn't want to get in, but I wanted people to see that it was important that they contribute. Yeah. I'm very glad I didn't get in because I think there is some really
40 solid people in there doing a wonderful job. Yeah.

I don't know the machinations of where treaty is up to at the moment. What I do know is that I was able to contribute to the growth of that voice, and I was very honoured, and still am, that it was part it. Was that as hard as the deaths in custody
45 job? No. But in some ways it was. But I will never do another big job again. I've done three or four like that and that's enough for me.

INTERVIEWER: What are you - when you think about what treaty could be in Victoria, you know, they are not far away from starting to actually negotiate and enter into treaty negotiations, are there things for you that are - you know, you have worked in lots of different spaces of fighting for justice, are there things that you
5 hope or aspire that it could achieve?

RICHARD FRANKLAND: I think there is a range of things that treaty could achieve. I think one of the things would be people who pay rates, for instance, that 2 per cent of rates, or 5 per cent, or whatever they - of anyone paying rates in
10 perpetuity goes towards a fund that's about social justice and equity and economic advancement. I think the creation, development and implementation of true cultural authorities. The opportunity to police ourselves. I think there needs to be a welcome to country from First Nation groups to people who have come home. So that we actually - people living off country have doctrines that they shift into. So if I was
15 living on Ngunnawal country I get welcomed there, and if I'm working in the First Nations space I adhere to their rules and obligations in a really clear mandate. I think that things such as cultural safety, RAP plans should come under that banner as well. I think it needs to be really well resourced. I think not just financially but with goodwill. I think that there should be permanent seats in Parliament for First Nation
20 people, so that we have an interface between black and white at the highest levels. I think that we should go for more than the 3 per cent employment. We should be going for 7 or 8 until that equity is reached. Yeah, I think all of those - those types of things.

25 I think also that we should have a future plan. A united Australia plan, if you like. We should envisage a common vision for victory that encompasses all of us about tomorrow Australia. I think we need a tomorrow Australia centre that is actually about planning that. Because the reality is, if me, as a first nation person, if I'm culturally safe and non-Aboriginal people aren't culturally safe they are not going to
30 be safe. They are not going to be safe because I - and I'm not going to be safe, if that makes sense. You know. And until we have all got the same amount of tucker on the table or the opportunity for the same amount of tucker, then someone is going to go hungry in some way, shape or form.

35 So after the Royal Commission I was pretty buggered and I spent a lot of time writing poetry on the lounge room floor. A woman called Maxine Briggs came over. The government never provided any psychological support at all, and that job really - really, really knocked me about. And Maxine came over and lined up someone for me to talk to. They couldn't navigate that type of trauma very well, and unbeknownst
40 to me the Elders had had a meeting and Uncle Jim Berg came and seen me and said, "The Elder had a meeting and they want you to set up Mirrimbiak". Not Mirrimbiak, it wasn't the name then, the native title body. At that time the Aboriginal Legal Service was under the auspice - the administration of a group called Price Waterhouse. And it was - things were pretty tough in the community because that
45 was our voice, you know, our legal voice. And I had worked for them as a field officer years before. And the field officer back then, there were two of us, but basically it covered the whole state and it was hard - hard yakka. It was really hard

work. There was bugger-all black fellas in government back then. Maybe three at the most. And with no real power, no real voice. And so I think there was a budget for native title, the representative body, of about 190,000, and they wouldn't really release the funds. So I just got a credit card and bought furniture and things like that.
5 That's what you did back then.

A lady called Jan Muir, probably one of the staunchest, deadliest people I have met in relation to the First Nation voice. I still hear her voice - I used to call her Mrs Muir. I still hear her saying, "We have got to take to community, Richard". You
10 know, "community always know what is right". That's what we did. Anyway, we fought with them all. Got the place set up. It was a hard, hard fight.

I found a piece of paper - I might still have it in my files there somewhere, which showed that Price Waterhouse were the signatories of a petition to Keating saying
15 that native title will be the economic ruination of Australia. When they left they put a bloke called John Lanigan in charge and I sued him. Him and I had a bit of a stoush. He took off. I don't know how much money he ended up in his pocket with, but it was billed in his contract that he - he got a fair whack. And I remember a woman called Beatrice Faust I think her name was, said that he was a very brown-inside man. But
20 he wasn't Aboriginal. But she was saying he had a great understanding of First Nations people.

The advisory board, which is all they were at the time, were pretty strong people and they rebuilt the legal service under First Nation control and voice. Anyway, we
25 lodged I don't know how many of the claims. We lodged the Gunditjmarra one. I brought in Auntie Laura and my mum, because my mum and Sandra Onus had done the Alcoa fight and I thought it was fitting that those three - that two of those three matriarchs were part of that process.

I left there, but while I was there I made a film - I executive produced a film or
30 Mirrimbiak did called After Mabo the Amendments. We got some copies to Les Mauser and a few others who were at the UN, lobbying the UN for First Nation rights. And they used that with the Committee For the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to have investigations and I think findings against John Howard at the
35 time.

It was the last chance I got to make films for a while, I guess. But that was all right. Anyway, I finished that fight and, yeah, I was bugged again. The - it went on. It
40 seemed to me that I had developed a habit of doing some of the hard fights and getting them to a point where community could have voice and control. And I didn't mind that role. I didn't need to be creating a nest for myself.

INTERVIEWER: Mirrimbiak was about helping community lodge native title claims, is that right?
45

RICHARD FRANKLAND: That's right, yeah. There was some incredible people working there. Mirrimbiak lodged many of these claims and made people aware of it.

I always thought that the legal fight - the framework I wanted to see was local Aboriginal land councils. That was what I had in mind. And the other thing I had mind was that the legal fight should be that the onus of proof should be on government, not on First Nation people. And what I mean by that is that every time
5 the government - and this is in my naive opinion, I guess, that every time the government funded an Aboriginal program it was an admission of prior ownership in a whole heap of ways. Because the way it seemed to me was that the western euro-centric lens on First Nation culture was that it stopped and it should remain the same. And if that was the truth, then non-Aboriginal people should be wearing the - the
10 males should be wearing wigs and pantaloons. That's the way I sort of seen it. Like, why could their culture evolve and not ours? So that was the lens I sort of had on things. But because I stepped out - I didn't mind, you know. And I'm not a really good office person anyway. I mean, I would rather be out with a chainsaw, or building things, and - even writing is an interesting task for me. So, yeah.

15 **INTERVIEWER:** And then another significant part of your land rights work was also after ATSIC was disbanded you set up your own political party. Can you tell us a bit about that?

20 **RICHARD FRANKLAND:** Yes. I had been - I think that year I tried to get a program going called Directors Without Borders where you go to different places in the world where there is particular issues going on, like that are severe for one group of people, a marginalised group. And so one year I had gone to the Middle East at Christmas. There was a bit of a nasty war going on there. The next year we went to
25 San Cristobal where the Abejas people, 47 of them, had been massacred and they cut the foetus out of five pregnant women. And I think - do you want him up here?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Yeah, that's all good if you want to.

30 **RICHARD FRANKLAND:** I can put him outside.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: It might be a bit distracting.

35 **RICHARD FRANKLAND:** I will pop him outside, will I? All right. You are a bit noisy, mate. We love you.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Give me just a second sitting down there.

40 **RICHARD FRANKLAND:** You want him?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: With the kitty.

45 **RICHARD FRANKLAND:** Tedward Hemmingway Frankland Esq. Lord and master of all. AKA the Orange Bastard. Table-leaping, sink-diving - Orange Bastard. Catnip addict. Where was I up to, sorry?

INTERVIEWER: So you want me to start that again? So after ATSIC was abolished you set up your own political party. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

RICHARD FRANKLAND: So I tried to set up this program, Directors Without
 5 Borders, where I went to the Middle East the first time, and that was a pretty nasty war there. And we filmed 33 kids who had been shot and snuck it out through about 16 or 17 checkpoints. It was a - we didn't have anyone backing us up. So it was just me and a bloke called Ralph, Ralph Rigby. And it was - left a bit a mark on both of us, I think. And then the next Christmas we went to - through a bloke called Justin
 10 Cockburn, he had been working with the Abejas people on the Guatemalan Mexican border San Cristobal where there had been a pretty horrific massacre. 47 people massacred and the foetus cut out of five pregnant women. And I was there to film the survivors and talk to the Zapatistas, the revolutionary fighters. And I got typhoid and lost about 15 kilos in 10 days. I was basically dying. It was - the doctor would come
 15 in every day and say, "You shit blood?" No, mate. "When you shit blood you die, you understand". So I would lay there and get the rigors. And I would crawl into the shower, shit everywhere. It was a little bit rough. And I - I come good and went four days, I think it took, to get to Mexico City through plane and car. I got there and I was in the hospital for a bit and then jumped on a plane and came home. But the
 20 footage was all stuffed up because of moisture.

I got home and I was resting up and I think I scored a job as a park ranger. I can't remember clearly, it might have been another year. But, anyway, I spoke to Sid
 25 Spindler, who was a former Senator. And his ashes are actually under a tree on my property here. I put trees in for the dead here, I don't do it so much anymore. And next thing you know I was running for the Senate and we created Your Voice. I think we all wanted to call it One Voice or something, but anyway we ran and it - the idea was to give people hope. It wasn't about winning. I was shitting myself when I thought we were going to win. I didn't want to be a parliamentarian. I couldn't handle
 30 that sort of - I could handle it, I just didn't want to be in that thing. But I got so many phone calls and letters from kids and their mothers saying, "thank you", you know, "my son or daughter thinks they can be anything now". And so it was really about that hope. And it was letting people like Howard know, and others, that we are not going to be silent and not going to go away. And it was also giving the allies, the
 35 non-Aboriginals, hope as well. So it wasn't just a one-nation thing, it wasn't just a one-people thing, it was about all of us together. And that's what was fantastic, was this incredible beauty was there. It was about us as a collective. It was snapshot, in my opinion, of who we could be in a tomorrow Australia.

40 So that was it and we had a few mottos. In fact, I was cleaning the shed the other day and come across a Vote One Richard Frankland hat and I pissed myself laughing, you know. And T-shirts and things. And there were little ones and kiddy ones and stuff. And I got to ask to run for the Senate a few more times but I - I don't like - I don't like those political parties. I sort of see them as football teams, you know.
 45 That's the way they look at each other, isn't it. They think they are footy teams and they have got their groups that back each other up.

INTERVIEWER: What about - what else do you reflect on when you think about the fight around land rights that you have been part of?

RICHARD FRANKLAND: When I look back at land rights, or I look at it now, it's
 5 so different now. It's like there's - back then there was a fire and a rage and there was
 a passion. And a lot of people weren't on wages, you know. Like a lot of the
 meetings were in people's kitchens and at the Advancement League that was the
 mother of all organisations. And when the regional organisations started there was a
 different - they were like the spear point. And the big spear point was the league.
 10 And the legal service and VACCA, and these organisations. You know, you could
 see the strength in them and they were visible. And when I think of land rights, every
 one of those workers, every one of their clients would be there marching and we
 would all cry, you know, "land rights". That was the call. And it was - we had a
 united voice. Even when ATSIC was going all these people would turn up and march
 15 together. And there was a unity. If you disagreed you still linked arms. It didn't
 matter about the political differences or the diversity, you linked arms. You could go
 anywhere and get a bed and a feed. And if you travelled, back in those days, and
 stayed in a motel and not at the mob's house, they would be shitty, you know,
 because they would want to see you. I didn't know what travel allowance was back
 20 then in the 80s. They gave me money for travel. And I said, "what's this?" I thought I
 was being corrupt. I said "No, I can't take this". Anyway, when I worked out what it
 was, well you would go and buy groceries and stay at someone's house. That's what
 you did. And if they were - you would take the guitar and you would sing some
 songs, and you would have a laugh and a giggle and tell stories. And that's what it
 25 was like.

And I have forgotten how many houses I stayed in. You would wake up in the
 morning and there would be all these kids peeping around the door. "Hey, uncle,
 wake up". You know. And it was just a different type of joy. Now you travel and you
 30 are in a motel and eating at this flash restaurant and having a glass of red, it feels
 different. And it's a different discussion because it's not at a kitchen table. And if you
 do go to someone's house all the kids are on these phones and the TV is going. The
 kitchen is not the heart of the place anymore, the TV is with its 56 million channels
 and the social media. But that kitchen table, that was the place, you know. There
 35 would be card games and stories and giggles and kids coming in. And you would end
 up with a kid on your lap while you are playing Euchre. And that old girl, she would
 always cook up a feed out of nowhere. "And where have you been Richard, what
 have you been doing? True!" You know a fantastic sense of home in all of those
 places. And some terribly - terribly sad as well. You know. Like I remember I
 40 created a policy at some places that I ran, we didn't drop flowers off when there was
 a death, you dropped tucker. You know, big mobs of it. It just made perfect sense.
 And you would go around and personally deliver it. So you would drop that tucker or
 so people had a feed. Because you know they - you know they are going to have 10,
 20, 30 people staying. So you drop tucker off, and I said no, you don't drop grog, you
 45 just drop the tucker; mobs of it. And you don't wait around to be honoured and
 something, because the honour is in the look in the eye, the shake of the hand and the
 way they hold you. I am not sure if people still do that. But I did it when a fella up

the road lost his wife a few years ago. Just a big bag of spuds, a big - couple of meat trays, a big mob of bread. It doesn't - it didn't cost much then, yeah.

5 **INTERVIEWER:** What do you think - what would land rights mean if they were fully realised. What would that look like and what would it mean for community? A little question.

10 **RICHARD FRANKLAND:** I think the first thing about land rights is recognising - and treaty should do this as well. It was all the different economies. There is a multitude of economies. It's not just a fiscal or money economy, there is a cultural economy. There is a wellbeing economy. So land rights to me would heal the nation in a whole heap of ways. But if it happened overnight, it would be quite scary because the people - there would be suicides and all sorts of things amongst non-Aboriginal people because the money god is paramount. So it - to me it has to be a progressive thing over a period of years. But the first thing would be to get people used to the concept of it. Then talking to people about what that actually means. And it doesn't have to mean taking something from anyone. To me it's about an injection of true history into the cultural economy and the cultural fabric economy. And knowing that the land was owned for Millenia before non-Aboriginal people came here. So there is that recognition first. And it has to be a true recognition and it can't be about we conquered, you lost, we won. It has to be about, okay, something was stolen. How do we reparate that. And it has to be a solid negotiation. It also, in my opinion, has to be about equity and justice.

25 So the reparation has to incorporation reparation of atrocities that have happened and that are happening. Then it needs more than just small amounts of money going to community-owned organisations. It has to be individual reparation. You know, families should have the opportunity to say, well we accept this payout for all time or we accept land rights for all this time. I think it's being able to own the land that you walk on. So how do we do that? How do we enable that to happen for people? You know, what's the process? I think the end goal has to be about unity because there is so many non-Aboriginal people here from every corner of the earth now. What are you going to do? Send them all home? You can't possibly do that. We are married in, we love each other. We have great colleagues. How do we enable that next level of togetheress.

40 So land rights to me is a symbol of what tomorrow Australia could be. And to me it's about recognition, it's about reparation and it's about unity. That's what it looks like to me.

45 **INTERVIEWER:** Thank you. The last question on this topic I was going to ask you is around some local - local land issues. Around Gunditjmara country here, your country. You have made a documentary around the Convincing Ground here and also issues with development and things that are happening here. Is there anything on that that would be pertinent for you to talk about?

RICHARD FRANKLAND: I guess when I made the - not every film, but many films I have made, because they are on things that are sensitive, or issues that are sensitive to some people in the dominant culture it creates a bit of a stirring. So with the Convincing Ground there were people who didn't believe the massacre had

5 happened, or dumbed down the story, or toned it down. And there were different lenses on it. So it was estimated that there were 260 people killed. So the storyline, the narrative is that a whale washed up. The whalers said it was theirs. The Kilcarer Gundidj clan said it was theirs, as they had done for, you know, time - years and

10 years before. And there was a fight between the whalers and the clan. The whalers lost and they went and got members of the Hentys and came down with weapons and so on. And a whole heap of people were killed. Two survivors took off to the Cart clan, which is up at Mt Clay. My mum said in the film that there was hiding and

15 whispering and running and it wasn't in one spot, it was spread out. And I have heard stories from Aunty Rosa Donka, who has passed, and Aunty Iris who said that their aunty, at a massacre out near at Condah, their aunty was a baby being hidden in the bushes and in the rushes in the creek watching the massacre happen. So you could well imagine that in all likelihood happened at the Convincing Ground.

When I made the film it was quite a battle. The ABC board - someone from the

20 board six weeks after it screened went down, got a copy of the film and triggered an investigation into me saying I hadn't followed some process or protocol. And the investigation was thrown out. But it was about systemic discrimination. It turned out that one member of that board, a business colleague, was working for the land developer and the land developer actually said when he was interviewed by

25 somebody else - they said, "What would you do about this?" And he said, "Have you got shotgun?" Now, the thing is - again, in all probability if a blackfella had said that they would have been charged, locked up, it would have been on the front page of every newspaper. So we had the attitude against us. However, the film made a point and it kicked a few goals. I had some issues that happened to me personally. My

30 house was valued at one point before the film at one level, and after the film came out it was devalued even though there was an 8 per cent increase in the market. So there is not just one way you suffer when you do these things.

There is still no plaque down there. I go down and measure it up every now and

35 again and, you know, I should do it, I should get off me lazy old black arse and put a plaque up honouring the dead. But I'm hoping that Gunditjmara do that. I'm hoping there is monuments at every massacre and battle site.

And that's the other issue that I have that plagues me a bit, is the terminology. We

40 talk about massacres and we don't talk about battles. They may well have ended in a massacre but people resisted first. In fact, I have started visiting some massacre sites. Not enough, but every now and again I will go and honour the dead. It's a good feeling. It wears you out a bit but it's a good feeling.

45 **INTERVIEWER:** And what about on - you mentioned there is no plaque at the Convincing Ground. There are a lot of monuments within a kilometre of there that speak to colonialism and not to anything to do with the people that were on the land

for thousands of years beforehand. Is there something about monuments that is important to acknowledge and that's missing in -

RICHARD FRANKLAND: Monuments shape the thinking of a nation. We were
 5 what we see, we become what we see. So if we don't honour true history we can
 fictionalise the history. Inga Clendinnen says in the book *Dancing with Strangers* we
 live with a nursery version of history, and subsequently we cannot grapple with the
 contemporary happenings. And that's very much what's happening in Australia
 because we have lived with a nursery version of history for so long. And if you read
 10 Lawson and Paterson, two iconic figures in the history of Australia, they rarely
 mention blacks at all, if at all. So we have this fictionalised history, you know, that
 the nation was settled gently. That any First Nation people there were homogenous,
 that there weren't - it wasn't a structured society. So before we attain land rights,
 before we attain total equity and justice, we need to acknowledge the complexity and
 15 diversity of our own people's pre-contact. And what we have done, we have accepted
 this - these complex systems over health, over education, over justice and so on. And
 they have to be complex because we interface in two cultures. But do we end up
 losing our own culture in the middle of it - of that interface? And how much do we
 compromise? I don't know. I mean, I think monuments serve the purpose of
 20 acknowledging the past and training the way we think about the present and the
 future: I am this because that man explored this nation. No, you are this because of
 what was taken from me. You know. You are this because of what was taken from
 me and my people. That's the only reason that you exist. You exist on the blood of
 my ancestors. And that's the simple truth. And they paid the ultimate price. And I
 25 pay a price with the trauma that exists within me as a First Nation person. It is not a
 case of get over it, it's a case of open your eyes up. See what was so that we can work
 on what is and plant seeds of what can be.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you. I think I will leave that bit there. That is very
 30 powerful, thank you. Maybe if we move on to - you have done a lot of work in
 language - language revival. Can you tell me a bit about the work you have done and
 why it's so important?

RICHARD FRANKLAND: I haven't done a great deal on language. I put some
 35 language in some plays and a lot of Koorie English. I did a program where we
 reclaimed language through Guditjmarra Live, which is we got a whole heap of
 Guditjmarra people to sing songs in language and write them in language. And that
 was really exciting. There were these ladies on it and I thought, oh, they are going to
 write real gentle songs. No way. They wrote this really feisty I want me land back
 40 songs, you killed our people. So they were confronting things in song that were just
 incredible. So strong and so powerful. And so, you know, prodding the stick. You
 know, get up and fight. There were others who wrote songs about uncles who had
 been to war. It was all these beautiful - I think I did a prayer song, a language prayer
 song which I wrote. And the other part of language that stands out for me is I
 45 proposed a lingua franca, which is a trade language to cover all of Australia. Not so
 that we lose our languages, but so that people coming home and non-Aboriginal
 people had an entry point into First Nation culture. And the idea was to create

another level of communication with us as a people. And we still retain our own dialects and languages as well. I mean, Indonesia has done it, the Māori mob have done it when they reclaimed their language. And it makes perfect sense to me. Like, if we look at New Zealand there is a whole host of people, black and white, speaking

5 language. And how awesome is that? There is TV shows with complete language that most people understand. And we can get to that point. I mean, not while I'm alive, but we could plant that seed. So I think language is -- it's like a music to the soul. It creates a gateway to who we are and who we can be. So they are the most prominent things I've done.

10

I do a bit of language work here and there, but I'm mostly guided by these absolute legends. Like people like Vicki Cousins who is also, again, one of the best possum skin cloak makers around. So you have got all these other people doing far more in language than what I can do. There is a couple of young ones too doing some

15 awesome stuff, and I get jarred up sometimes when someone speaks to me in language. I have to go and research. But, you know, I speak a fair bit of Koorie English around the house sometimes and I often tell non-Aboriginal people moom means hello.

20 **INTERVIEWER:** We have a festival to prove it.

RICHARD FRANKLAND: Yeah, Moomba.

25 **INTERVIEWER:** (Indistinct) a bit about tomorrow Australia. What does that mean? What does that look like when you talk about that concept of tomorrow Australia?

RICHARD FRANKLAND: I think if I have a non-Aboriginal brother or sister here, someone I love dearly or someone from another clan or - and if my kids or grand

30 kids were doing some type of ceremony, and their kids or grand kids were standing on the side, I would invite them to be part of the ceremony because it's not actually about exclusion. Culture shouldn't be about exclusion and it shouldn't be about people being above anyone else in any way, shape or form. And to me those kids dancing together or singing a language song together, or learning a craft together, is

35 about tomorrow Australia. It doesn't mean handing over any type of authority, it just means handing over a bit of yourself. And I think that's tomorrow Australia. I think it's about not being assimilated. I think it's about assimilating non-Aboriginal people and even ourselves into a better way. I don't want to be fighting all the time. It doesn't mean that I won't fight, it means I don't want to. But if I have to I will. And I

40 would like to fight for that. I would like to fight for a tomorrow Australia that's about us. It's the same reason why looking at the oppression of others you learn about the oppression of yourself and you learn what freedom is too.

45 **INTERVIEWER:** On a similar line, you are a proud dad and uncle and granddad.

RICHARD FRANKLAND: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What are the things that you - what are the changes that you want to see for those grand kids in the future?

5 **RICHARD FRANKLAND:** Changes for the kids and grandkids. I was never - I don't think I was ever the greatest dad, I was always away working. My advice to any dad out there is don't travel too much. Be home as much as you can, be present as much as you can. The greater good will always be needing hands. I want to see them grow up without seeing a death in custody, without seeing any oppression, with knowing what they have got in their hands so they are not thinking the grass is
10 greener. And like my dad said, you know, grow up with a good sense of right and wrong. Knowing that you will never achieve it totally, but you will achieve part of it.

I wrote something for one of my surrogate sons. I wrote: Have kind eyes so that you see others and yourself in a kind way. Have good ears so that you can listen and hear
15 the stories of others and the stories you tell yourself. Have a gentle tongue so that you tell good stories to yourself and to others, and about others. Have wise hands so you don't hurt others and you don't hurt yourself. And have a quiet spirit. Now, we never ever attain any of those because every journey to being better than you are should always be a quest. Your quest should always be to be a better person, a better
20 contributor. Having a good sense of right and wrong. That's what I would want them to know, that the quest never ends.

INTERVIEWER: I have heard you say that we are not the problem people but we are a people with a problem and that problem is colonisation. Is that - it's a framing that you are trying to switch. Why is it important to think about it in that way?
25

RICHARD FRANKLAND: When we think of - when we think of the six traumas, those traumas didn't exist prior to the cultural collision, yeah. There were other stressors but they weren't those. And the problems we live with now are about those
30 traumas. And even with trade with the Makassans and the people up Arnhem Land way, having tobacco was two or three puffs, so it wasn't abused. Having alcohol was two or three drinks, so it wasn't abused. It wasn't self-medication. Yeah. So we have had all these problems thrust upon us. We are often told we are the problem but we are not. And as much as we have a trauma deficit we also have this incredible ability
35 to be resilient and a thing called buoyancy. We bounce back from extreme traumas again and again. Not just individually but collectively. And this is quite amazing. If we actually analysed the trauma resilience we would see that we have carried the load of the problem from the dominant culture in such a dignified and amazing way. And we have done it at great personal expense. There is people out there that have
40 given their lives to First Nation affairs and continue to do so. Black and white. And they work extremely - and they lose so much along the way but they also gain so much. You know. We - like many oppressed peoples around the world, we suffer, we fall down, we get back up again and again. We rebuild. And we come out stronger and clearer and more learned than our dominant cultural colleagues' brothers and
45 sisters. And we are not the problem.

We are not a problem people, we are a people that have had many problems thrust upon us in so many different ways and we navigated in such brilliant ways. We create organisations, we create - we contribute to the cultural tapestry of the world. We are great artists, we are great voice makers. We are resilient. Trauma when it taps
 5 on our door - there is a Buddhist saying someone told me not long ago, have a cup of tea with your trauma. Yeah, a cup of tea is good. I would rather punch on with the bastard and follow it home to its mates and give it a flogging. And if it knocks me down I would like to get back up, take a few breaths and slap the bastard again. I own my traumas. I'm not always good with my ownership but I own them. And my
 10 mob, my people and our allies do the same. Be a warrior. When it slaps you down you get up and slap the bastard back.

INTERVIEWER: On a personal level, you might not like to talk about this, but all the sort of key parts of justice that you have been part of fighting for, all the kind of -
 15 the influence and the impact that your art has had in all different areas, are you proud of everything you have done?

RICHARD FRANKLAND: Pride is such a trap, isn't it. I wrote a thing called the Korreen Principles. Korreen means south wind or south mist. It has got seven points, and one of the points is to have - in the sentence after the word is about humility.
 20 And I hadn't always been good at that. Before I get on any stage or engage with people I always ask the old people to remind me why I'm here and help me to give a gift to people. And have the courage to sing or speak with wisdom and the wisdom to sing or speak with courage. And to touch one person if any at all, you know. And
 25 what happens is the pride goes to one side and you realise you are just part of many bits of the puzzle. You never get all the answers, which is okay by me. So I think letting go of pride is an important thing.

I like sitting at my veranda table, I built that with an old non-Aboriginal fella
 30 years ago, I think. And many people have sat there, good and bad people. Kids, birthdays, grand kids have sat there ordering me about. Surrogate kids. I have lost and won at that table. And of all the stages I have been on and all the things I have contributed to, I like sitting there. I have sat with mates dying of cancer. I have fallen in love at that table and out of love. I have been charged up - me and my cat Tedward
 35 Hemmingway, he was addicted to catnip and I had a bit of a bad health thing going on. We sat out there stoned under the fairy lights a bit under medicinal cannabis. That was pretty weird. But, no, I think it's - I think it's an honour to be able to contribute and not own the issue. The best thing you can do - the most powerful anyone can ever be, in my opinion, is to contribute to the creation and development
 40 of something and then give it away and walk away with a clear conscience. I like doing that.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you. It is our honour to sit and listen to your truth today. Thanks so much for sharing it.

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RICHARD FRANKLAND: I have just got one message for the mob.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, please.

RICHARD FRANKLAND: And reckon it's a simple one. With everything that's happened to us as a people it all leads to who you are now and who you can be. And
5 if you can let go of all the hate and the anger and forgive yourself, the most important thing that I ever learnt was that I like me. You like yourself and you become free. I like me and I probably love you too.

INTERVIEWER: Beautiful. Thank you.
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RICHARD FRANKLAND: Good.

INTERVIEWER: Well done.

RICHARD FRANKLAND: Whiskey anyone?
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(Richard Frankland plays guitar and sings)

RICHARD FRANKLAND: When you've got art you've got voice. With voice
20 comes freedom and with freedom comes responsibility. And you have got to ask yourself are you been responsible with our freedom?

(Sings) Hey.

(Speaks) Oscar Wilde says agitators and stirrers are a meddling bunch of people who
25 go down to -

(Sings) perfectly content levels of society and sow seeds of discontent.

(Speaks) thereby by shaping a better civilisation and humanity.
30

(Sings) which is why, why, why -

(Speaks) they are so absolutely necessary.
35

(Sings) law breaker. What laws, what laws have they broken? Law breaker, yeah,
40 yeah. Oh, what laws, what laws have they made? And do they call you those people of dispossession? Are you a healer born? Hey, soldier, soldier, soldier made. Do they call you people of dispossession with their laws they make? But are you a healer born? Hey soldier, soldier made. Hey soldier, soldier made.

(Speaks) go to Yoorrook. Tell the stories. Sing the songs. Take the pictures, make the films. Go to Yoorrook. Truth telling for all our people.

(Sings) hey. Do they call you people of dispossession with these laws they make? I
45 know you are a healer born. Hey soldier, soldier made. Hey soldier, soldier made. Oh, you are a healer born, or a soldier made. 200 years, is a long, long time. 200

years and we have been fighting all this time. 200 years for what is theirs, what is yours and mine. 200 years ain't no more crying this time. Oh, soldier, soldier, soldier, soldier made. Oh, law breaker. Laws, what laws have they made? Laws what laws have they made?

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(Speaks) a little bit rough. I sort of made a bit up in the middle for the Yoorrook mob.

INTERVIEWER: Beautiful.

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RICHARD FRANKLAND: When you've got art you've got voice. With voice comes freedom and with freedom comes responsibility. And you have got to ask yourself are you been responsible with our freedom?

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(Sings) perfectly content levels of society and sow seeds of discontent.

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45

(Speaks) a little bit rough but that will do.

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