Djinanginy Kaartdijin - leadership voices of Indigenous women

By Perpetual Private Insights
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For 2021's celebration of International Woman's Day, Perpetual was delighted to bring two young Aboriginal women together to talk about, well, all sorts of things.

Krista Dunstan is a lawyer, Air Force officer, Noongar woman and self-confessed beach bum. She has also just been appointed Investment and Trade Commissioner to the ASEAN region for the West Australian Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science & Innovation.

Taliah Payne is a Nimanbur woman, who works as a Native Title Trust Manager in Perpetual's Perth office and was heavily involved in her own family's Native Title claim.

What brought these two women together in Perth's new Boola Bardip museum (the name means Many Voices in the Noongar language and the museum has a major focus on the role of Aboriginal people in West Australian culture) was the chance to talk about life as an Aboriginal woman in 2021 and the impact some amazing Aboriginal figures have had on their lives.

Feel the fear - and do it anyway.

These are two women who have taken a whole range of opportunities to live a life that defies stereotypes. Krista has competed in Mrs Galaxy and Miss Naidoc competitions, won a

Lawyer of the Year award, served on boards and is also a writer. She lives up to the spirit of her favourite Richard Branson quote: “If someone offers you an amazing opportunity, and you’re not sure you can do it, say yes – and *then* learn how to do it.”

In addition to her experience with Perpetual, Taliah has worked in the mining industry, for an NFP and in government. She has a UWA degree majoring in fields as diverse as Industrial Relations and Anthropology.

One area that unites these two women is their belief in the strength of Aboriginal culture and identity. Amongst other international opportunities, Krista was invited to participate in an NGO delegation in Geneva talking about the UN’s Convention on the Rights of the Child. She was excited by the interest in Aboriginal culture she found in these international fora. “There’s a curiosity about our people,” she says. “And a lot of respect from other indigenous cultures for the continuation of culture we’ve had here.”

Two-way streets

In the video conversation above, and throughout their meeting, Taliah and Krista reflected on the two-sided nature of many of their interactions – whether it’s mentoring an Aboriginal woman, or philanthropic relationships, the perception that the flow is one-way needs to be challenged.

Whether you’re a mentor, an NFP or a corporate reaching out to the Aboriginal community, you have as much to gain as you have to give because the experience of Aboriginal women is so unique and diverse that anyone – and everyone - can learn from it.

As to how philanthropists can have most impact on the lives of Aboriginal women and Aboriginal communities, Krista is clear on where the focus should lie. “We know how to help our communities, how to operate at a grass roots level. But help navigating the systems and frameworks that tie us down in paper will free us up to really soar.”

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