



## Words of Wisdom on Cultural Healing from Judy Atkinson

**Re-membering** – seeing the past as a means to re-joining and becoming members of both a particular Aboriginal community and society in general (***story telling v homelessness***)

**Re-sourcing** – creating a map to find locations / situations / relationships where our people feel culturally safe (***community wealth v poverty***)

**Empowering voice** – helping people access places of cultural safety by having an effective voice (***resilience and resistance v powerlessness***)

**Re-creation** – of cultural products through various forms of creative activity such as music, film, theatre. **Craft and art (cultural expression v disorientation)**

**Dadirri – Listening to one another (The Aboriginal Way)**

**Ngangikurungkurr – Dadirri** – listening to on another in contemplation – reciprocal relationships

**Pitjantjatjara – Kulini** (listening), or **Pulgkara Kulin Tjugku** (really [deep] listening, and wanting to listen)

**Bundjalung – Gan’na** – hearing, listening, feeling thinking, understanding

**Gunmbayngirr – Junga-ngarraanga Miinggi** – hearing, learning, understanding, knowing from the heart



## What is Dadirri?

*Edited version adapted from the writings of Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr.*

*Dadirri*. A special quality, a unique gift of the Aboriginal people, is inner deep listening and quiet still awareness. *Dadirri* recognises the deep spring that is inside us. It is something like what you call contemplation.

The contemplative way of *Dadirri* spreads over our whole life. It renews us and brings us peace. It makes us feel whole again. In our Aboriginal way we learnt to listen from our earliest times. We could not live good and useful lives unless we listened.

We are not threatened by silence. We are completely at home in it. Our Aboriginal way has taught us to be still and wait. We do not try to hurry things up. We let them follow their natural course – like the seasons. We watch the moon in each of its phases. We wait for the rain to fill our rivers and water the thirsty earth. When twilight comes we prepare for the night. At dawn we rise with the sun.

We watch the bush foods and wait for them to open before we gather them. We wait for our young people as they grow, stage by stage, through their initiation ceremonies. When a relation dies we wait for long time with the sorrow. We own our grief and allow it to heal slowly. We wait for the right time for our ceremonies and meetings. The right people must be present. Careful preparations must be made.

We don't mind waiting because we want things to be done with care. Sometimes many hours will be spent on painting the body before an important ceremony.

We don't worry. We know that in time and in the spirit of *Dadirri* (that deep listening and quiet stillness) the way will be made clear.

We are like the tree standing in the middle of a bushfire sweeping through the timber. The leaves are scorched and the tough bark is scarred and burnt, but inside the tree the sap is still flowing and under the ground the roots are still strong. Like that tree we have endured the flames and we still have the power to be re-born.

Our people are used to the struggle and the long waiting. We still wait for the white people to understand us better. We ourselves have spent many years learning about the white man's ways; we have learnt to speak the white man's language; we have listened to what he had to say. This learning and listening should go both ways. We would like people in Australia to take time and listen to us. We are hoping people will come closer.

We keep on longing for the things that we have always hoped for, respect and understanding. We know that our white brothers and sisters carry their own particular burdens. We believe that if they let us come to them – if they open up their minds and hearts to us. We may lighten their burdens. There is a struggle for us, but we have not lost our spirit of Dadirri.

There are deep springs within each of us. Within this deep spring, which is the very spirit, is a sound. The sound of Deep calling to Deep. The time of re-birth is now. If our culture is alive and strong and respected it will grow. It will not die and our spirit will not die. I believe the spirit of Dadirri that we have to offer will blossom and grow, not just within ourselves, but in our whole nation.