



Dadirri: Listening to one another

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 up peace. It makes us feel whole again. In our Aboriginal way we learned to listen from our earliest times and our Elders. 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 and lives' journey.

When a relative passes away we wait for a long time with the sorrow. We own our grief and allow it to heal slowly. We wait for the right time for our ceremonies, meetings and family gatherings. 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 or preparing 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 forward 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 other cultures to understand us better. We ourselves have spent many years learning about the diverse cultural backgrounds of other people and their ways; we have learnt to speak the Australian language; we have listened to what they have said. 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 Australian 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 for rebirth is now. If our culture is alive, 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.

