

## Listen to the Wisdom

In a recent convocation, Benedictine author and theologian Joan Chittister stated, 'Don't be afraid to speak. Be afraid of what will happen to the whole truth if you don't' ([www.acccr.com.au](http://www.acccr.com.au). 02/05/2021).

We could use similar words in relation to our openness to Indigenous wisdom, 'Don't be afraid to listen. Be afraid of what will happen to the whole truth if you don't!'

The late Bob Randall, an elder of the Yankunytjatjara people from Central Australia, a singer, storyteller, community leader and 1999 NAIDOC Person of the Year shared some deep insights into his indigenous understanding of the purpose of life. He invites us to listen:

*The purpose of life is to be a part of all that there is. Everything living is our family. The trees are our family just like the kangaroos, emus and all the other animals. Growing up, our oldies used to tell us we were connected to everything else, every other living thing, and the proof of that is being alive. You're never lost and you're never, ever alone. It is my responsibility to care for everything around me. My people have a name for caring this way, we call it Kanyini. It is caring with unconditional love. You feel good when you live like this. Kanyini – which is the connectedness – has four concepts.*

1. Tjukurrpa, which is my belief system.
2. Kurunpa, which is my spirituality.
3. Ngura, which is a sense of belonging to home and land.
4. Walytja, which is my family.

*I must connect with each of these four lines to be whole. You take away my Kanyini – my life – my essence of all I am here for and I am nothing*

(Bob Randall, Resurgence & Ecologist, Issue 243, July/August 2007).

This understanding of connectedness to the land and all living creatures underpins a very different way of seeing the world. It is truly a blessing in an

age of rampant consumerism and individualism. In her reflection on Indigenous wisdom Claire Coleman warns against simplifying our embrace of indigenous wisdom:

*It would be tempting to imagine that the only skills and cultural changes needed would be to learn environmentally friendly farming techniques and ways to collect and conserve water. However, without major cultural changes these practical skills would be useless. There are major differences between the Indigenous cultures of Australia when compared to white Australia. The first of these could perhaps be called "non-greed", looking after family and even strangers and never taking more than is needed....The environment in which someone lives is not a separate thing, to Aboriginal people, but a part of the self. This makes it impossible to exploit the environment; because to harm the environment is to harm oneself*

(Indigenous Wisdom. [www.artshouse.com.au/first-nations](http://www.artshouse.com.au/first-nations)).

So how do we listen to the wisdom of Aboriginal people and their cultures? What might this look like today when we are bombarded with information through the media, on our devices, in the noise of everyday life? How can we learn from Kanyini - caring with unconditional love for all?

In the coming weeks we join in celebrating and commemorating some very significant dates:

26 May	National Sorry Day
26 May	4th Anniversary of the Uluru Statement from the Heart
27 May	1967 Referendum
27 May - 3 June	National Reconciliation Week
3 June	Mabo Day



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*We acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional owners of the lands on which our ministries exist and the Elders both past and present on whose land we walk, work and live. We support the Uluru Statement from the Heart.*

### REFLECTION

This is a truly great time to really listen to First Nations people and to give thanks for their wisdom. How can you do this in the everyday of your ministry?