

## LET'S CELEBRATE JINDI WOROBAK

In the mid 1980's, I decided to try and understand the concept of the Dreaming as closely as possible. Academic publications proved to be of little help, as they tended to be detached, esoteric ramblings about the etymology of the term. However, this did show that there were deeper layers of meaning implied. This was then reinforced by some tribal people I spoke with, who assured me that the term 'The Dreaming' was in fact 'just right'.

So, I decided to read every Dreamtime creation story I could find, and in doing so, a deeper pattern to the stories soon became apparent. All these primary creation stories began in an empty darkness in which the Spirit of All Life began to Dream, and the first Dreaming was of Fire. My first thought was – Wow this is the Big Bang, only the universe is being imagined into place by a Supreme Being.

These creation stories then all told how after Dreaming of fire, wind, rain, earth and sky, land and sea, the Spirit of All Life grew tired, but wanted the Dream to continue. So, life was sent into the Dream to make it real, and each Creator Spirit was given a piece of the Dreaming jigsaw, to guide their actions.

Then, when they had finished their work, the Creator Spirits each surrendered their Dreaming, to become the landmarks and animals we see today. Finally, the only remaining creature, with consciousness and knowledge of the Dreaming plan, was mankind. So, it is the job of mankind to protect the Dreaming by caring for the Land.

However, we cannot do this as individuals, we need to do it in ritual association with each other, and pass on the Dreaming Secrets to the next generation, so they will be prepared for their responsibilities.

In a very real way then, traditional Aboriginal thought systems hold that human perception and human ritual are important elements in defining reality. We are still connected to the original Dreaming through our own Personal Dreaming and just like the Spirit of All Life imagined the world into place, so human consciousness and ritual holds reality in place. Aboriginal people were the first post-modern thinkers.

In this vein, many Aboriginal people have over the years expressed to me, the idea that 'there is a ritual answer to every problem'. This idea is well illustrated by how, in traditional culture, inter-tribal disputes were prevented from spiralling out of control.

For instance, if the traditional 'payback' system continued to escalate and aggravate tensions between two tribes, the respective Elders from the tribes would meet and agree on a ritual resolution. This was known in some languages as 'Jindy Worobak', which means 'Come together after a dispute'. Makarrata means the same thing.

The ceremony agreed on might or might not include a time-limited ceremonial fight between the tribes, but it would certainly include ceremonial healing and cultural

exchanges. This included speeches, ritual smoking, dance performances and games. The point was that after the ceremonial resolution, all further payback was strictly forbidden, and any breach was subject to immediate and drastic punishment by one's own tribe.

The point I am leading to is, why not adopt the Jindy Worobak approach and create a special ceremonial event, in which all Australians could 'Come together after a dispute' and make it a 'National Day of Healing'?

Such a day might for instance start with a 'Sorry Time Speech' by an Aboriginal Elder, which would highlight the historical issues behind the dispute. This could then be followed by a traditional Aboriginal Smoking Ceremony in which all attendees would in turn ritually cleanse themselves, by bathing in the smoke.

After this, there could then be cultural exchanges, in which for instance, various ethnic groups within the community could perform and teach their traditional dances. It would of course also be entirely appropriate to end such an event with a traditional Australian barbeque.

The only question remaining would be - What particular date would be the most symbolic, on which to hold a series of ceremonies across the country, where all Australians could come together after a dispute? What actual date could best serve to recognise our past difficulties, and become a new day of national healing, when we could all move forward together as Australians?

Well, I have just had a random thought. Why not put aside January the twenty-sixth each year and celebrate it as Australia's Jindy Worobak Day? Local Councils around Australia could even lead the way. Councils are uniquely well-placed to coordinate the contributions of local Aboriginal and ethnic groups. They are also best placed to include a Citizenship Ceremony as part of a National Day of Unity.

As my Aboriginal friends have always said, there is a ritual answer to every problem. So, if Australia Day is a problem, why not make it the answer?