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Photograph: Living in the Future Films

Deep Listening: *Dadirri*

REVIEW

A Living in the Future Film, by Helen Iles

Review by Melissa Coffey

How do we listen more deeply to one another? How do we do this in community, even when our opinions conflict, in order to agree on a path of action that moves a community forward?

In this powerfully reflective documentary film, director Helen Iles visits with seven 'intentional communities' across Australia. Interweaving a series of interviews and interesting footage, the film gently draws out common themes between diverse approaches to creating a more authentic sense of community than what our contemporary, increasingly urban, consumerist-driven society often offers.

Despite differences, what underpins all seven of these

communities, in their individual visions, is a connection to and concern for the natural environment they have built their communities within. Iles draws this theme out through capturing evocative glimpses of surrounding nature, exploring the communities' permaculture sites, and documenting some of the history of environmental activism, initiated by some of these intentional communities in their formative years. The film's attention to history makes it clear – intentional communities are not merely some ephemeral eco-trend – some of the featured communities have been in existence for 40 years.

'*Dadirri*', from the film's name, is an indigenous word from the area of the Daly River, Northern Territory. Meaning 'deep listening', it entails a way of respectful listening, not just with our ears but with our eyes and our hearts. Developing *dadirri*, like the Buddhist practice of mindfulness, allows one to tune into oneself, to other people and to the environment.

Although these communities are not necessarily adopting *dadirri* with deliberate awareness of it as an indigenous practice, what the film highlights is that any community that desires to care for the surrounding natural environment, and to develop more inclusive decision-making for its members, inevitably embodies this principle.

As one of the interviewees reminds us, the indigenous people of Australia did not consider this land a 'wilderness' – it was their home. Like any home, it required care and management. And in caring for home and country, as indigenous elder, Aunty Doris Paton points out, the concept of *dadirri* was essential. In knowing "when the birds come, the flowers blossom, the rivers flow", tribes could not only serve the land but also let the land serve them, making better decisions for their communities about when to hunt, where to set up camp, when to move on.

The intentional communities all

share a similar commitment to the environment and to each other, often with humility and humour – which I found extremely moving. They do not say it is easy. Although they do, unfailingly, say it is worthwhile.

Deep Listening: Dadirri presents many ideas and insights that are pertinent to any community-building initiative – be that in schools, neighbourhoods or organisations. It also shows us a way of living that is an antidote to many of the ills of contemporary life. Managing to avoid the obviously didactic, this film is instead thoughtful, gently provocative and insightful.

As the viewer journeys with this film, stepping into a number of homes and communal spaces, the theme of listening gradually emerges as a compelling motif. The more the viewer listens, the more one hears about the importance of active and authentic listening. Deep listening: to each other and to the land. ●

Further Information:

Deep Listening: Dadirri will be screened at CERES Community



A beloved milking cow at the Dharmananda community.

Environment Park, Brunswick East, on Friday 24th April 7-9pm. Q+A with Elder Dr Doris Paton and Director Helen Iles.

Tickets:

<http://www.trybooking.com/Booking/BookingEventSummary.aspx?eid=124711>

For full details of upcoming events:

<http://livinginthefuture.org>

Melissa Coffey is a freelance writer and published author. She writes across several genres, around themes of feminism, sexuality, wellbeing and spirituality. Melissa writes online for 'Stress Panda' and her work has featured in the literary journal 'Etchings'. Her short story 'Motherlines' was published in the Australian anthology 'Stew and Sinkers' (2013). Find her on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/MelissaCoffey.CuriousSeeds.Comms?ref=hl>



'Dadirri' is all about 'deep listening'.

Photograph: Living in the Future Films

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