

CHAPTER ONE

HEALING

YUIN NATION ◦ **Max Dulumunmun Harrison**



My Aboriginal name is Djarla Dulumunmun. My nation totem of the Yuin people is the Black Duck. I am a Yuin man, an Aboriginal of this land. When I think of that word reconciliation, I know it's a falseness. I know it's a lie to the people that call themselves Australians, that word has been put to the ears of these people. There can be no reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people of this land because there has never been a partnership in the first place to reconcile about. So how can this word *reconciliation* come about and bring people together, that is the sad part. So I take this word *reconciliation* and I use it to reconcile people back to Mother Earth, so that they can walk this land together and heal one another because she's the one that gives birth to everything we see around us, everything we need to survive.

2 ELDERS

That's why people must start respecting Mother Earth for what she really is. She's not a plot that people think they can buy and own, she's not something that we can take to the grave. And we say we own it—this is crazy, this concept of ownership. I'm here to teach people let's reconcile with the Mother, with Mother Earth. If we can reconcile with the Mother, then we can breathe the air and walk together in harmony. Every part of this land is sacred: this teaching is the most important part of our survival. It's our home, we live here together. This is reconciliation, to look each other in the eye and know this equally.

KNOWING SORRY

Sorry's got to come from the spirit and heart. It will have to come from there, and the genuine concern to the atrocities of the Aboriginal people of this land. I cannot speak for and on behalf of Australians because I'm not Australian—I'm a Yuin, and no one is going to take my birthright away from me by saying I'm Australian, that's still an adopted thing to me. I can adopt other things, like being able to drive a motor car, live in a house with electricity, wear shoes, but my birthright and my

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-53924-1 - Elders: Wisdom from Australia's Indigenous Leaders

Mandawuy Yunupingu and Lowitja O'Donoghue

Excerpt

[More information](#)

HEALING 3

naming of my birthright I will not adopt, because I would feel that I'm just adopted to this country by being an Australian. I am Yuin and I'll stay Yuin, and that's that healing thing for me there, staying true to my culture, staying true to my beliefs.

The only way I can see the non-Indigenous person making amends is by walking the land with Aboriginal people and understanding their spirituality to the land; understanding why a tree is important, why a tree is sacred; understanding why the rivers and the waters became sacred; understanding why the wind is sacred; understanding all the animals that they share this planet with.

Knowing the Aboriginal totem, if they know the totems in the area they can respect those animals, and by knowing these animals you begin to know the Aboriginal way. It's the heart-sorry and not the head-sorry that would mean a lot and heal people.

By walking hand in hand and listening to the sacred text of the land, the sacred text is every facet of the land, the story of the land, every dreaming of the land. A text is a story, a dreaming! It's the same as the text that white man brings to us in a bible, if you can put it into those Christian terms. I believe that's where something went wrong because Christianity is man-made, spirituality is god-given.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-53924-1 - Elders: Wisdom from Australia's Indigenous Leaders

Mandawuy Yunupingu and Lowitja O'Donoghue

Excerpt

[More information](#)

4 ELDERS

THE ROCK

I woke up from a meditation up here on the rock as Grandfather was coming up. Grandfather warming me up. I must have fell asleep all night. So I came down from my spot in the rocks and gave my thanks to the old people, spirit people. Then I thought, how long was I there? But it doesn't matter that I was there a long time, it mattered that I got answers; got healed. I was there until the third day.

THE TREE

Just through these trees we have healing through these dry bits of wood. Dry, I never said dead, because when we take that so-called dead tree and we light it, what we're doing is bringing it back to life. And when those coals are lit, or even cold and put back in the fire, and if you think they're dead, you go pick those coals out of that fire. If I asked you to, you would think I'm crazy.

OUR WORLD WITHIN THE UNIVERSE

What's there in the universe and our world within the universe? We have Mother Earth, the one that births everything for us. The food, all the material things we see around us, is what she births.

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-53924-1 - Elders: Wisdom from Australia's Indigenous Leaders
Mandawuy Yunupingu and Lowitja O'Donoghue
Excerpt
[More information](#)



Totem Rock

6 ELDERS

Then there is Father Sky: he holds the stories of the planetary system up there, he holds the oxygen for us to breathe and also carries the water for us to drink. And Grandfather Sun, he's the old fella that grows the plants and feeds that Mother Earth that births for us; he brings out the flowers, the honeys.

Then there's Grandmother Moon: Now Grandmother Moon has got a wonderful concept of rebirthing, and birthing laws also, and she's the one that comes into the flesh woman time when Grandmother Moon goes from one-quarter, one-half, three-quarters, full moon. She's the one that can turn the ocean, lift the great expanse of waters on this planet. Man is woman first before they become men, in their mother's womb. They are woman first, so they got to start respecting the woman, because if they don't do that, how can they respect their Mother and Mother Earth. So get out of the head-stuff and get into the heart—into the spirit. Be the link in that family unit.

MEN'S AND WOMEN'S BUSINESS

Men's and women's business is also very healing to both parties. The separation of man and woman can happen because when they do there's also a union there. Learn to be respectful when

they're on that separate business. That man should start thinking about that woman and her needs—the same of the children's needs. The man should then, in his men's business thing, share all that with his mates, share all that with his family males, his family men. And not to abuse the system and have that as an excuse to get away and have more men's business. That's then dodging responsibility—he'll never go home! The only time he'll want to go home is when there's sex. You see it's always good to talk out your stuff. Don't keep it in, just let it out; you never ever leave a fester, you squeeze it out, or put a leaf on it and draw it out, or you put on grass and draw it out. So the way you bring that out is by talking it out, a very good healing therapy for that male and the woman too.

Men, they got to learn to shed tears, because tears were meant to be shed and they're human after all, they're human. Men need to show emotion. After all they did it when they were a baby, they cried for food, they cried to be picked up and sung to. The man needs to do some nurturing by nurturing his family, and in return he is nurtured. Healing is so important and how we heal.

One of the dreams we can share would be how we can heal the world and how would we go about that. If we had all the world leaders in one specific place, some tranquil valley where

8 ELDERS

these world leaders would be and no weapons and no fear of attack or assassination, and have some of the Aboriginal Elders to come in and talk and address these world leaders in these tranquil settings and let them take this in; and push that image there to the rest of the world, show them all the tranquillity, show them the virgin law of that land, let them be a part of it. At these great gatherings with these world leaders, they must step out of the ego and into the spirit and listen. One thing is for sure, we all breathe the same air, we all drink the same water. This is the message for everyone and to everyone!

The planet is okay—this planet will get rid of all the parasites. And the parasites are us, it's the human parasites that's causing all the destruction and not letting the planet heal. That earthquake is the planet saying look out, look out. Man has got to cleanse himself, man has got to heal himself, not with medicines but to heal himself spiritually. They must learn to heal spiritually—by bushwalking—watching the waters—listening to the wind—hear the bird sing—watching the antics of the animals, watching the birth of a flower. If we heal ourselves, then we won't have to destroy the planet, because we will be part of it.

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-53924-1 - Elders: Wisdom from Australia's Indigenous Leaders
Mandawuy Yunupingu and Lowitja O'Donoghue
Excerpt
[More information](#)



Max Harrison, homeland

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-53924-1 - Elders: Wisdom from Australia's Indigenous Leaders
Mandawuy Yunupingu and Lowitja O'Donoghue

Excerpt

[More information](#)



LEFT TO RIGHT: Eileen Unkari Crombie,
Eileen Kampakuta Brown, Eileen Wani Wingfield