CAMBRIDGE

Paper Dreaming

Our stories, our way

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Compiling Editor

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UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Please be aware that this publication may contain images of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples now deceased. Several variations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander terms and spellings may also appear; no disrespect is intended. Please note that the terms 'Indigenous Australians' and 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' may be used interchangeably in this publication.

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To the knowledge keepers
storytellers
explorers
and
survivors.
We are the embodiment of creation.

This is for you.

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Acknowledgements

I want to acknowledge all of the communities from which our writers come, and which they call home, as well as their friends and families, their schools and teachers for providing valuable support and encouragement.

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– Lorna Munro

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Preface

The writers who have contributed to *Paper Dreaming* come from all over the country – from Kununurra to Sydney, Queensland and beyond. Our young people and old people have much knowledge to communicate, and the perspectives that we share are the embodiment of the trans-generational interconnectedness of creation in this country. We are home to the birthplace of life as we know it on this earth, and we represent our ancestors and future descendants – no pressure, right?

During the time *Paper Dreaming* was being compiled, the Western Australian government approved the closure of 150 of the state's 270 remote communities. The majority of these are located in the Kimberley.

On the east coast of Australia, we have had mass sit-ins and Aboriginal grandmothers from around the country protesting against another stolen generation, with alarming rates of Aboriginal children in state care rising every day. Welcome to the disappearing generation.

Today, the majority of the Aboriginal population is under the age of 30. These young people are not represented on TV; they are lacking important health services, educational opportunities and access to resources; they are suffering from dispossession, colonisation and thoughts of suicide and self-harm.

We are the descendants of warriors and leaders, who have learnt to raise their voices and tell their stories *their* way. Mainstream Australia will never know how valuable it is to have a voice and to be heard until their voice has been taken away from them in every sense.

The young people who have written for this publication are the next generation of voices that shall ring across the land. These are our stories, told our way.

Maya Angelou says that 'people may not remember what you said, they may not remember what you did, but they will never forget the way you made them feel'.

I hope this book elicits emotions, experiences and memories, and that it will provide lessons for those of us who need it.

– Lorna Munro

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About the Compiling Editor

Lorna Munro is a multi-disciplinary artist who works in visual arts, poetry, performance, language and writing. She is also an educator and broadcaster, and an emerging playwright and set designer. She has been an active member of her community since the age of 13.

This dynamic 26-year-old proud Wiradjuri/Gamilaroi woman calls the Redfern/Waterloo area of inner-city Sydney home. She honours her teachers and elders by passing on what she was taught, and she is currently developing and facilitating art/poetry programs and tours interpreting the history of her local area with young people, along with her work with The Red Room Company.

Lorna has been strongly influenced and nurtured by her activist parents, and mentored by many other members of the Black Power Movement, whom she affectionately refers to as her Aunties and Uncles. She acknowledges the privileged education she has received.

She is an emerging artist with a growing profile, having had work shown in Boomali's 2010 exhibition *Celebrating 25 Years of Strength*, and designed and produced set design and installation pieces for The Belvoir Theatre's production of *Don't Take Your Love to Town*, adapted and directed by Leah Purcell and Eamon Flack, and based on the autobiographical book of the same title written by Ruby Langford Ginibi.

Some of Lorna's work includes TV and film, appearing in the ABC's *Australia on Trial* (2012), *The Years That Made Us* (2013), *Redfern Now* (2012) and *Redfern Now II* (2013). She has also worked with some of the world's greatest poets and MCs, collaborating on such projects as *The Invasion Day Mixtape 2013* and *2014*, and has had poetry and performances featured in the Sydney Writers Festival in 2012, 2013 and 2014, Corroboree 2014 and Yabun 2015.

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Caught!

Elizabeth Morgan

'Whatcha doin'?'

Pauline jumped as the voice suddenly cut through the scrub, and she peeped around the trunk of the billy-goat plum under which she'd been sitting. Her rounded lips twisted into a mischievous grin as she saw her sister sliding down the rocky hill to her left.

'Nothin'. Just watching for goanna.'

The thin girl regarded her from a distance, her hand on her hips. 'Gammon you watchin' for goanna; there's no goanna in that tree.' Her voice carried through the air clearly. Pauline got up and dusted the seat of her shorts.

'I was waiting for you to see if we could go looking.'

Glenda pursed her lips, considering. Then she shook her head. 'Nah. There won't be any goanna around now. We've gotta look after Ben, anyway.'

A 5-year-old boy appeared at the top of the hill behind her. Pauline wrinkled her nose.

Ben suddenly started down the shoulder of the hill and caught his foot on a stone. It sent him rolling down the hill and both girls sprang forward instinctively. Glenda reached him before he had gone very far and he fetched up against her brown legs, looking dazed. She swung him onto her hip and brushed the dirt from his cheek.

'You right, bub?'

'Yeah – I'm bleeding, but.' He displayed an elbow grazed from the gravel and inspected it with interest. Pauline stood by, regarding the child's injuries with as much curiosity as he had. She swiftly licked a thumb and rubbed the cut.

'You won't have a scar from that one.'

Ben looked disappointed. Pauline flicked a strand of hair from her eyes and glanced around at the plume of white smoke rising from behind the hills where the fire crews were monitoring a grass fire on the other side of the road.

'I don't think that's gonna move very far; I reckon we should go down to the creek.'

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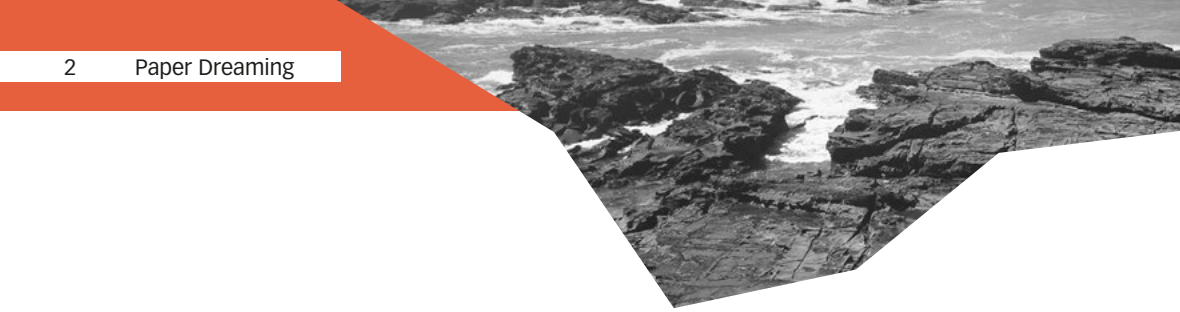

Glenda followed her gaze. 'Yeah. It'll be cooler down there, too.'

The three scuffled along the wallaby track towards the line of trees not far away, which marked the bank of the creek. The long grass rustled in a breeze that had sprung up, and the dry dust underfoot showed the marks of even the smallest insect. Meat ants scurried between the stones.

The ground sloped downwards, into the trees and bamboo on the river's edge. Pauline tugged Ben's sleeve as they stepped across the muddy ground.

'Look, budder – what made them marks?'

Ben shoved a thumb into his mouth as he considered the print his sister had uncovered in the leaf litter.

'Buff'lo,' was the laconic reply. Glenda kissed the curly head briefly in approval and flashed a smile at Pauline. She led them to the edge of the waterhole and peered down.

'Reckon there's crocodile in there?' Pauline asked.

Glenda stuck her bottom lip out and shrugged. Her eyes wandered along the bank, looking for any signs that one of the reptiles was lurking in the brown water.

'Dunno. I wouldn't swim now – can't see the bottom. It was running last week.'

Pauline glanced back the way they had come, towards the saddle where they always crossed the hills from the road to get to the creek. The smoke was coming down the gully now, and the girl bit her lip.

'It's raining ash,' she commented. Glenda looked up at her, then at the sky. Her brow furrowed.

'The wind's changed,' she said. She too looked back up in the direction of the track. The smoke was getting thicker, and she shifted Ben to her other hip.

'Reckon it's jumped?' Pauline asked.

'Nah. I don't think it will jump the road. But we should go back, anyway.'

They turned and began to head back. They had not gone far when Glenda stopped, uncertain.

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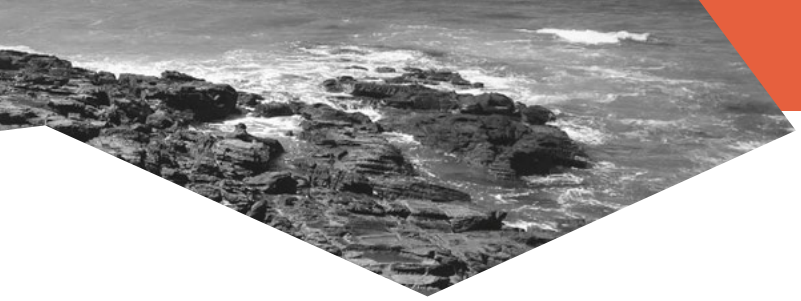

'I think it's jumped,' she murmured. The two girls listened, catching the sound of crackling wood and hot air through the thickening smoke. 'We should go back, see if we can cross the creek anywhere.'

Silently, they turned again to the waterhole and began to make their way down along the edge of the river. Usually they didn't go far beyond the long stretch of water that was the swimming hole; the bush was overgrown with bamboo and creepers further down, and mosquitos whined as they searched for bare skin.

The girls stepped carefully but quickly, eyes open for any dangerous ground. Glenda also kept one eye on the water, wary of the unknown territory. She let Ben slip to the ground, but kept fast hold of his hand as they moved on; the little boy wanted to run ahead, tugging on her hand. Her sister was walking on a little way in front, unencumbered.

Pauline was enjoying her tramp in the bush. She watched the ground as she walked: the different plants whose root systems intertwined to make the soft matting that formed the floor. Carpentaria palms made a sponge-like mat, oozing mud-coloured water. The gums and other trees created raised ridges under a shallow layer of mud, with squelching dips in between, capturing the story of passing animals easily through their spoors.

They had walked almost to the railway line, a kilometre from where they had started, before they found a suitable place to cross. Until then, the creek had been relatively narrow – if they had wanted to swim – but the dark still water made all three of them uncertain. Here the creek was only knee-deep, and the tannin-stained water was almost golden in the late afternoon sun. Glenda picked Ben up and waded across after Pauline, slipping up the muddy north bank. They walked through the pandanus into the open grassland, and both girls looked up towards the sun. It had turned blood red, and through the screen of smoke it was possible to see the yellow corona rimming it.

'Come on, we'll go back up to the road.' Glenda led the way, with Ben and Pauline trailing along in her wake.

The track on this side of the creek was well worn along the bank,

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by virtue of the kids living in the house on the property – this bank was privately owned land. Ben ran ahead after a while, bored with being carried all afternoon, and Pauline raced to keep him close. Their older sister moved more slowly. Walking towards the fire was harder, as the smoke billowed around and through boulders and stands of trees. Pauline's eyes were streaming from the smoke and Ben began to cough slightly. When they reached the swimming hole, Glenda stopped the boy and quickly pulled his shirt off over his head.

'Here, bub,' she smiled as she dipped the material into the water and wrung it out. 'Hold this up. It'll stop you breathing the smoke in.'

'I'm alright,' he insisted, but held it to his nose and mouth anyway. 'Can we go back?'

Glenda shook her head and pursed her lips in the direction of Pauline, who had kept walking. 'Nah, we hafta keep up with Paulie. And the smoke won't be bad close to the fire.'

Ben skipped to catch up with his sister and slipped a grubby hand into hers. The road was not far away now and they could hear the flames eating at the scrub ahead. Something soft and cold suddenly flopped against his bare foot, and he gripped Glenda's hand and nearly pushed her over as he instinctively recoiled. Pauline stopped and glanced down.

'It's a cane toad,' Ben mumbled, somewhat surprised at the sudden appearance of the amphibian in the open.

'An' there's another one, budder.'

Ben looked in the direction where she had nodded, and became aware of more animals moving west towards the afternoon sun – lizards, toads, grasshoppers, a doe with her joey; he even glimpsed a brown snake slithering past a bush rat.

'They're all getting away from the fire,' Pauline explained. 'Look, there's the road.'

Ben looked, but he couldn't see past the tall brown grass that reached over his sister's head. 'How do you know?'

'Because of all the hawks. They're eating lizards and stuff that are crossing the road.'

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For the first time, Ben noticed the dozen or more kites hovering and stooping on the thermals caused by the fire. In the heat and smoke, they seemed majestic and surreal. He shivered. Pauline glanced back down the track as Glenda came round the bend. The older girl waved them forward, and she tugged at Ben's hand.

'Come on,' she urged, 'We'll beat Glenda!'

The two broke into a slow trot, covering the few metres to the edge of the tall grass in a matter of seconds. They suddenly came into the firebreak along the side of the road and Ben's eyes widened as he saw flames licking the trees in front of him. Glenda had been right: the hot air was pushing the smoke upwards, leaving clear air at its front.

Close to the road, it was easy to see the insects and other creatures scurrying across the bitumen, and the pair marvelled at the way the kites flew in to snatch their prey from the hot road. Glenda's feet crunched the short, dry grass as she joined them on the verge and the three gazed in silence at the spectacle. The fire crews were on a service road behind the fire's leading edge, fighting the fire from its north and south frontiers. The girls could see glimpses of red through the scrub, but could hear no sound above the roar of the flames.

A ute kitted out with a water tank and hoses turned onto the main road from the service road. Glenda and Pauline stepped back, pulling their little brother with them, but the vehicle slowed as it approached and stopped beside them. The man in the front passenger seat put the window down, and the driver leaned over to see them more clearly. He raised an eyebrow at the three children and pursed his lips. Pauline grinned back sheepishly.

'Hello, Uncle David.'

The man jerked a thumb towards the back seat as his eyes twinkled at her.

'Get in,' he commanded, and Glenda hurriedly pushed her younger siblings into the cab. He watched in the mirror as they buckled themselves in and pulled out onto the road.

'You do know there's a fire just there, don't you?'

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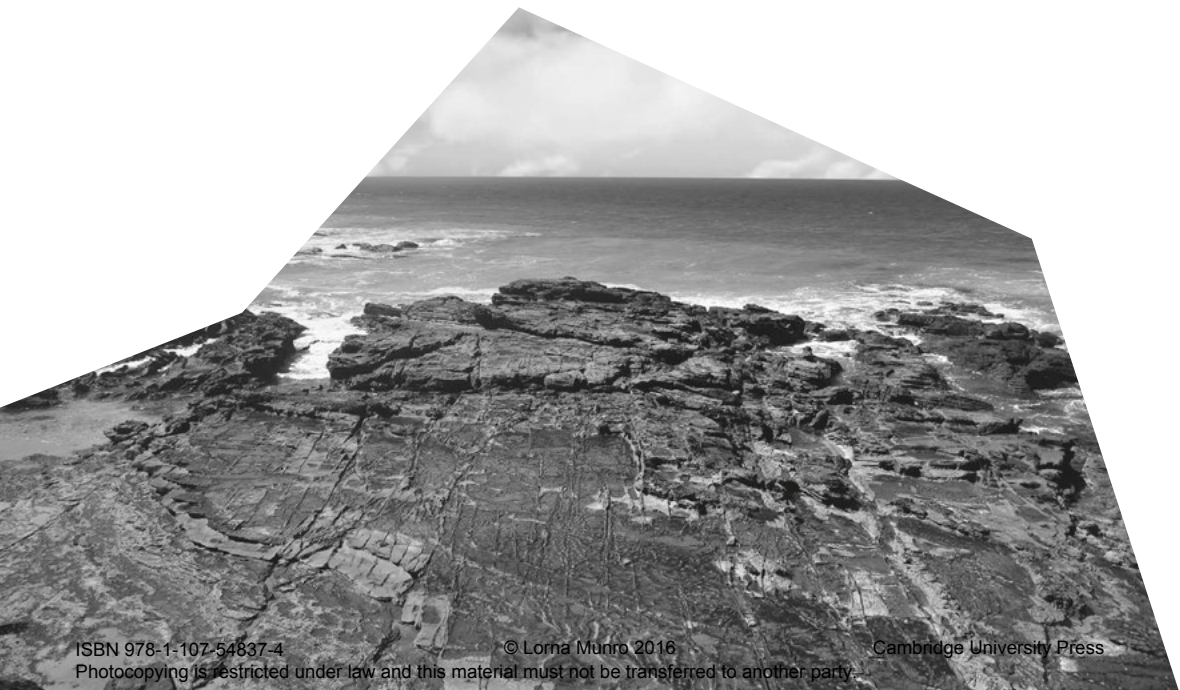
Glenda nodded. 'We were at the creek – it was all safe.'

Their uncle glanced quizzically at her. 'Maybe.'

He turned into a second service road and pulled to a stop beside a fire truck. 'We've still got work to do.'

Dave's partner got out and began to pull the hoses off the ute tray. As he walked past to join him, Dave drummed on Glenda's door and opened it. He winked at Ben and leaned over to ruffle his hair, then tossed his phone into Glenda's lap.

'Ring your mother.' He paused and regarded each of them with amusement. 'And stay put!'



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My Community Blackout

Samantha Martin

One beautiful night after dinner at Doon Doon Station, everything was amazing. The food and the sound of the silent night. Doon Doon Station is about 110 kilometres south of Kununurra. This story took place in the cold season. Doon Doon Station is in the East Kimberley region of Western Australia. It's rugged country, with outcrops of rocks and spinifex.

That night I fell asleep. I could feel the coldness from the air-conditioning on my cheek. After that feeling, I fell deep into sleep. Long after I fell asleep, I felt restless and stuffy. The air-conditioning went off, so I got up and discovered the power was out. The house was in darkness and silence. I couldn't see a thing. Everything was black. I was scared.

I thought, 'What if my grandparents went to turn on the power and just left me sleeping?' I thought this first. I yelled out 'Nan … Grandpa?' But there was no answer, and I got even more scared. All I could hear was the sound of frogs. What if something from my Dreaming story came out and tried to take me away?

Then all of a sudden, I heard a sound. A car door shut. I listened to see whether I could hear a second door shut and whether it was my grandmother's, but I didn't hear anything. So I closed my eyes really tight with my hands over them and sat on the floor.

I didn't hear our front door open and then I heard, 'Sam?' I opened my eyes and saw the brightness from a torch. It was my grandfather. My grandfather is special because he can do things other people can't do, like knowing what you're feeling even when you don't show it. I'm glad my grandfather shone the torch on me. I'm glad it wasn't something else.

That night we had to sleep outside because it was too hot in the house. It was beautiful but we had no power. The people from the other end told us late that night. After they told us that, they went up to the shop and told them to call Kununurra and tell them that we'd lost all power in the community.

The next day we still had no power. A new power generator was coming on the truck. We thought, 'Stuff waiting – let's go out bush and let's go fishing.' So we got the troopy ready and went down to the river.

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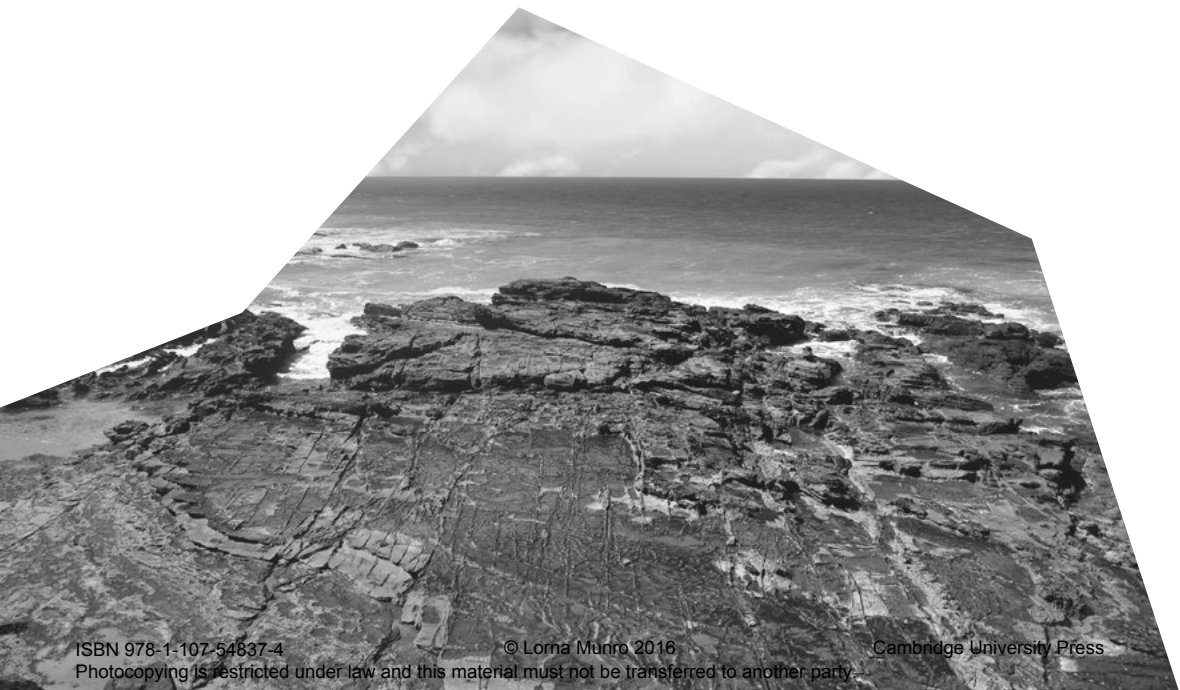
Down at the river, my grandmother made damper (bread) with flour and water, and she put it on the fire coals. My grandfather unpacked the car and I got the fishing lines ready for fishing. I was the first to throw a line in the water. I love feeling the fish bite and pull, but my grandmother was the first to catch a fish and my grandfather was the second and I was last, because I don't have patience. We caught about 11 fish, we cooked them and then we started packing the troopy to go back home.

On the way home, we got bogged in the sand – we have sand just like the beach out there but the river sand is way better. My grandfather got us out of the sand and we drove home.

Driving through the community, I stuck my head out the window and my great-grandmother yelled from her porch, 'We got power!' I told my grandparents and we were all happy. 'Yesssss,' I said. 'Can't wait to sleep in my room.'

I slept well that night with the air-conditioning on.



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My Country
Ranahl Yungabun

My country is the Great Sandy Desert. I was born in Derby and I live in a small community called Djugerari. I lived there all my life, up until when I moved to Broome to go to high school. There are lots of good places that you can go hunting and there are lots of small creeks that are created in the wet season. There are also some Dreaming stories about my country that explain when people and animals came from the desert and two hills, called the Two Sisters.

Dreaming story

A long time ago in the Dreaming, a big giant goanna came from the desert. He was followed by two young girls. They walked for days until they came to a big billabong called Jiljardee. When the big goanna went into the water, it killed the two girls. When you go there now and the water is low you can see two white rocks. They are the two girls who were killed by the goanna. It killed them because they went into the water. The people think that the big goanna is still in that big billabong.

Wet season

My country has lots of hills all around and lots of underground fresh water (*Jumu*). In the wet season, the land turns green and gets flooded everywhere; when you go hunting, you can find lots of goanna tracks in the mud. There are also two rivers that we need to worry about. One is Salty Creek and the other is Christmas Creek. There are lots of types of bush food that you can find everywhere and lots of plants that you can use for medicine and other leaves that you can get from the trees.

When it rains, it gets very cold at night. In the morning, there are also some small waterfalls near the hills. In the dry season, it's hard to find water and the bush animals like to live near water, like dams and small creeks.

Not many stay in that community now. Most of the people have moved into town because they like to get drunk. We only go there for shopping and for work. Our community has drinking restrictions: if you

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drink or take drugs there they will have a big community meeting and you'll get kicked out of the community.

Hunting

The best time to go out hunting is around midday. This is because the animals like to stay in the shade. Bush turkeys can't fly when it's hot because they need to stay cool. You can't find emus because they live far away, the same goes for camels. There are lots of human-made dams for cattle. There are lots of sand hills on the other side of the hills. You can find lots of small goannas here. When you go for a drive at night you can find small kangaroos. They like to hang around the road at night. When I go for a drive at night time in the car, I run them over and take them back for the dogs to eat.

The hills near our community are good to climb because you can see how beautiful the land is, especially when the sun is going down and the colour of the sunset – you can see the station and other tanks that reflect from the sunset, and the colour of the land is green and orange. Sometimes when we get bored we go swimming at the dam. We always take the little kids. Every morning when we wake up, we go straight to work. We fix cars, garden and clean up around the house or the community. There are some empty houses in Djugerari. We always keep the community clean, and try to keep drugs and alcohol out.

My mum and dad used to live in the community, but they had a family fight a long time ago. They moved to Wangkatjunka. I stayed at Djugerari with my uncle. I only go to Wangkatjunka on the holidays. Now Mum and Dad are living in Fitzroy Crossing. In my family, I've got two older sisters – Sarita Thomas (step-sister), Dannika Yungabun and two younger brothers – Keanu and Jade.

Every time when I go into town I stay with my mum. My dad has been in jail five times because of fighting with people. It doesn't make me feel worried. Sometimes on the holidays we go out camping, fishing and hunting near the river.

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Wet

Before the rain comes, all the goannas bury themselves underground. When the rain stops, all the frogs cry because they want the rain to come back. You can hardly sleep because they cry every night and even through the day.

When the rain comes, the land gets filled with water – even the dams – and lots of ducks fly around everywhere. When the rain passes, we drive to the lookout and take photos of the lightning. Sometimes the flood blocks us so a helicopter brings food for the people when they have no food. We always go swimming at the river when the road is good to drive on, or we go shooting for ducks or pigs.

Dry

In the dry season when you burn grass, lots of turkeys come looking for small insects like grasshoppers. Every wet season, the road gets ruined because people like to drive on it when it's wet. The only time the road gets fixed is when it's dry because it's easy to drive on. On one of the hills, there's a figure of my grandfather riding a horse.

When I'm at home at Djugerari, I feel happy. I can go anywhere and I'm close to my family. I can speak a little bit of the language. I can understand it. One day in the future, I want to be the chairperson (boss of the community) for my community and have a good family. The reason I want to become a chairperson is because I would like to get the little shop working again and a store load coming twice a week, all the trucks and tractors fixed, get two community Toyotas, make a new playground, fix the basketball court, put grass on the oval and try to make the people come back to Djugerari, and ask some people to work on the station.

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The Best Rain, the Worst Flood

Samantha Martin

One day it was very hot in Warmun (Turkey Creek) in the East Kimberley of Western Australia. The sun was so hot that it made the ground steamy when my grandmother was watering it. My grandmother is a very strong person: she is the motivator in my family and she makes everything so easy. My feelings for my grandmother are unexplainable. I love her.

My grandmother didn't have to water the ground any longer. We suddenly heard thunder, and saw dark clouds and flashes of lightning. My grandmother and I saw lots of raindrops approaching fast – they were coming closer every time we blinked. It was like the storm was travelling at the speed of a blink, each time I closed my eyes. Then the rain hit fast, and as it landed on our skin it would sting really hard. The sun was blocked out by the dark clouds and we knew a big rain was coming.

The smell of the rain on the dirt ground was so fresh. Trust me, the smell would make you want to eat the dirt off the ground, it smelt so good!

Everyone in my community was so happy when that rain came. It was a beautiful sight, and everyone came outside and played in the rain. That's when I realised I have the most beautiful family, friends and country. This made me think to myself, 'I don't want to leave this behind and if I do, I want to be able to come back to that same moment and take in the last smell of the air, the last sight that I see and the last sounds that I hear and I will never forget them.' This is where I belong and I'm so proud of where I'm from.

That night, when the sun fell, I couldn't sleep because the rain, lightning and thunder kept me up. I went outside to see how far the water came up. It was right under our verandah! I went to wake my family up because I was curious about this rain, so my family and I stayed up all night to watch that water. It was like we were on night patrol, watching the water rise up and go back down. We stayed up all night until morning. It started raining again in the morning, but even harder. The dirty, muddy, murky water came inside the house. We stacked everything, but the water kept on rising. It was scary and I felt unsafe.

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We called the police, who were based in Kununurra. My grandfather said, 'We need to be evacuated because our community is going to be under water.' Just before being evacuated, we had all sorts of animals coming into our house, like snakes, lizards, frogs and other animals that we don't usually see, or else they'll only come out at a certain time. All the little kids in our community were swimming in the water, and trees and branches were breaking and flowing in the flood. We were at a very high level of risk – there were dangers lurking in the water like very hungry crocodiles. I felt scared and I was in shock – I didn't know how to deal with this danger, but there was no way to deal with it.

Later that day, time flew like it had wings. The water level changed, and the next thing we knew we were running for the hills and standing on top of our roofs. It was ridiculous but funny at the same time, and it was also raining on us. I was laughing because it was very weird – it's not often that you see everyone on the roofs of their houses, especially in the Kimberley, where it's usually dry.

Then all of a sudden we heard helicopters. All the people who were at a high level of risk had to be evacuated first. As we were getting into the helicopters, I thought to myself, 'Can this get any worse?' When we were in the sky looking down the houses, it made me feel sad. We watched the water as it changed its flow.

We were evacuated to Kununurra. In Kununurra, we had to stay out of town in some dongas. We called this place 'Village' because it was like a little village. As we stayed there, we got three meals every day for a year until we went back home to Warmun. The food was good but I think the rain had followed us to Kununurra, like it was angry at someone or something, because it struck a light pole that was near a donga. The bang was very loud – it deafened our ears and vibrated in the dining hall. Everyone was in shock. The flash was so bright that it made the power go off and come on again in the blink of an eye.

A couple of weeks down the track, the rain in Kununurra stopped. Everyone was happy and the place felt clean, smelt fresh and looked green and beautiful. It was a great day to go shopping in town with my

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grandmother. We bought food for my parents back at Doon Doon Station, which is about 110 kilometres out of Kununurra. My grandmother and I left our family back in the village, watching the footy. Their life is planned out with footy – they love it. I guess this is where I get my footy head from. I love watching footy and playing the game too.

After packing the car and saying goodbye to my grandparents, I decided to have as much fun as possible before going back to Doon Doon again. So later that day, my grandfather's sister took me and some other kids fishing in a dam just out of Kununurra. When we got there we had to unpack the troopy. We started fishing with handlines. It's easier, and if your line gets stuck or snaps, it's easier to put on the hooks and sinkers. We were separated all over the place in groups so we didn't get lost. We caught about six barramundi and seven bream. We cooked the fish out bush, then took some of it back to the village so that we could share it with our family. The fish was so fresh and juicy, and the smell was delicious. It made your mouth water. That was the last fish I tasted though because I got grounded by my aunty and uncle. I went to the shops without asking and did things without them knowing, like going for walks during the day to the shopping centres.

A couple of weeks after that, it was time for me to go back to Doon Doon Station. To be honest, I really didn't want to leave because I was having so much fun (except for the grounding) – everything was nice. My aunty told me that she would come and pick me up in three weeks' time. I was hoping that it would come quickly because when I'm with my aunty it's the only time I get freedom to be myself. When I'm back home I have to watch my little cousins and they're always a handful.

At Doon Doon Station, my family and I went camping out to this place called Dancing Ground. This place is where my family dance to do corroborees and other things. Dancing Ground is like this big gorge that never runs dry. The water is so deep that we have canoes to take us up and down the river. We would see freshwater crocodiles and they would come right up next to the canoes – maybe just to take a look at you, but it's really scary. But we always manage to paddle fast so we don't have to

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worry about the crocodiles and have races in the water with the canoes or just swim.

After all the fun in the water, we had to put up our tents and get wood to make the fire. The road was rough and sandy – in the wet season you wouldn't want to go out there because you'd get bogged and stuck from when you cross the little water crossing and it starts rising up. That's why we choose to go out when it's the cold season – that way we don't have to worry.

Around the night fire, staying out there for about two weeks, my grandfather told us stories about our Dreaming – they are about our beliefs. He told the story about the kangaroo and the cockatoo and how the kangaroo fought for his land and some other stories. For dinner we had fish. I loved it out there.

After staying those two weeks out bush, it was time to go home because we really needed to have a warm bath. On the way home, we played games, like if you find an animal you have to say its name in our language. Our language is Gija, and we speak it fluently to elders and young people, but I get a bit shamed speaking language towards my grandfather and I don't know why this happens. But the game was always fun because we would sometimes get mixed up with the names. Also on the way back we would get bush food and berries and we would race to see who could collect the most. My grandfather always says, 'This only happens once a year so we have to make the most of it', which is so true, but Nanna says, 'We should always leave some behind for the animals and elders of our culture' – which is also true. I agree with them both!

When we were back home, I was happy. We unpacked and cleaned up, then we all raced for the shower, but I was first. That night we had dinner, and everyone was very tired – including me. No one bothered to stay up and watch *The X-Factor* or *Criminal Minds* – my grandmother loves *Criminal Minds*, she loves all the mysteries and games, but she didn't want to watch the TV series because she was too tired. We all had an early night.

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The next day, things got a little too loud in our house because we had visitors. I was still asleep. I thought I'd better get dressed because I wouldn't want to be the one doing the dishes tonight after dinner. It was my aunty – she came to pick me up earlier. I was glad to see her, but I didn't want to go with her because I was happy and I had more fun than I'd thought. I'd thought my grandparents were going to be boring and too old to go anywhere, but I was wrong, which was a good thing.

Getting into the car with my aunty, we heard the trucks going past with housing frames and other equipment. This was the moment we'd all been waiting for. After looking at the trucks going past, I didn't want to go with my aunty because I was having so much fun, but I still went because no one was going to keep my little cousin out of trouble besides me. So I went with my aunty and said goodbye to my grandparents.

A couple of months went past. The next thing you know, we were packing our things from Kununurra Village to go back to Warmun. The construction guys said that they'd move the dongas to Warmun so that we could stay there until our houses were fixed. Driving into Warmun and just looking at how dirty the place was, I felt sad because it wasn't as green as it usually was. This made me think, 'We could help the community with the cleaning'. This is what the council suggested and everyone agreed. My aunty and I went to see where her house was – it ended up about 100 metres away from where it had stood. My aunty was sad. I felt sad too.

After all of the building and conversation about where they were going to place everyone, my aunty was the last person to get her house. She was told by the council that her house was the most damaged. We still don't know why they gave the last house to her. She should've been the first to get a house, I reckon.

Moving all of our furniture into the house, we were happy. My grandparents came down to help with the furniture. Three days after making the house look like a home, I had to leave for Darwin to go to school. That night we had a big ceremony and David Wirripunda came and helped us, which was good.

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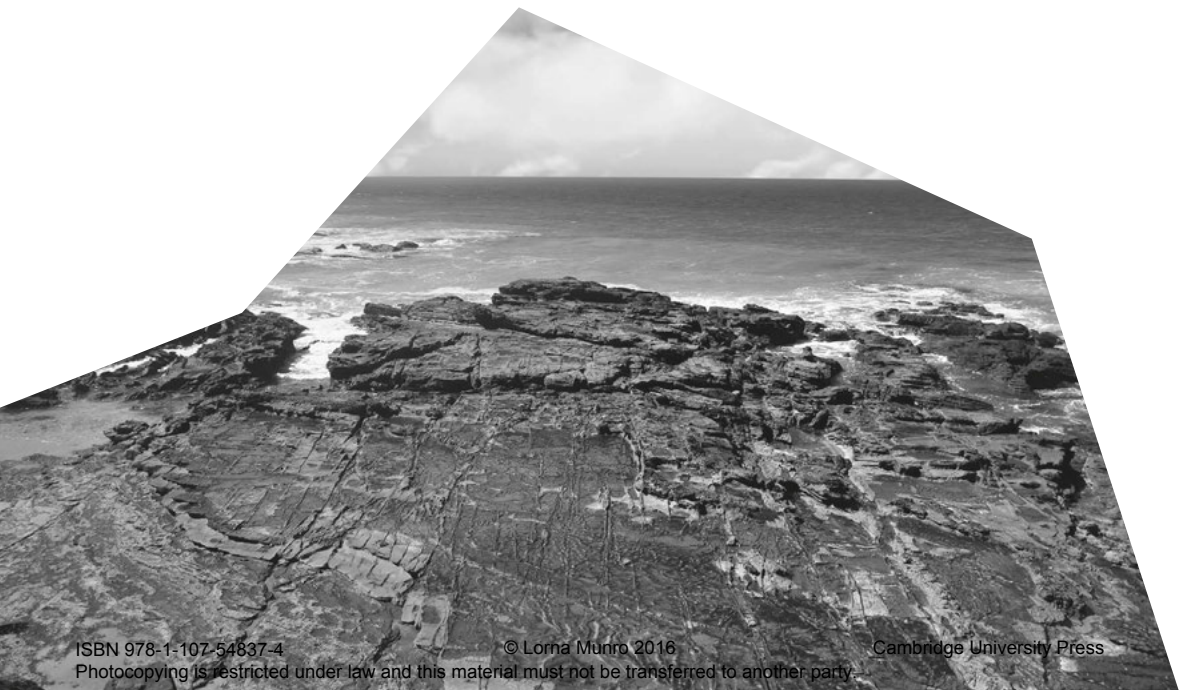
I was happy to go to Darwin, but sad to leave my family behind. I was nervous getting packed and driving to Kununurra to catch the plane at 10:50 a.m. Saying goodbye to my family was hard. I cried a little and so did my grandmother. My grandfather felt a little sad inside, I could see. Going though the terminal ready to board the plane, I took a last look at my country and waved through the window to my grandparents. I felt sad. I went to school in Darwin at St John's College for a year. Then I decided to go to school in Broome.



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Caught!

Research and Discussion

1 Elizabeth's story turns out to be quite dangerous in the end, with the fire 'jumping' and changing direction. Who or what caught Glenda, Pauline and Ben?

2 As the events unfold in Elizabeth's story, Glenda – who is the oldest of the three – shows great bravery and knowledge of bush skills when things start to get bad. Looking back at the story, what were some of the things she did to keep her siblings safe? What would you have done? Would you have kept your cool in a hot situation?

3 Ben had noticed tracks and was hoping to find a goanna. In Indigenous communities that have access to hunting and cultural maintenance, knowledge is handed down from one generation to another. How old is Ben? Please discuss and list what you could do at Ben's age.

Writing and Creating

1 Have you ever been caught in a dangerous situation? What was your experience? Can you recount what decisions were made to secure your own safety?

2 Pauline, Glenda and Ben were caught in a fire. Can you relive the journey they made? Make a timeline of the events mentioned.

3 Elizabeth uses very descriptive language in her story, and she personifies fire and other elements very well. Her recounting of her experience paints a picture of fire being alive and moving randomly and unexpectedly. With this in mind, write a poem about fire.

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My Community Blackout

Research and Discussion

1 Samantha talks about her community, Doon Doon Station, which is 110 kilometres south of Kununurra. Can you locate Kununurra on a map of Australia?
2 Instead of waiting for the new generator to arrive in town after Samantha's community blackout, she and her grandparents decide to go fishing. How do they cook their fish? What does her grandmother make?
3 Human beings have an innate fear of the dark and water. Why do you think this is?

Writing and Creating

1 Would you be scared if the power went out in your street? Can you recount a time when this happened to you? What did you do?
2 What does Samantha mean when she says, 'What if something from my Dreaming story came out and tried to take me away?' Have you ever heard a Dreaming story?
3 Can you animate a cartoon strip of a Dreaming story? What are the themes of the Dreaming stories of your local nation?

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My Country

Research and Discussion

1 Ranahl comes from the Great Sandy Desert and lives in a small community called Djugerari. Can you find this on a map?
2 Ranahl is full of knowledge about his country, and shares a Dreaming story about a goanna. Dreaming stories can sometimes be morality tales about what is right and wrong, or warnings about sacred places or places where people should not go. Why do you think we need stories of creation and death told via morality tales? What is the difference between a Dreaming story and a myth or fable?
3 Ranahl shares his hopes for the future. What are some of your hopes and dreams for your community? How do you see your future benefiting your community?

Writing and Creating

1 List some of the pearls of knowledge Ranahl has shared.
2 List and compare the similarities and differences between Djugerari and your own community. Discuss with your class.
3 Write a short story about your community.

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The Best Rain, the Worst Flood

Research and Discussion

1 Can you imagine being in a flood and watching the water rise? After hours and even days, how would you be able to quantify how much rain had fallen?
2 What are some of the things you can do to prepare for a flood/wet season? Consider how your community may handle a flood differently from others.
3 How do you think it would feel to be flooded in and then kept away from your home?
4 Why did Samantha say that it was the best rain and the worst flood?
5 When looking for bushfood, why should we always leave some behind?

Writing and Creating

1 Samantha says that she and her grandmother had noticed the rain coming towards them, 'travelling at the speed of a blink'. She describes the rain as something about which her community initially was happy. Research storms and floods, and make a profile with the information you have sourced. How fast can a storm travel? What are some of the benefits of a flood?
2 In a previous story in this book, 'Caught!' by Elizabeth Morgan, fire has forced a lot of native animals to evacuate their natural habitats. In Samantha's story, animals are trying to find higher ground and are naturally drawn to Samantha's house. The extremities of the elements can be dangerous and unsettling; fire and flood can cause much damage to property and land, as well as lead to positive regeneration of land, but they can also mean that many native animals in the bush are left to fend for themselves. Can you put yourself in the animals' position and recount what any of the animals mentioned had to endure?
3 In her poem 'My Country', famous Australian poet Dorothea Mackellar describes Australia as a 'land of sweeping plains, of ragged mountain ranges, of droughts and flooding rains'. How often is our country hit by storms? Why does this happen?

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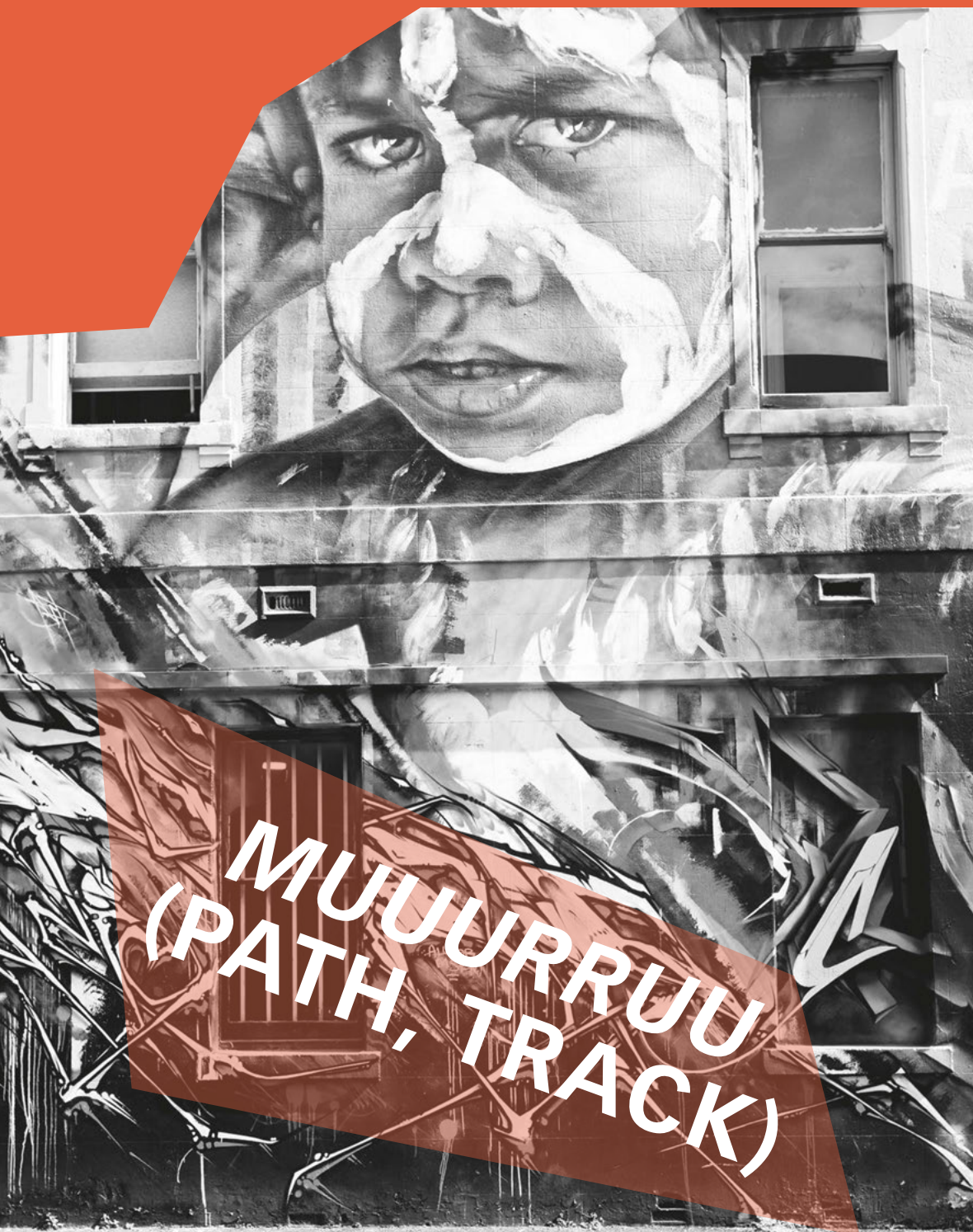

MUUURRUU (PATH, TRACK)

Street art by AWOL crew, Melbourne

ISBN 978-1-107-64337-4

Cambridge University Press

Breathe
Lorna Munro

Sometimes, it just gets hard to breathe
In this world that we travel in
Escape to a different mind state
That we developed out of defiance and debate
Can you relate?
To thoughts clouded and jaded
My dreams of youth were overrated
For you presented a view
Clear and unfaded
Through a TV screen
Both loved and hated
I ended up with great white hopes
In a black brain
This environment created
Views of my own self
Even back then was outdated
My best friend
She said don't you ever change
This is a beast
A monster, a blob of wasted existence
Time to rearrange
The composition this musician was whistling
In the soundtrack
To our daily misery and misled intuition
But there was no superhero
Toppling over skyscrapers
Changing height like a see saw
I was quick to draw
Strength
From my own version of law
And this was no playground, court or park
Just a place that we would meet after dark
And soak up each other's awesomeness

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Spending a lifetime wondering where the time went
We were but girls
Not quite women, yet

Native roses emerging
From a criss-crossed pavement
Dying in waves let these roots take shape
How does beauty seek nourishment
In a resting mound graveyard
For flowers
Built up on colonised ideals
Of what we should look like
Mutating in just hours
What the hell should I be like?
Don't nobody try to censor how a lady should talk right?
Stuff it
I'm just a product of this soil
Attempting to act right
Water trying to be oil
Cling wrap trying to be foil
Don't swear or you will spoil
Your pretty words.
Poetry
Is a curse
My father says that in his language your pen is also your spear or sword
The focused cause
That can be used to force
Opposing
Pillaging and plundering on conforming villages

ISBN 978-1-107-54837-4

Cambridge University Press

But I come in peace
Let these visual images
Invade your brain and detain it
Like what was done to my ancestors
Our history and the way that you have stained it.

You know coz …

We cannot all be vegetative, weeds, grass or stars
In this delusional warped controlled reality
My chest caves in
On demand
It gets hard to see

A sense of self-worth, hoarded behind a glass window
I cannot breathe

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Cambridge University Press

Dear Diary
Elizabeth Morgan

Dear Diary,

Today Priscilla an' the other girls told me I was just a quarter-caste an' played being Aboriginal to get the attention. Because I'm white.

Though I prefer 'latte'.

Cassia stood with her back to the wall, glancing down the corridor. Ms Ravensbruc was walking slowly. Cassia thought, 'I wish she would hurry up.'

As she came level with Cassia, the woman glanced across and smiled.

'Hey, Cassia, shouldn't you be in class?'

Cassia pursed her lips. 'Can I talk to you?'

Her brows furrowed slightly, but the teacher passed Cassia in silence and unlocked her office door. 'Take a seat,' she invited, parking herself behind the desk. She pulled a drawer open and passed a smooth glass ball across to the girl. 'What's troubling you?'

Cassia grimaced mentally. She even spoke like a psych. She put the ball back on the desk. 'I don't need it.'

'Okay. What's on your mind?'

'Just quickly, I wondered what happens with bullying.'

The counsellor raised an eyebrow. 'Well, usually the bully has some intrapersonal issues; perhaps they were bullied before, or perhaps they come from a difficult home life. And so they bully because they have low self-esteem, and want to feel superior. Are you okay?'

Cassia gave her a withering glance. 'I'm fine.' Her tone was final. 'But I meant, like, with punishment, or whatever. What happens here at school?'

'Ah. Well, the incident is reported to a teacher; it then goes to the Home Liaison Officer and, depending on the circumstances, the bully could get detention or garbo duty. And they usually have a little session with me.'

'Thanks. Could I have a late note?'

'Of course. And if anything's troubling you, it's my job to deal with it.'

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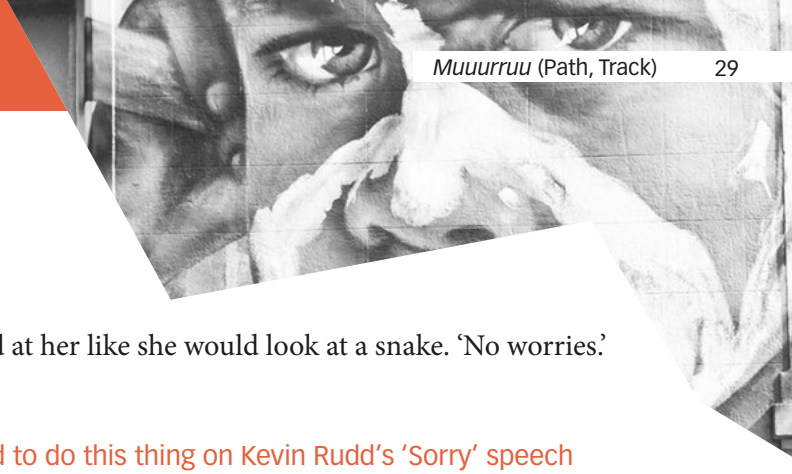

Cassia looked at her like she would look at a snake. 'No worries.'

Dear Diary,

Today we had to do this thing on Kevin Rudd's 'Sorry' speech for SOSE. They all said my essay wasn't good, because I don't understand what it means to be Aboriginal.

'Abo!'

The word was hissed as she walked past an alcove underneath an outdoor stairwell. Cassia turned quickly, unsure about whether the comment was directed at her. Two silhouettes huddled in the shadows.

'Leave her alone,' another voice said, and a girl with a short brown crop stuck her head out into the patch of light filtering through overhead. Cassia recognised her as one of the girls in the year level above. She had a reputation for being less than virtuous.

'You right?' the older girl asked, and Cassia nodded.

'Don't mind Jack, she was just tryin'a get your attention. You don't pay much attention to what's going on around you, do ya? I'm Bobbie.'

Cassia blinked at the old-fashioned name. 'What did you want me for?'

Bobbie sucked her bottom lip, considering. 'Nothing. You just looked a bit … lost. You want to sit with us?'

Jack shuffled around to make room, so Cassia let her bag drop and sank cross-legged to the floor beside Bobbie.

'You never sit with anyone, do you?'

Cassia gave her a curious glance. 'D'you watch me?'

Bobbie shrugged. 'I watch everything.'

'What's your real name?'

'Rachael. Don't ask me how I got 'Bobbie' from that – I just did. She's Jacqui. How's Priscilla?'

Cassia bit into an apple, not meeting her gaze. 'I don't hang out with Priscilla.'

'I know, doofus. What's she up to?'

'Ah, I dunno. I think she's just jealous.'

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'Jealous, insecure, spoilt, shy, or whatever else you want to call it,' Jacqui interjected. 'You're better at most things than she is, and everyone likes you.'

The bell went suddenly, and Bobbie nudged her. 'You'd better go. We've got a free period.' She winked meaningfully. 'Just don't let her get to you.'

Dear Diary,

Today things got physical.

'Miss, what are we doing today?'

Miss Davies was heading a straggling line of students out to the oval, two of the girls behind her carrying coloured sashes and cones.

'Hockey.'

A collective groan escaped from the all-girls class, and the young PE teacher smiled to herself as she dumped the bag of hockey sticks on the lawn under the beauty leaf tree.

'What, don't you like it?'

Priscilla pouted. 'It's too hot.'

'What do you mean it's too hot? I love hockey.'

The Aboriginal girl slouched to the base of the tree and sat on a protruding root. 'Yeah, but you don't have to play. Why can't we play basketball inside?'

'Mr Peters has the boys in the gym,' was the curt reply.

'But we can share!'

Miss Davies' patience was wearing thin. 'No.'

'But it's air-conditioned, Miss.'

'Priscilla, I said no. Get over it.'

Priscilla subsided, her cronies clustering around her like flies. Miss Davies ignored them and continued with the class.

When the teams were picked, butterflies formed in the pit of Cassia's stomach as she realised she had been drafted opposite Priscilla. Miss Davies blew the whistle and the game commenced.

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'Cass, follow Priscilla; keep an eye on what she's doing with the puck!'

Miss Davies' instructions sounded across the tree-flanked oval, and Cassia gritted her teeth. She wanted to keep out of reach of Priscilla's stick. She heard another shout from the teacher and darted in to try to take the puck; Priscilla's stick moved for a moment, leaving her open, then Cassia felt a searing pain in her ankle as the other girl's stick connected forcefully. Play stopped almost immediately, as the girls who had seen the incident protested loudly. Cassia dropped her stick. Miss Davies blew her whistle and hurried over; she hadn't seen exactly what had happened.

'What happened?'

'Priscilla whacked Cassi's ankle,' was the indignant reply. Miss Davies bent from the waist to have a look as one of the girls supported Cassia and another removed her shoe and sock. The ankle was already turning blue. The teacher sucked in her breath.

'Karin, take her to the office.' She turned to Priscilla. 'You need to be more careful. That was irresponsible and foolish; I don't want to see that happen ever again.'

Priscilla feigned penitence. 'It wasn't my fault, Miss. She got in the way and I couldn't stop fast enough!'

Gemma caught the last few words as she retrieved Cassia's bag and hurried to catch up with Karin. 'Yeah, right,' she muttered.

'What?' Karin asked, glancing behind Cassia's shoulder as they hobbled along.

'Priscilla's goin'a get away with it,' said Gemma.

'Just drop it,' said Cassia, the pain evident in her voice. The other two girls looked at her in surprise.

'What do you mean, drop it? She should get detention!'

'We can't prove she did it on purpose. Just drop it.'

Karin and Gemma exchanged a glance. 'Okay, whatever you think.'

Dear Diary,

First day back, and something interesting happened.

Dear Diary

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'Hey, how are you?'

Cassia heard the voice first, then the arm draped around her neck. She smiled wanly at Bobbie. 'Not so sore. You know it's broken?'

'Yeah, I heard something like that. Nothing happened so far?'

'Nah.'

'Good-oh. See you at lunch.' The older girl swung off down another corridor.

Cassia fumbled with the door handle. She was late and it was awkward to manage with her crutches. She got it open and slipped through as Mrs Rossi was calling the roll.

'Sorry I'm late, Ma'am.'

'I understand, Cass. Sit in front, it'll be easier to deal with the crutches there.'

'Thanks.'

Science was her favourite subject. She eased herself into a chair behind one of the long tables in the middle of the lab. A counter ran around the edge of the room, and benches were set perpendicular to the wall with gas taps and sinks. The lab equipment was already out, along with the microscopes, and by the looks of things they would be making their own slides.

Cassia took her books out and listened as Mrs Rossi prepared a slide herself, instructing the class as she did so. Suddenly, something small and hard hit her shoulder and she turned. Priscilla sat two rows behind, a malicious look on her face. Cassia faced the front. Another missile flew through the air and hit the back of Cassia's head, and another shot past her shoulder and bounced onto the table. It was a piece of rubber. She bit her bottom lip and put her head down. This was only a single period. She could get away from it at lunch.

'So, how'd things go?'

Cassia had joined Bobbie and Jacqui at lunch, sitting in their usual spot underneath the stairs. She cleaned her yoghurt container with her finger and stuck it in her mouth while she thought.

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'Yeah, alright. Priscilla's been a bit of a nuisance, but I reckon it'll stop at that.'

'What d'ya mean?'

'Ah, just chucking stuff at me during class, an' that.'

A piercing shriek echoed through the courtyard and all three girls looked up immediately. Raised voices followed, and they looked at each other.

'Sounds like someone's having a fight,' Jac remarked. Bobbie scrambled to her feet.

'C'mon, then!'

As her companions stood up, Cassia hesitated. Bobbie smiled.

'It's okay, Cass – you don't have to come.'

Cassia made up her mind. 'Nah, I'll come an' see what's going on. But I'm not a part of it.'

Rachael looked at her quizzically. 'You know, we don't get involved with anything we shouldn't. People just assume things about us.'

'Okay. Here, help me up.'

The two girls grasped a hand each and hauled her to her feet, Bobbie steadying her as Jacqui reached back for the crutches. They made their way into the shed, a large covered area popular during lunchtime. A crowd was clustered in the far corner and Bobbie leapt up onto one of the benches to see over their heads.

'It's Priscilla and Ruby,' she informed the others. 'They're really having a go at each other.' She beckoned to an older boy on the fringes of the group, and he detached himself and crossed the concrete floor to join them.

'Dyl, what's going on?'

Dylan pursed his lips. 'I've sent Joe to get Mr Peters; Stan did something to Pris, an' she punched him. Then Ruby stuck up for her brother.'

The foursome watched silently as Mr Peters arrived with Mrs Rossi and broke up the fight.

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Dear Diary,

I found out today that Priscilla got garbo, but Stan was expelled and Ruby got detention. I still don't know exactly what happened. But I said hi to Priscilla an' asked how she was, and she just started crying. I think she doesn't hate me. She just hates being confused.

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Decolonisation

Teila Watson

Slow but sure
Is the process
Breaking down our own walls
With no protest
Accepting our own flaws
And that we know less
But hey young Murri we aren't hopeless
Our ability to find is in our bloodline
Running through our veins
Like the water through the scrub during flood times
Wiping the weak
Stripping leaves,
Leaving mud lines
Like the lessons that we keep, creased in our minds
Muddy water so deep
Reflects the sunshine
Cleaning the river beds 'n' creeks
Delete
Pollution
Fix him one time
Denounce defeat
And in our sleep
Spirits speak
Our complete
Philosophy
At least sometimes
And when I feel the need
To battle 'n' compete
With the sheep's
Complacent confines
I set my spirit free
Breathe
Let go of all the hatred and break them strong binds

ISBN 978-1-107-54837-4

Cambridge University Press

Knowledge is the key
And there are stories for all songlines
Just like our own kinds
Lives
We are the leaves stretching out
Staying tied to the same vine
Reaching and yearning for
Learning and unlearning war
So turning that it's burning all
The deadwood and dry grass of my past
Replenishment comes each an every day at last
The banishment of my humanness is never gonna last
Like a spell cast
Magic in my soul I feel grow
Whole
Holding no halves
Fuelling the fire with its coals
Change desires never sold
Wearing no mask
I throw myself in now
Ready for cleaning and cleansing
I won't let the flood flow past
So don't let the flood flow past

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Cambridge University Press

Redemption

Eric Avery

Redemption never did cease in a clouded heart,
Not a thing did misspell the words when I said,
Love,
Cradled in a soft interior of sorts,

A time unchanged,
Memories of life when a basket or a string,
Etched in our bones and blood,
I cannot undo,
Wrongs in the past but in the future must,
Finding solace in this orb unchanged,
I have a tarnished rose,
But,
Atlases,
Globes of light,
Lead this to be,
Redemption.

Our deconstruction,
Destructive,
In the most cunning of ways,
Planks covered my eyes,
Admits black elephants on parade,

Crying for their young,
Their sanity,
Their liberation from a life unshared,
When things like this happened.

I am nothing,
Demure am I,
Physical realities brought me down a staircase,

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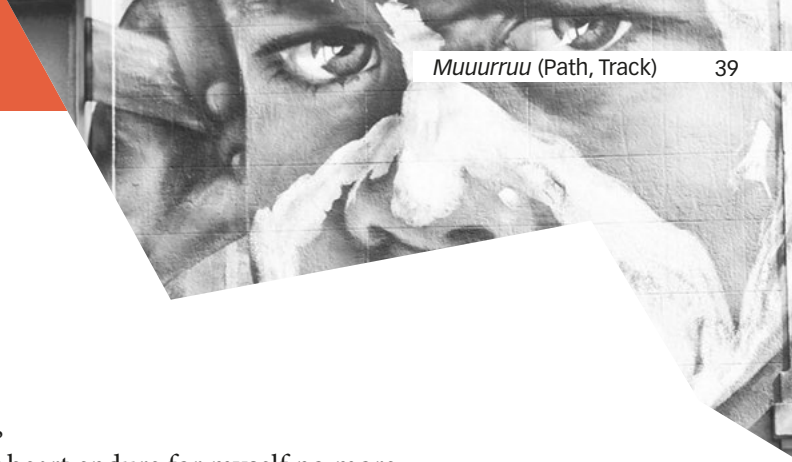

Racketty,
Spiny,
Out of this womb,
No more does my heart endure for myself no more,
Enduring for love,
Is what continues more,
Lost souls,
In an ocean,
Swimming strong is our love,

Our summer of contentment,
On that rock,
I was the earth and you the sky,
Skies clear,
Blue,
Clouds only when you cried our names,
And rain did fall on my chest,

One we become,
Swords not used to disembark from this land,
A walk with you strong,
Arms held up to the sky,
In adoration
Our place defined,
In calendars of your living in me,
Man and woman,
You are sacred,
Let it be,
Take my healing heart,
And amongst us all is around us,
I swam,
Rivers,

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Creeks,
Shadows falling, floating in a bed 1788,
Did you leave lasting impressions,
On my pillow book of sorts,
You are forever in my heart,
In my meat,
Minyawaa thinkanuu,
Black woman,
Are you meant to be,
First fires,
How do you see if dreams are gone,
Fading fast,
And now moving on,
But you hold my feet on the ground,
My hands touch the heavens with you,
Do we live in separate spaces no more.

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Breathe

Research and Discussion

1 Lorna's poem references her own frustrations as an Indigenous woman growing up in a patriarchal society. Lines taken from actual conversations and even popular culture – such as movies – are used to convey her message. What else do you think she is talking about? For example, in the lines 'I was quick to draw / Strength / From my own version of law / And this was no playground court or park / Just a place that we would meet after dark / And soak up each other's awesomeness', what do you think she is alluding to?

2 In the first few lines, Lorna says something about presenting views of overrated youth, clear and unfaded through a TV screen, both loved and hated. Create a log over a period of one week about watching your favourite TV shows. Take notice of how many Aboriginal people you see on TV. How were they presented? Was it in a negative or positive way? Don't forget to record how this made you feel. Discuss your findings.

3 Research other Aboriginal poets and compare the similarities between the messages you found in the writing and what Lorna is saying. Present your findings to the class.

Writing and Creating

1 Write a poem about how you feel at the moment. Try to use one word to symbolise how you feel and write for five minutes. Share your poem with someone.

2 If Lorna sees cut flowers as a metaphor for herself and her experiences, what exactly is she saying in her poem? Can you translate the entire piece and interpret the message?

3 After you have written something from your own perspective about your experiences of growing up in Australia, memorise and perform your piece in front of your class.

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Dear Diary

Research and Discussion

1 Cassia says that another girl in her class, Priscilla, said that she was 'just a quarter-caste' and that she was acting being Aboriginal to get attention. How would you feel if someone said that you were lying about who you are? Discuss this with your friends or classmates.

2 Aboriginality has been quantified and labelled by non-Aboriginal people since European occupation. Research some of the policies from previous eras that may have influenced this thinking. How is this connected to Cassia and her experience with the bully at school?

3 In Cassia's second diary entry, she says, 'Today we had to do this thing on Kevin Rudd's "Sorry" speech for SOSE. They all said my essay wasn't good, because I don't understand what it means to be Aboriginal.' Why do you think this happened? Why did Cassia feel this way? What do you think it means to be Aboriginal?

Writing and Creating

1 Cassia hints to the counsellor at the start of the story that she may have had some problems at school, and as the story unfolds it becomes clear that Cassia is being bullied and that the harassment is racially fuelled. How could you tell whether one of your friends was being bullied? Discuss and present strategies that we can all use to stop bullying and racial discrimination at school.

2 Explain why you think Cassia was being bullied by Priscilla.

3 After a fight breaks out in the schoolyard, Rachael says to Cassia, 'You know we don't get involved with anything we shouldn't. People just assume things about us.' What do you think Rachael is hinting at when she says this, and why would she say it at that particular moment?

4 What do you think Cassia has learned from this experience and from keeping a written record of it in her diary?

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Decolonisation

Research and Discussion

1 Research and explain the definition of 'decolonisation'. What is Teila talking about in her poem? Discuss with your family what this word means, and present your findings in class.
2 'Decolonisation' has a hopeful undertone, yet is quite explicit in Teila's message honouring people's connections to each other as well as the land from which we descend. Reading lines from Teila's poem, can you tell where she is from? What are some other hints?
3 Symbolically, the flood represents so much. What do you think she is saying with 'Our ability to find is in our bloodline / Running through our veins / Like the water through the scrub during flood times'? What is your interpretation of Teila's writing?

Writing and Creating

1 Write a short essay about what decolonisation is and why it is important for everyone (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people) to decolonise themselves and their thinking.
2 Please explain why colonialism is unhealthy for Aboriginal people. Make a list of some of the trans-generational outcomes that Aboriginal people still endure today, and have endured in the past. Why do Aboriginal people need non-Aboriginal people to understand this?
3 Write a script detailing some of the ways in which we can decolonise ourselves and act them out in front of an audience, then discuss the issues raised with your audience.

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Redemption

Research and Discussion

1 All the poems that are featured in this section have a hopeful message that resonates loudly with young Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people alike. Eric's poem is a great example of how to channel emotion into writing. What emotions are conveyed throughout Eric's writing?

2 Discuss what Eric's poem is really saying. How do you interpret another's message? Poetry is sometimes explicit as well as subliminal. What do you think this poem is saying without overtly stating it?

3 Eric's love for his land/country can be mistaken for the love between a man and a woman. Can you personify and recreate your love for something within this writing style? How can we humanise an object, element, season, idea or subject?

Writing and Creating

1 Eric is a dancer as well as a violinist and writer. Consider how a dancer would think compared with a writer and a musician, then create a multi-disciplinary performance piece about a topic of your choice. Perform this for your class.

2 How could you physically interpret words with movement? Walk around the room with your classmates, exploring this. Then present to your class the different movements and what they mean.

3 Choose a word you use almost every day, trace it out on the floor with your feet and then test to see whether people around you or in your class can guess what it is. How does your body tell a story without you having to actually speak?

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Gone Fishing
Elizabeth Morgan

The river flowed lazily past, barely seeming to move as it rounded the wide bend a little way downstream. Huge old paperbarks leaned out over the water, reflected in the gently rippled surface as a breeze passed over. Pandanus grew in clumps along the bank, trailing yellow-green fronds in the cool, tannin-stained river; wattles flanked stands of paperbark saplings that grew out into the water. Rivergums, tall and straight, towered over the smaller species.

A rope stretched in an arc across the surface of the river. At the centre of its parabola, a second rope was knotted securely, and left to trail another 10 metres further down. And at the end of *that* rope, a plastic tub – seating two girls with light chocolate-coloured skin – rocked dangerously. They were fishing.

'Biting?'

'Nup.'

'You want to head back in?'

'I'll head *you* back in if you don't be quiet,' Jessie murmured, but the remark was no less forceful or ominous for the lack of volume. Sheila sank into silence, jiggling her line up and down impatiently.

'I don't think there's any fish.'

'Shh.'

She looked over the rim of the tub – as far as her precarious position allowed – and looked into the depths, which weren't very deep. 'At least, not any big fish,' she amended.

Jessie grunted.

Sheila reeled her line in, dropped the hook into the tiny bait bucket wedged between her knees and began to pull on the rope.

'I'm going back. You can trawl.'

'You don't trawl on a river.'

The girls made steady progress until Sheila unwittingly pulled the tightly packed tub too close to a submerged tree. It spanned the river just below the surface, and she hauled them over the crown of its branches.

'Look out!' Jessie shrieked, too late. Her sister managed to make a tremendous leap from a sitting position to the nearby bank and landed

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on her hands and knees; the violent movement tumbled Jessie into the freezing water. She erupted in a shower of white, spluttering spa-bubbles popping around her, making pleasant fizzing noises.

'What'd ya do that for?' she demanded, getting her balance and standing chest-deep. 'You've made me lose my knife!' Jessie sank back into the water, scrabbling about in the leaves and mud. Her hands closed around smooth metal and she came back to the surface. 'I'm not fishing with you ever again!'

She retrieved her reel and waded to the opposite bank.

'You can get the bait bucket and tub,' she shot over her shoulder, glanced at the 'bits and bobs' littered over the surface, and hastily jumped back in to retrieve the barra lure she had forgotten. Then she trudged up the sloping bank, scrambled over the granite boulders and disappeared into the long grass, following a wallaby track.

'Meany,' Sheila muttered at her retreating figure.

***

Jessie's bare feet made the faintest of marks in the brown, cracked dirt of the track. The hem of her shorts dripped water onto the parched dust, making little crater lakes. They didn't last long, but quickly evaporated in the morning sun.

The track led under a twisting trunk, bark flaking off in papery strips. It was too low to crawl under. Jessie stood, biting her lip, considering: it was a very *wide* trunk. She made up her mind.

First, she took the loose sinkers and hooks from her bucket and buttoned them carefully in the deep pocket of her boys' shorts with her knife. Hooking the lure carefully to her thick plait, Jessie slid her reel onto one arm and hitched her bucket over the other. She threw both arms over the slippery tree, digging her nails in on the other side, and launched herself from the ground in a curious sideways motion, like the pendulum of a clock. One brown leg came level with the curved, horizontal limb, and she allowed the momentum to swivel her body until she slipped down the other side.

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Taking a moment to restore her possessions to their rightful places, she carried on until she judged that she had come far enough. Jessie cut through the scrub and came out a bit further down from a collection of different-sized granite boulders that stood right by the edge of the river. One actually stood in the water, and baitfish nibbled the algae on its surface.

'Hmm.' Jessie's keen eyes took in the surroundings. Two paperbarks grew in a little inlet on the opposite bank, making dark shadows in the still water: barra water.

In one bound, the girl was up on the outermost rock, peering down on the startled baitfish.

'Hmm.' A granite riverbed, it looked like it had been paved with uneven pavers, with little underwater cliffs and gullies and caves.

'If there's no fish here, then there's no fish at all in this whole wretched river.' With this philosophical outlook, she began to make preparations.

When one is fishing for barramundi, it is best to use raw steak, fresh worms or a lure. Jessie had used both meats before, with relative success, but had never used a lure in fresh water. So she took the lure from her hair and laid it on the rock beside her while she dealt with the hook already on her line. She stowed it away and chose a swivel from her collection in the bucket; it was difficult to get the lure on, but in the end she managed to tie the swivel to the thin fishing line.

Jessie stood and swung the line experimentally back and forth, trying to make up her mind where to cast. She decided on a half-rotten tree that reared up two metres from the bank, because she could see a tangle of roots just below the surface. Her brows came together as she judged distance, automatically taking in the speed of the water as it eddied past, and keeping an eye on the overhanging tree branches that might get in the way. She let go of the line, listening to the whirring as it sang through the air, and the faint 'tsk tsk' as it slid off the plastic reel. It was peaceful fishing.

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After Jessie left, Sheila didn't know what to do. She gathered the floats and gave up on finding the sinkers that had spilled out in the upset. Then she sat in the sun and thought.

After contemplating for a little while, she rolled onto her stomach and dangled her fingers lazily in the water.

She watched the river fish nibble at the strings of weed that clung to the soft sand of the bank, admiring the way their bodies twisted and turned. Sheila wondered what it would be like to be a fish.

'I would explore all the logs and roots and branches that hang in the water,' she told them. 'And I would feel like a rubber ball, just not so bouncy.'

Cupping her hands under her chin, the little girl became oblivious to her surroundings and eventually nodded off in the warm sunshine.

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At the River

Aaliyah Parnell

At the river with the family
What a beautiful view
Everyone's swimming happily
It all seems so new

Living in Sydney
All I have is the beach
Sitting on the grass as it gets windy
Right now I want a peach

Going home as it gets cold
Packing up because it's late
People doing what they're told
'I'm going for a drive with Aunty Kate'

Adults are talking
Kids are having fun
Everyone is chilling
I wish the summer could last long

When it does go away
I'll remember that certain song
That we listened to on that day
As I think about where I am from

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Connecting with Country

Laverette Roe

Hi! My name is Laverette, and I am 16 years old. I was born in Kununurra and I am a Goolarabooloo man. Here is a story I'm going to tell you about why I have a strong connection with my country.

I have a very strong connection with my country because I love going camping with my family and friends. Country means land that our tribe lives, hunts and travels on. When I'm on country I feel a sense of belonging and I can hear the country's voice. I feel proud to be Yawurru and I feel my ancestors' spirit in my heart and soul.

Every year we walk the Lurujarri Trail. My ancestors have walked this trail for many thousands of years. They follow the song line from Minyirr to Manari. The song tells us the way to walk and what food we can collect on the way. We collect Gubinge, which taste like sugar and are real good for you. Gubinge is a small fruit that is green in colour and has the highest amount of Vitamin C of any fruit. We also show the people walking the Lurujarri Trail how to get bush honey from the inside of a tree and show them how to make clapping sticks and boomerang. We show them how to make bush tools and how to collect bush food; it makes me proud and happy about the knowledge I have of the country. Every time I do something right I get a funny feeling inside of me and I hear my ancestors talking to me, which flows through my body and soul and I know they are looking down on me and they are proud.

As I grow older, I actively seek the knowledge of my relatives and elders because I want to know more and more about my culture. It is hard to put into words how being on my country feels. The best way to describe it is that feeling you get when you're at home with all your favourite things and you can do whatever you want. If I could take you to my country I could tell you stories about Murella the Creation Spirit and could show you many places where you could collect food and water to survive. I could take you to fishing spots that my ancestors used thousands of years ago. Where we would catch Walga Walga (salmon), Gidard (green snapper), Jubud (rock cod), Goolal (turtle) and my favourite, the Dugong.

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In the future I realise that my responsibility in looking after my country and culture will become a big part of my life. I know I have more to learn and that my family will pass on that knowledge to me by my elders, and then I'll pass it down to the next generation to come.

Let me take you back to a time when I was younger – I think I was about 6 or 7 – when I first started to realise the importance of country and what it means to me. This was when I first walked the Lurujarri Trail. This was when I first started to learn the Dreaming stories and started to learn the song lines. These are songs that are important to my people and remind us of the laws that are there to help us look after country.

The people that taught me this are my pop's mob. He grew up in Broome and learnt a lot of this from his pop. It takes seven days to walk the trail and we drive some of it by trucks. Along the way we listen to stories with tourists and people from the university – they are all white fellas. I think it's important because we show them our culture; it's like having our classroom outside, 'cause it has all the stuff already there.

When I get older, I know that I will be a part of keeping my culture alive. This is a real privilege for me because I realise that keeping my culture alive is important. Goolarabooloo is my identity and it is everything to me. My pop is my inspiration because he is my teacher, and I am thankful that he is prepared to pass on the knowledge to me.

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Away from Home
Elizabeth Morgan

Maddy had been in school for three months. Usually she would be at home, but Mum and Dad had decided she needed 'proper schooling', so she had been sent from the community she loved to a boarding school. Maddy was doing well – apart from the class bully. Dorothy was merciless during sports, and Maddy decided it was time to give her as good as she got.

'Hey, Maddy,' said Dorothy.

Maddy nodded.

'You could hit the ball this time, Maddy,' said Dorothy.

'Maybe I could,' Maddy said. 'A cricket bat is much easier to use than a softball bat.'

'Does that mean you can see it because it's bigger?'

Maddy walked away.

When Dorothy had bought enough votes to be captain that week, she left Maddy out of a team. Miss Cunningham had to shuffle them around and Maddy was tagged on to Dorothy's opponents.

'Play well, Madeleine,' Dorothy smiled sweetly.

'Thank you.'

Dorothy was first to bat. Maddy jogged to mid-field, turned and waited. Stephanie was bowling, and sent a nice under-arm to the batswoman. Maddy riveted her eyes on Dorothy's arm as it came up and back. She slammed the ball in Maddy's direction and stood back to smirk. And saw her ball fly swiftly into Madeleine's cupped hands.

***

'Change over!' Miss called.

Rachel was captain, but was too afraid to bat.

'I'll take it,' said Maddy, and held out a hand. Dorothy walked to her bowler and took the ball.

'Ready, Maddy?'

'Ready, Ma'am.'

'Keep your eye on the ball, Maddy.'

Maddy decided that an answer would be superfluous.

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Dorothy drew her arm back and sent a ball spinning down the pitch. A few of the girls gasped. Maddy's lips twitched, she stepped out of her crease, and … didn't take a wild swing at the ball; instead, she met the ball with a highly scientific stroke, which sent it to out-field.

She cocked her head on one side. 'Is that a six, Dorothy?'

Then she began to run.

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Gone Fishing

Research and Discussion

1 Jessie and Sheila sound like experienced fisherwomen. Why didn't they catch any fish?
2 Judging by the way that Elizabeth uses detail and tells her story about these two young girls, can you describe their relationship? What evidence can you find?
3 Research your local river. What Aboriginal nations does it run through?

Writing and Creating

1 Read through 'Gone Fishing' and imagine the scene that Elizabeth paints with her descriptive language. Using visual arts, can you recreate the river in which Jessie and Sheila are fishing?
2 Rivers are abundant, and for Aboriginal people rivers are the community's life source and are considered special places. What else can be found at the river?
3 Write a poem about a river using the existing text of 'Gone Fishing'. You can either try a 'blackout poem' or rearrange it to say something completely different.

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At the River

Research and Discussion

1 Where is Aaliyah from? What river do you think she is talking about?
2 What kind of poem is this? What style of writing would you say 'At the River' is?
3 Do you have a song that reminds you of the holidays? What is it about the song that triggers your memory?

Writing and Creating

1 Can you recall the first time you went swimming? Where were you, who were you with and what happened?
2 Find a partner and exchange your experiences, then re-enact them in front of the class. Could you remember what was said?
3 Discuss with your classmates how the activity comes across. Did you believe the students when they were telling their partners' stories?

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Connecting with Country

Research and Discussion

1 Describe and recount Laverette's connection to his country. Why is it so strong?
2 Research the Lurujarri Trail and present the information you have found to your class.
3 How old was Laverette when he first realised the importance of country? What does country mean to you?

Writing and Creating

1 Define the word 'country' and compare your definition with the way Laverette and many others in *Paper Dreaming* use the word.
2 Laverette talks about knowledge being handed down from one generation to another, and how, according to some Dreaming stories, this has gone on since the time of creation. An activity that can represent this chain of knowledge is using a ball of string and passing it to everyone in the class. By holding onto the string that is linking everyone together, you will be tangled in a system that can represent the knowledge systems that exist for Australia's Aboriginal people.
3 Write a poem about this activity. What did you discover? How did it feel to be connected to everyone in the room?

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Away from Home

Research and Discussion

1 What do you think 'proper schooling' would mean? Why couldn't Maddy stay in her community?
2 Research how many Aboriginal children and young people are currently enrolled in boarding schools. (You may find information on the internet.)
3 Maddy had been in her new school for three months and she was being bullied. Who was she being bullied by? How did she stand up for herself?

Writing and Creating

1 Taking note of Maddy's story, have you ever had a similar experience? Can you recall and write a detailed recount of what happened?
2 Themes of bullying and isolation appear throughout the *Paper Dreaming* stories. Is being bullied just another part of growing up? Why is this? What do you think about this statement? Debate this issue as a class.
3 Create an anti-bullying campaign.

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A Lesson in History

Elizabeth Morgan

My name is Jack.

For as long as I can remember, my family has lived in Victoria. We were ordinary white Australians – actually, we took little notice of the debate surrounding the rights of the First Australians.

Many people believe that, because of the settlement of what was then known as Van Diemen's Land, the Tasmanian Aboriginals died out. I discovered, quite unexpectedly, that this was not true; I also discovered why the eldest child in every generation through my paternal lineage traditionally has his or her ashes scattered on the Derwent.

My grandmother 11 generations back was named Bess by her master. This is her story.

***

The girl looked past the prow of the sealer, hair blowing as the spume was lifted off the ocean by the constant winds of Bass Strait. The coast of Van Diemen's Land was receding behind her and she looked with uncertainty at the man to whom her family had given her. He looked rough: big hands, weatherbeaten face and an unkempt beard. He glanced up and saw her eyes fixed on him.

'It's alright, lass.' His strange words came to her over the noise of the waves and rushing wind in the sails. She didn't understand, but the nod he gave was reassuring. She fixed her attention on the sea again.

The men worked around her, some pausing now and then to consider her sitting in the bow. She ignored them.

'Mac, you've got a fine one there, haven't ye? Proud as a peacock!'

'An' so she ought. She's a sight more refined than you, James,' was the answering growl.

The girl drew her knees up, resting her chin on them as she watched the activity around her with dark eyes. She supposed the man to whom she had been given was to be her husband; her mother and aunts had taught her that a woman's place was to gather food and care for children, but she did not like either. Her mother had told her this man was going

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to own her, and take her to his tribe across the sea. She shivered. The man they called Mac, her master, approached with a blanket. He put it around her shoulders with a kindly nod.

'You get some sleep,' were his words, but they sounded strange to her. Nevertheless, she found herself gently slipping into the realms of silence.

A clattering woke her, and she peered into the heavy fog that surrounded the ship. She couldn't see more than a few yards ahead, but could dimly make out the outline of the mast closest to her. She rubbed her eyes and guessed that it was early morning. She must have slept through the night.

There was a flurry of activity on board – men unloading and going over the deck of the sealer to make sure nothing was left behind in the thick cloud. The girl could hear the noises they made, her keen ears identifying the distance and direction. Footsteps approached and Mac emerged out of the dense grey in front of her. He held out his hand.

'C'mon, lass. Time to get off, now.'

He heaved her to her feet, gently shepherding her across the swaying deck with an arm hovering around her shoulder. The Scot helped her up to the gangway, and they made their way down onto the shingled beach, keeping out of the way of the still-working men.

Cliffs suddenly loomed in front of them and the girl's steps faltered. There was something about this place that made her afraid. Mac felt the shudder, and his arm tightened for an instant. He guided her to a path cut into the rocky bluff and they scrambled up it. The path led to a plateau, windswept and bare, strewn with tussocky grass, showered by the salt spray. A huddle of rough huts stood in the centre, and Mac directed the girl to the last but one on the northern rim.

The cabin was dark inside, but Mac hooked the sealskin covering the doorway up and weak grey light made the interior less gloomy. The man pointed to a fireplace, then nodded to a stack of wood neatly cut against one wall.

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'You light the fire now, an' I'll see about the breakfast.' The young Aboriginal girl didn't understand a word, but her quick mind saw what he wanted. She set to work quietly.

***

'We'll be going, soon.' Mac had made the announcement one evening as the sun was setting and Bess flashed a smile at him from where she knelt at the fireside. 'How soon? When?'

'Two, maybe three weeks. As soon as the supply ship reaches us.'

In the 12 weeks since she had left her own tribe, Bess had learnt a lot from the quiet Scotsman. The first day, she learnt that she should never wander alone far from the camp, and certainly not at night. Mac treated her as a daughter, but other men in the sealers' camp were not so scrupulous. One had come into the cabin while Mac was out and she was not strong enough to get away from him. Mac had returned in answer to her shouts and his anger flared when he saw the man holding her by the wrists as she struggled. His hand had bunched into a fist, and the next thing she knew the stranger was lying unconscious on the floor. Mac had dragged him out by the boots, dumped him in the dust in the middle of the circle of huts, and yelled and cursed in English and Scottish that the next time someone touched his wife's maid, he would kill him.

Every night, before Mac sent her to bed, he would take his Bible out from the special box he kept it in and teach her to read the strange English words by the light of a lamp. Seal-oil was precious, but the Scotsman didn't let up. He showed her the portraits of his wife and two children, telling her stories and teaching her about his family. The son was a young man, but the daughter was 16, the same age as Bess. Bess worked for Mac in the camp, learning skills she would need to be his wife's maid in a place he called Melbourne.

Very soon, she would see what Melbourne was like too.

'What would you like to see most when we get home, lass?'

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Bess's dark eyes had gleamed in the firelight and she answered without hesitation. 'Trees. I want to see trees again, and animals.'

'Aye, to see the trees again would be welcome.'

And so, when they disembarked on the wharf in Melbourne, Bess's gaze travelled beyond the clustered buildings, beyond the woman standing in her long skirts and shawl waiting for the return of her husband, away into the distance of the eucalypt forests that were like the ones she had played in as a child. She had learnt much, and become accustomed to her life with Mac, but her heart bled for her own land.

'I've brought a gift, my dear one. Bess, a native lass.'

The sound of her name spoken made Bess look around, and she approached as Mac beckoned to her. She bobbed a curtsey to his wife as he had instructed her to do, and raised her eyes to the older woman's face.

'She's a fast learner, and I suspect she and Kate will get along fine.'

'Och, aye. And where did you find her?' The woman considered Bess, assessing her, sharp eyes noting her confident yet respectful demeanour.

'Her people were camped near the settlement and she was to be given to a chief in a few weeks as his woman.'

'How old is she?'

'Sixteen years, so far as I can work out.'

Mrs Mac clicked her tongue. 'I was wed at 16, but not to an old grandpa.' The woman clasped her arms across her stout body and her eyes twinkled. 'Well, our lass could do with the company, even if it is from a native girl. And I've no doubt I could use the help.'

***

And so it was settled. Bess became a part of the household, did the chores and ran errands. Family tradition has it that she fell in love with the son, Robert. I am unsure about that – Dad doesn't know. What he does know is that we have the blood of the Scots in our veins, so whether the family tradition is correct or not is anyone's guess.

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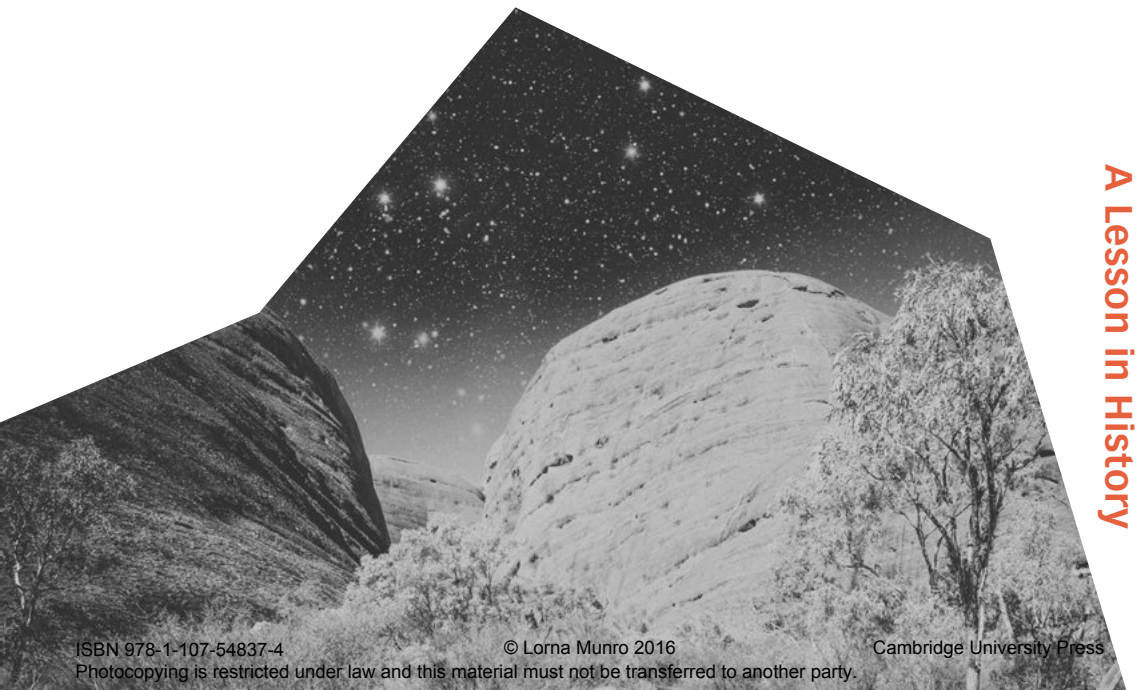
My ancestress Bess died when she was quite old, but her nine children continued to live in Melbourne and its surrounding countryside as maids and labourers. I don't know when the family became fully integrated into the community; maybe it was when the brown skin inherited from Bess faded from the mix of genes through the generations, and people forgot we were 'part native'. Maybe we will never know.

But now, one thing I'm certain of is that I am descended from the Tasmanian Aboriginal people. And no sirree, we certainly didn't die out!



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My Grandmothers

Aaliyah Parnell

My name is Aaliyah and I'm 14 years old. I'm from Waterloo, but my family is from Cowra, which is Wiradjuri country.

I have many cousins and I am connected to many different mobs from all over Australia.

My mother's people are Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi and my father's people are from Armidale (NSW) and Oodnadatta (SA).

My father's mother used to spoil me rotten because, for eight years, I was the only grandchild who lived in Sydney; the rest were in other towns and it was before my brothers were born.

My father's mother was born in South Australia; she was taken away at a young age. I was told that she was taken to an island in the Northern Territory.

I was also told that my grandmother grew up with many other young girls who were taken away and moved to a dormitory on Melville Island. She was a part of what is now known as the Stolen Generations. I have many aunties and cousins that aren't really related, but my grandmother called them family.

My grandmother was the best cook and when there was a special occasion she would cook up the nicest feed. She worked at an Aboriginal college called Tranby – she was the cook there. I remember one night, me, my grandmother and my aunty were sitting outside talking about things, amazing things – it was the best! It's one night I'll always remember.

I miss my grandmother.

A couple of years ago a horrible phone call came through. She got really sick and was in hospital, then she passed away. She was gone. It wasn't just a bad night, though it ended up to be worse for my family: a few months later, around Christmas, my Mum's grandmother passed away.

I lost two grandmothers in the one year, which was really hard to get through.

My other grandmother, my mother's mother, grew up on Erambie mission in Cowra. She is the middle child of her family. She's been involved in protests and helps fighting for land rights. Sometimes she

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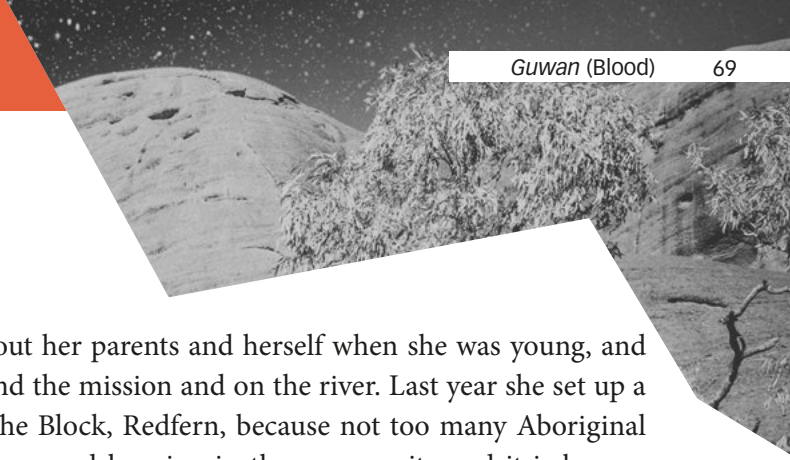
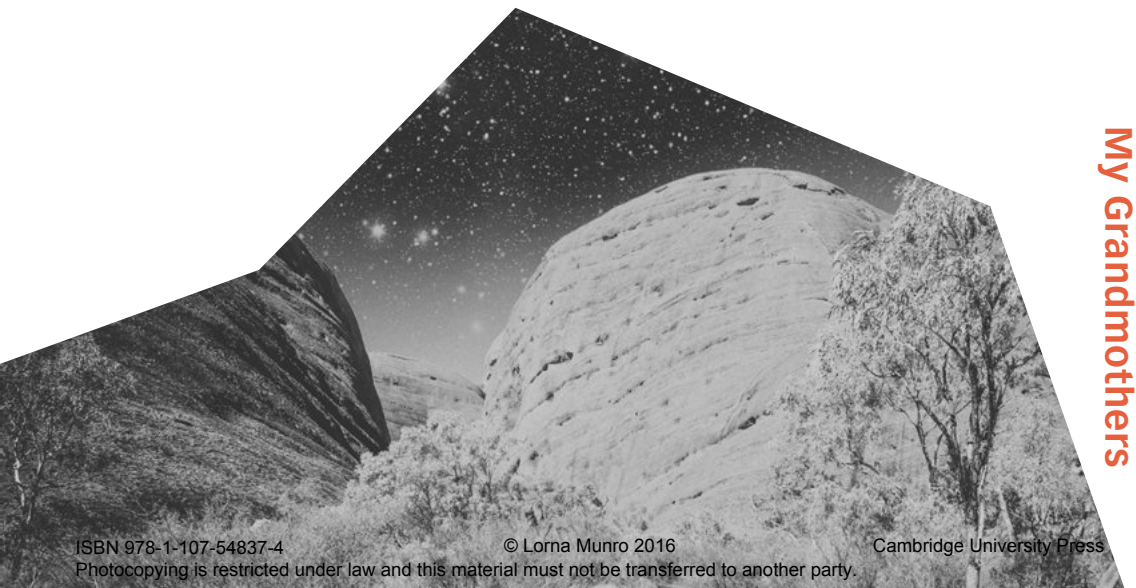


tells us stories about her parents and herself when she was young, and stories from around the mission and on the river. Last year she set up a tent embassy at The Block, Redfern, because not too many Aboriginal people were getting good housing in the community and it is known as black fellas' land. She worked at the Land Council for 10 years as the chairperson. And she knows a lot of history and I like spending time with her and learning. She is the only one left: her mother passed away just before last Christmas.

I know a few other girls at my school who are the same: they lost their grandmothers as well, and we talk about it sometimes. I don't really talk about it too much, which is why I thought I should write about it because it can help.

My grandmothers are not here anymore, but I know that they still hang around watching over me and my brothers and cousins, and they never really go. Their spirit is still felt, and sometimes I smell their perfume or I hear a song they really liked and I am happy that I got to spend time with them. I miss them, but I know that there is life after death and it's not too bad – just another part of your life.



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Maya
Malika Munro

Maya and Myka were the middle children in their family. They came from a big family of eight kids and had loving, hard-working parents. They all lived in the inner-city suburb of Waterloo in Sydney.

Maya was in Year 6 at the local primary school and Myka had just started at the local high school, which was in another suburb, with their older siblings.

As the eldest child of her family still at her primary school, Maya felt responsible for her three younger siblings, so every morning she would get her younger siblings up and get them ready for school. She would take them to and from school to try to help her parents, because she could see that her parents had very important jobs and were quite busy.

When it was time for Maya to go to high school, she was nervous and didn't know what to expect. Her older siblings told her the 'ins and outs' of the schoolyard rules, like at lunchtime everyone sits over here, no one sits over there and all the boys hang out over there and she was told to not hang around them fellas and definitely don't go near them fellas either. Maya couldn't help but laugh at these unspoken schoolyard rules.

Maya made new friends very quickly: a set of twins named Jess and Lisa. Her new friends' older brothers and sister knew her own older siblings, which was good for Maya because she could go to her new friends' house on some afternoons and then go home with her brother and sisters when it was time, but she would have to ask her mother first – after all, even though she went to a new school, she still had to pick her younger siblings up from school in the afternoon and take them home.

About two weeks went by and Maya decided that she would ask her mother whether she could go to her new friends' house the next afternoon. Her mother said that Maya could, and that she would pick up the younger children herself.

The next day, Maya had a very eventful afternoon. She got to hang out with all the other teenagers from her new school, and it was a whole new world for her. She saw girls playing basketball just as well as the boys they were playing against – she had always loved to play basketball.

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She saw boys skateboarding and doing tricks on self-made ramps; she saw a group of very pretty girls dancing around a stereo. Maya had never seen anyone move like that before, and she wanted to learn how to do it all – the only thing was that everybody was from different groups and she didn't know any of them.

Maya and her friends noticed one of the girls from their class standing with the girls who were dancing, so they decided to walk over and say hello. After talking to the girl for a while, she told them that the girls who were dancing were her sister and her sister's friends, and that she could dance like them – even better, she said, while cracking a cheeky smile.

Their new friend's name was Sandra. She was very funny and she was taller than them too.

After a little while, some of the boys who were skateboarding skated past them and Jess noticed that two of them were from her class. She screamed out, 'Oi!' as they went past. One of the boys swerved and ran into the other one and, like a tumble of bricks, they came down off their skateboards. After that, the boys looked at each other and laughed, and one said to the other, 'That girl aye Jack' and the other boy said, 'Yeah bra, I think she just sang out to me', and the other boy replied, 'Well one of them did uh.' The boys decided to skate past them again, but this time they'd be ready. As soon as they got closer, Maya jumped out in front of them and then jumped back out of their way just before they got to her, and the two boys had another collision. They all laughed and the boys started talking with Maya and her friends. Soon enough they were all dancing and laughing and having fun tormenting each other.

Later on, as it was getting dark, Myka told Maya that it was time to go home because dinner would be ready soon and their mum would be cranky if they came home late on her first afternoon out with her older siblings – she joked that their mother might not let her out again, so she said goodbye to her new friends and told them she'd ask her mother whether she could do this every afternoon.

That night at the dinner table, Maya couldn't stop talking about how much fun she'd had, and about all the new things she had seen and didn't

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know about until that afternoon. Her parents tried not to laugh at how excited Maya was. They could see that she liked her new school and new friends very much, and that she was growing up and wanted to explore and learn new things.

After dinner, while Maya was helping her mother wash the dishes, she asked her mother whether she could hang out with her new friends every afternoon. Her mum told her that she couldn't do it every afternoon because she still had responsibilities at home. Maya was crushed at first, but then her mother explained to her that if she did all her work properly and quickly, she would have more time to hang out with her friends; however, she still had to pick up her younger siblings two or three afternoons a week until suitable afternoon care could be found for them. Maya agreed that this was a fair arrangement.

The next morning, Maya got up extra early to clean up her room, then she got her younger siblings up and made sure they were ready. Once at school, Maya told Jess, Lisa and Sandra what her mum had said, and all the girls got excited and talked all day about all the new possibilities and adventures that were ahead of them.

That afternoon, Maya picked her younger siblings up from school and took them home. She talked and played with them all afternoon and remembered just how much she loved spending time with them. That's when she decided she would continue to pick them up two or three afternoons a week, or whenever they needed her to, because she realised it wasn't just her responsibility as a big sister: she enjoyed spending time with her siblings as much as she did with anyone else – if not more. After all, as much as she wanted to be with her friends, Maya knew that what she was doing was a good thing too.

So from then on she looked forward to every afternoon – whether it was spent with her younger siblings or with her friends, she was just happy to have fun.

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Family Christmas
Ranahl Yungabun

My name is Ranahl Yungabun. I am from Djugerari Community in the Great Sandy Desert, and here is some information that I found on the internet about my community.

Djugerari is located 110 kilometres south-east of Fitzroy Crossing by road. Access is via the Great Northern Highway (54 kilometres) and then by the unsealed Cherrabun Road.

Djugerari was established as a permanent Aboriginal community in the early 1980s by Walmajarri people moving from Cherrabun Pastoral Station, where many of the men had previously worked as stockmen. The community was incorporated in 1983. Most of the people from Djugerari are part of the Walmajarri language group from the northern Great Sandy Desert region of Western Australia. Now there are many empty houses, as people have moved into town.

I'm going to tell you about my family Christmas in Ngumpan. Ngumpan is a small Aboriginal community, a two-hour drive from Djugerari along a bumpy dirt road. Some of my family lives there – like my aunty, brothers and sisters. It is located 95 kilometres south-east of Fitzroy Crossing in the Kimberley region of Western Australia, within the shire of Halls Creek. When we hunt kangaroos, we always drive across the highway near the hill – the hills there are limestone, like the hills at Windjana Gorge, and there are lots of caves.

Ngumpan has its own art gallery, which is open to the public. Anyone can go there and buy any painting. My grandmother and grandfathers do lots of paintings and make lots of boomerangs to sell to tourists. There is a small freshwater spring that runs down from the hills and the water is crystal clear. Anyone can go and swim there. If someone from a different place tries to swim there, they have to get a small rock and rub their underarm and throw it in the water so the rainbow serpent can smell their scent and what language group they are from. If they don't rub their underarm, the snake will send a big wind or they'll even get sick. White people have to do the same. They always go to the art gallery when it's rodeo time in Fitzroy – lots of tourists drive down from Halls Creek or Kununurra.

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If we want to get pig, we drive down the road to a turn-off that goes to my community. There is a small creek called Salty Creek because the water there tastes salty. Lots of cows, pigs and birds always hang around there. After the floods, lots of pigs come out from everywhere. There are tracks everywhere – sometimes you can mistake small cows' tracks for pigs' tracks. Lots of family come from Noonkanbah, Wangkatjungka, Fitzroy and Ngalingkadji. Ngalingkadji is located within the Kimberley area of Western Australia.

We travel there and people from other communities come and celebrate Christmas. In Ngumpan they have law at the same time as Christmas; that's a bit sad because the boys don't get to celebrate Christmas with their family because they are away for a while. Law time can go for weeks, even months; the young boys go through many ceremonies and learn about songs, dance and culture, and come back as men. Sometimes the men take food for the boys who go through law; the community can't see them while they are out bush.

When I'm not with my family, it makes me feel worried. When I go away to school, it makes me think about them a lot. It makes me want to leave school but that's the wrong thing. I live at the residential college in Broome. It's a long way from my community and life here is very different: you can't go hunting the same as when I'm in my community. When my uncle comes to Broome, he always calls me to let me know that he's coming. Some of my family members always encourage me and tell me not to leave school because it's good for my future.

When I was younger, my uncle taught me lots of things, like how to fix and repair car tyres. He taught me how to hunt and how to shoot a gun, and always tells me to go back to school, even though I don't want to. Having Christmas is important because you're celebrating Jesus's birthday and it makes all my family happy. I used to go to church when I was little, and I still do. We go to church at Bayulu Community, which is 10 kilometres south of Fitzroy Crossing.

On Christmas morning, when the little ones are sleeping, we always put the presents under the Christmas tree. Before we eat, we always

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pray to the Lord and thank him for the wonderful day we had. I can't wait to have another Christmas with the family again. It brings joy and happiness, and I can't wait to be home in my community again.

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A Lesson in History

Research and Discussion

1 Elizabeth tells a narrative about Jack, who at the start of the story identifies as being an ordinary white Australian then finds that he has deeper roots in this country than he first thought. What do you think about this?
2 Research Tasmanian Aboriginal peoples, build a profile of factual knowledge and present your findings to the class.
3 There is a misconception that there are no longer any Aboriginal people in Tasmania. Looking through historical texts, can you uncover how this belief may have started? After reflecting on this story, use this misconception to initiate discussion in your class.

Writing and Creating

1 Rewrite Elizabeth's story as a script for a movie, using the most detail you can imagine and using further research as a reference point for your blockbuster movie script.
2 Create your own family tree. How far back can you go?
3 If your whole family story could be represented by one symbol, what would it be?

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My Grandmothers

Research and Discussion

1 What are the Stolen Generations? What do you know about this?
2 Aaliyah talks about her grandmothers, where they are from and what they did. She uses terms like the Stolen Generations, land rights and Aboriginal Tent Embassy. Do you understand these terms? Research and discuss what these words mean.
3 Aaliyah has had to deal with death in the family many times at a young age, and she talks about other girls her age from school who have had the same experience. Aboriginal people suffer from intergenerational trauma, and one impact of colonialism today is the gap between the life expectancies of Aboriginal people and those of non-Aboriginal people. What are some other issues young Aboriginal people experience today as a result of what happened in the past?

Writing and Creating

1 Write a short story about your grandmother/s.
2 Write a biography about your grandmother and/or grandparents. This activity may involve asking family about them and rebuilding a narrative of their journey/s using photos and other materials. Create a booklet from this information.
3 Write a poem about the Stolen Generations. Perform it for your class.

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Maya

Research and Discussion

1 Maya and Myka are sisters. How many siblings do they have?
2 When Maya first goes to high school, she has older sisters and a brother to guide her through the 'ins and outs'. Can you recall your first experiences at high school and how you felt at this time?
3 Compare and discuss the differences between primary school and high school.

Writing and Creating

1 What responsibilities do you have at home? Write a diary entry for each day, detailing these.
2 Create a mind map of some of the things that you experienced when transitioning into high school.
3 Create a guide for students starting at your high school. A pamphlet is a great way to present this type of information.

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Family Christmas

Research and Discussion

1 How far does Ranahl have to travel to get home to his community, Djugerari, from Fitzroy Crossing?
2 What does Christmas time mean for Ranahl and his community?
3 Define a 'celebration'. What does this term mean to you?

Writing and Creating

1 Using dialogue exclusively, write about your family celebrations.
2 Get your classmates to help you act out a scene from your dialogue.
3 Create an artwork that shows a ritual your family carries out during Christmas.

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Contributors

Aaliyah Parnell is a 14-year-old girl from the Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi nations. She lives in Sydney and attends the local high school. When Aaliyah was younger, she began to write short stories and enjoyed creative writing, then became interested in musical instruments. She can play the saxophone, guitar and flute. Aaliyah is the eldest child in her family and has two younger brothers. She enjoys watching movies and listening to music, and has performed and acted. Aaliyah sang with the Gondwana Choir, performing with artists such as Olivia Newton-John, Kev Carmody and Shellie Morris at the Opera House and NRL Grand Final, and she hopes to work in the entertainment industry in the future.

Elizabeth Morgan is an eighth-generation Australian and third-generation Darwinite. She has travelled extensively throughout Australia with her parents and seven siblings, and she especially loves the bush and Australia's unique landscape and history. She has a passion for literature and language, and speaks three languages. Her other loves include animals and anything outdoorsy. She is currently completing a Bachelor of Law at Charles Darwin University.

Eric Avery is a Koori, and belongs to the Yuin, Gumbaynggirr, Ngiyampaa and Bundjalung tribes of New South Wales. He is an independent artist (dancer/musician) currently based in Sydney. Eric started Indigenous dance as a young child, then moved on to physical theatre, ballet and contemporary dance at the age of 14. He has been exploring poetry and writing since 2001 with collaborator Lorna Munro, forming Poetribe – a fusion of poetry and music. Eric is currently rehearsing with Marrugeku for the company's production of *Cut the Sky*.

Laverette Roe is a 16-year-old Kununurra-born, Goolarabooloo man. He is a proud member of the Yawurru people. He feels a strong connection and sense of belonging to his country, and loves going camping with his family and friends.

Lorna Munro is a multi-disciplinary artist, working with visual arts, poetry, performance, language and writing. She is also an educator,

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broadcaster and emerging playwright and set designer. She has been an active member of her community since the age of 13. A dynamic 26-year-old proud Wiradjuri/Gamilaroi woman, she calls the Redfern/Waterloo area of inner-city Sydney home. She honours her teachers and elders by passing on what she was taught, and she is currently developing and facilitating art/poetry programs and tours interpreting the history of her local area with young people, as well as working with The Red Room Company.

Malika Munro is a mother of three from the Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi nations. She grew up in inner-city Sydney. Malika was born in Cowra, New South Wales, and moved to Sydney with her family as a child. She then went to her local primary and high schools in the same suburb in which she grew up. Malika has loved music for as long as she can remember and was introduced to poetry and writing when she was in primary school. She started writing poems for herself, and continued writing throughout her school years and into her adult life. Malika was one of the writers featured during the Sydney Writers' Festival 2014 as part of the 'Seven Sisters' poetry performance.

Ranahl Yungabun was born in Derby and lived in a small community called the Djugerai for most of his life until he moved to Broome for high school. He goes to Wangkatjunka on the holidays. He loves being at home at Djugerari, where he is close to his family. He can understand Djugerari language and speaks it a little. In the future, he wants to be the chairperson of his community to help out his people and make improvements to the area.

Samantha Martin is from Warmun (Turkey Creek) in the East Kimberley region of Western Australia. Her language is Gija. She loves her family, friends and country, and is very proud of where she's from. She goes to school in Broome and is a big footy head – she loves both watching and playing the game.

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Teila Watson, or **Ancestress**, is a Kungalu/Ghangalu and BirriGubba, Wiri Murri woman from the Dawson River and Nebo areas of Central/North Queensland. Born and raised in Brisbane, she began singing, writing and performing at a very young age through a range of community cultural development workshops, as well as learning and performing traditional First Nations dance from the time she could walk. A former student of the Aboriginal Centre of Performing Arts, she has performed both live music and theatre performances interstate, as well as facilitating workshops for a wide range of participants. Teila has also been involved with projects by Bell Shakespeare and the Queensland Theatre Company. Showcasing her talents alongside Poetribe for the opening of the Proppa Now exhibition during APAM at the Brisbane Powerhouse, Teila spends her time using many different media for visual arts, as well as playwriting, poetry, singing, songwriting and acting, while also remaining a strong family-focused and culturally orientated Murri. Aiming at social and political change through performance and literature, Teila is a passionate advocator for a clean planet, a balanced and respectful society, and a better world for future generations.

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