

# Indigenous Picture Books

*Ideas for exploring the environment in the International Year Indigenous Languages*  
by Jeanie Clark

Do you love sharing stories with your children, whether in person, image or print? It's such a great way to discover other peoples and places. Indigenous Language (IL) stories add another dimension of new sounds, words, languages and perspectives. This article will introduce some IL picture books that you might like to share with your children and what you might discover in them, as a way to participate in this 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages.



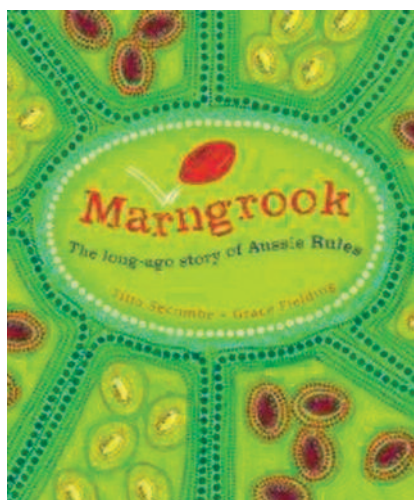
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Indigenous Languages

## Marngrook from Gariwerd

Now that it's footy season again, have you heard of the Marngrook footy show? It's the Indigenous footy entertainment show run on NITV on a Thurs night. You can find out about it at <<https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/marngrook-footy-show>>. The show started on the radio and has developed into a TV show. You can find out more about its 20 year history at [SBS](https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/marngrook-footy-show).

So why this name?

The answer is told in *Marngrook - the long ago story of Aussie Rules* (2012) by Titta Secombe and Grace Fielding, of Gariwerd/Grampians country. It is available from the Horsham library and possibly others. There is a [sampler for the story and its illustrations](#) here, but I'd also recommend getting the book and enjoying it.



From this book, we discover some Jardwadjali IL words in the glossary, how a footy was made, the Jardwadjali footy story, some animal names and social rules to keep children

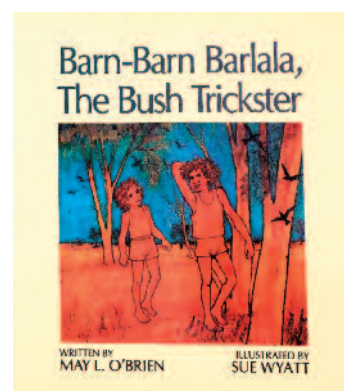
safe. And 'Marngrook'? It is a oval-shaped ball made of possum-skin used by people from before colonisation (pictured).



How was Marngrook played? *Behind the News* has a [video](#) and [discussion questions](#). It's also worth looking at. Is it also worth discussing what aspects of history we may not know of, that we can discover through IL stories?

## A story from Margaret River

Another story about caring for children in the bush is *Barn-Barn Barlala - the Bush Trickster* (1992) by May L. O'Brien from the Margaret River area. (Time for some map skills practice?) A few Wongutha words are scattered through this story. They are mainly names for people and plants, e.g. 'Barn-Barn Barlala' is a 'Bellbird' in English. This story gives information about bush food in the W.A. Eastern Goldfields desert - and how easy it is to get separated and



lost, when looking for it. What do your children know about 'bush foods'? Could this spark an interest? What communications do you use to warn children of the danger in wandering off? Do stories work well for both these purposes?

If you have enjoyed this book, then O'Brien has written three others from this area. These have been collected into the Bawoo stories, also illustrated brightly in reds and oranges. Some illustrations and questions from the Bawoo stories are available. in a [sampler](#). These stories are legends to explain how things came to be the way they are. Do children notice any moral lesson in each story? Do they know stories which have moral lessons too? (e.g. Aesop's