

Indigenous Picture Books

Ideas for exploring the environment in the international Year of Indigenous Languages by Jeanie Clark

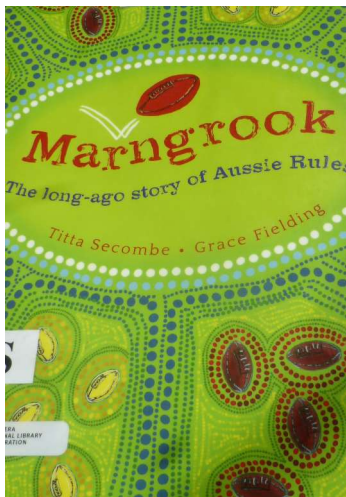
Do you love sharing stories with your children, whether in person, image or print? It's such a great way to discover other peoples and places. Indigenous Language (IL) stories add another dimension of new sounds, words, languages and perspectives. This article will introduce some IL picture books that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



2019 | INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF
Indigenous Languages

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-footyshow>. 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-footyshow).

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 on the webpage,, 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 an oval-shaped ball

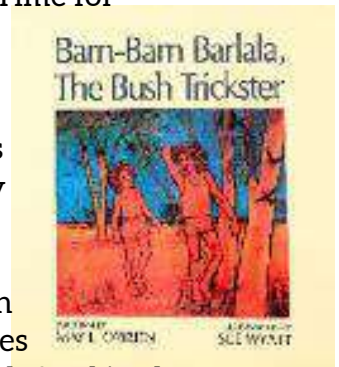
made of possum
-skin used by people
from before
colonisation (pictured).



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

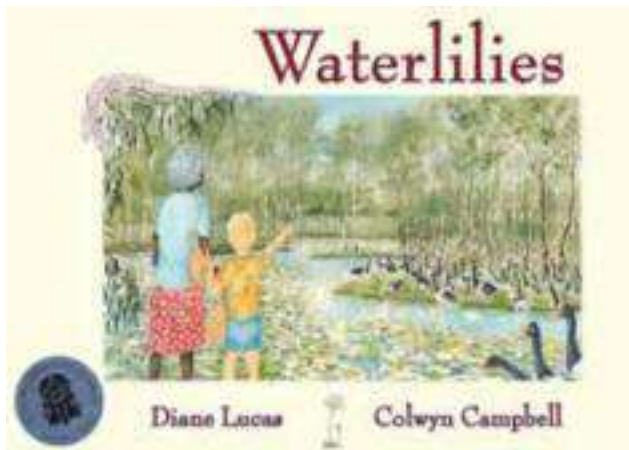
Another story about caring for children in the bush is Barn-Barn Barlala - the Bush Trickster (1992) by May L. O'Brien from the Margaret River area. (Time for some map skills practice?) A few Wongutha words are scattered through this story. They are mainly names for people and plants, e.g. 'Barn-Barn 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 (e.g. Aesop's fables)?

Environmental stories from Kakadu

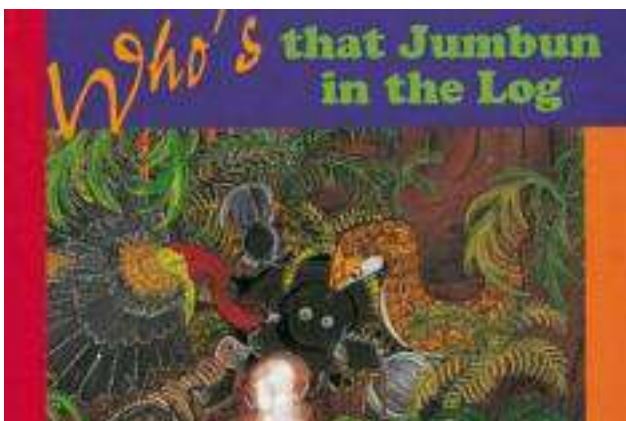


Some books are full of incredibly detailed and lovely visual images, from which we can discover much of the natural environment. *Waterlilies* (2007) by Diane Lucas and illustrated by Colwyn Campbell is such a book. It tells of two boys, from different cultures, who go to a Kakadu billabong and learn what lives there, how they are linked (i.e. its ecosystem), its bush food and how to prepare it for eating. The Gundjeihmi IL names of the Murrumburr clan of Kakadu, are used for the waterlilies' parts, and are given in a visual glossary.

If you enjoy this book, you might also like Lucas' earlier one - *Walking with the seasons in Kakadu* (2005). It describes changes in the natural environment for each of the six seasons.

Stories from the Atherton Tablelands

Another delightful nature book is *Who's that Jumbun in the log?* (1996) written by Narell McRobbie. It is in English, except for one Yidinji IL word- "Jumbun", ('wichtetty grub'). The Yidinji are based near Cairns. A little background on them can be found at

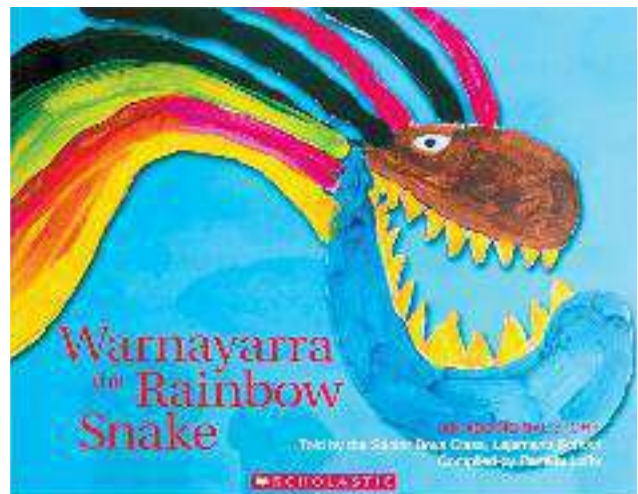


Cairns Regional Council. This story is very different as it uses icons instead of some words - good for early and pre-readers. Lots of fun! Along the way there are details about life in a rainforest supported by dot-outlined colourful drawings. A follow-up activity could be creating a diagram to show the 'Jumbuns' role in the rainforest.

If you enjoyed this book, Mc Robbie has another called *Bip the Snapping Bungaroo* set in a billabong. Again, McRobbie draws on her Yidinji heritage for the word 'Bungaroo' (turtle). This story is read out-loud with the words and pictures available on YouTube.

Stories from the Tanami region

Warnayarra - the Rainbow Snake (2004), by children of the Lajamanu School, is a story from the Warlpiri people on the northern edge of the Tanami Desert. (Time for some more



map skills practice?) It was also in Horsham library, and may be in yours. A brief introduction to Lajamanu and the Warlpiri is [available at <www.rah.com.au >](http://www.rah.com.au)

This book was compiled by Pamela Lofts from stories told and drawn by the children of the bi-lingual Lajamanu school. *Warnayarra* gives insight to some history of the Warlpiri and to a natural phenomenon. A reading in English with the accompanying child-based pictures is on YouTube. Following this, children could describe where the Warlpiri worked and what happened in this weather event. Then compare how they might explain it.

Stories can help us see differences in cultures. Consider *Kuuku-kurlu - The Monster story* (2012) a Walpiri children's story written by an eight-year-old. What does this story show is scary

about the monster for this child? Would your children agree that this is a 'monster' story? What sort of scary monster-dog story would they write? Does this suggest any cultural differences?

Stories from Groote Eylandt

Not too sure where Groote Eylandt is? Mapping skills again to find it! (Note that its name is in Old Dutch. What is the translation?) The indigenous people here are the Warnindilyakwa. Their language is Anindilyakwa. A quick history is at <www.grooteeylandtlodge.com.au > Their online Language Centre has stories. Here we also learn 'Karningaba' is Anindilyakwa for 'Hello'.

When we go walkabout or Yurruwa Yirrilkenuma- langua (2014), written by Rhoda Lalara, is a bilingual book of the Gaddigal Land in the Anindilyakwa language. It tells the story of animals seen on walkabout. The IL reading is online at Allen and Unwin. Better still is the IL reading with clearly identifiable creature images, also at Allen and Unwin. The IL words are long, but it has a classroom video to help. Here the Anindilyakwa reading is followed by the teacher and children repeating words. Some suggestions for activities with this book are available.

Of course, it is easier to discover stories and IL words, if a book is bilingual with written words and images. On-line is an Anindilyakwa language story, Yinikarrka (Chicken Hawk), that does this. At the end of this story, ask your children what the story aimed to explain? How would they have explained it? Do we have stories that do that also? If so, are there examples? If not, how do we explain such features?

If you enjoy the sound of Anindilyakwa, there is more and a seven minute video-story about animals playing golf. It has a very different style of artwork to the Walkabout book. Try matching words spoken to the written language on the screen! This develops understanding of the

challenge to learn another language. What about telling the story from its images? Have fun with this! Could it be a trigger for some creative writing too?

Stories are not just about reading. They are a window to discover other world views and knowledge of other places and people's - cultural diversity. So, follow-up listening and reading stories, with discussion about the story, not just for its information, but for ways of thinking and wider issues.

We've now seen a few picture story books from a half a dozen IL's of Australia. If you would like to find more, try this list of Australian Indigenous books., at <https://www.gleebooks.com.au/education/australian-indigenous-peoples> >

There really is a lot of choice!

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TAILORED TUTORING

Is your child:

- needing extra support in a specific learning area?
- having trouble 'cracking the code' of reading?
- gifted and craving more extension and challenge?
- wanting mentoring in an ongoing project?

My reluctant reader comes out of each session feeling confident and proud of his progress! – *Jack*

Catherine has a lovely, gentle and patient nature and is a fantastic asset to the home educating community. I enthusiastically recommend her services to other families. – *Tomara Shafiq, President of SHED*

Hi, I'm Catherine! I am a trained primary school teacher who has been working closely with home-educating families for 6+ years. I'm dedicated to the broader picture and relate with each child holistically, supporting them to flourish in their way.

My eldest had learning difficulties and was unable to read until he was over 8 (though that now more than made up for lost time and is a very competent and avid reader of age 17). I attribute much of his confidence and passion for reading to his tutoring with Catherine. – *Louise Hawes*

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MICRO EDUCATION

Catherine Kirby
Qualified primary teacher
Class facilitator
& mentor