

The Rainbow Serpent is Back!



Edwina Reilly
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Enviro-Stories is an innovative literacy education program that inspires learning about natural resource and catchment management issues. Developed by PeeKdesigns, this program provides students with an opportunity to publish their own stories that have been written for other kids to support learning about their local area.

www.envirostories.com.au

In 2014, the “Tools, Totems & Tucker” Enviro-Stories program provided local kids with the opportunity to write and illustrate stories about local Aboriginal cultural - in particular Wiradjuri culture. This program was sponsored by the Central West and Central Tablelands Local Land Services.

Central Tablelands Local Land Services

The Central Tablelands Local Land Services region is located in central New South Wales and covers an area of approximately 31,365 km². It includes the major towns of Bathurst, Blayney, Cowra, Lithgow, Molong, Mudgee, Oberon and Orange. It falls predominantly within Wiradjuri Aboriginal country and small parts of Dharug and Darkinjung country.

www.lls.nsw.gov.au/centraltablelands

Central West Local Land Services

The Central West Local Land Services region is home to around 110,000 people and covers the central west slopes region around Grenfell, Forbes and Wellington to the western plains of Nyngan and Coonamble. The major Aboriginal nations that the central west region overlies are the Wiradjuri, Wailwan, Wongaibon, Kawambarai and Kamialroi. These nations also extend into other Local Land Services regions.

www.lls.nsw.gov.au/centralwest

The Rainbow Serpent is Back!

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The "Tools, Totems and Tucker" Enviro-Stories Program has been proudly supported by the Central West and Central Tablelands Local Land Services.

The "Tools, Totems & Tucker" collection consists of the following books:

Sponsored by Central Tablelands Local Land Services

- Aboriginal Totems
- Our Living Land
- Aboriginal Animal Tracks
- Aboriginal Life
- The Dreamtime Trilogy

Sponsored by Central West Local Land Services

- Burnum finds his way
- How the Koala got his claws
- Storm Boy and Uncle Farren
- The Peculiar Platypus
- The Rainbow Serpent is back!

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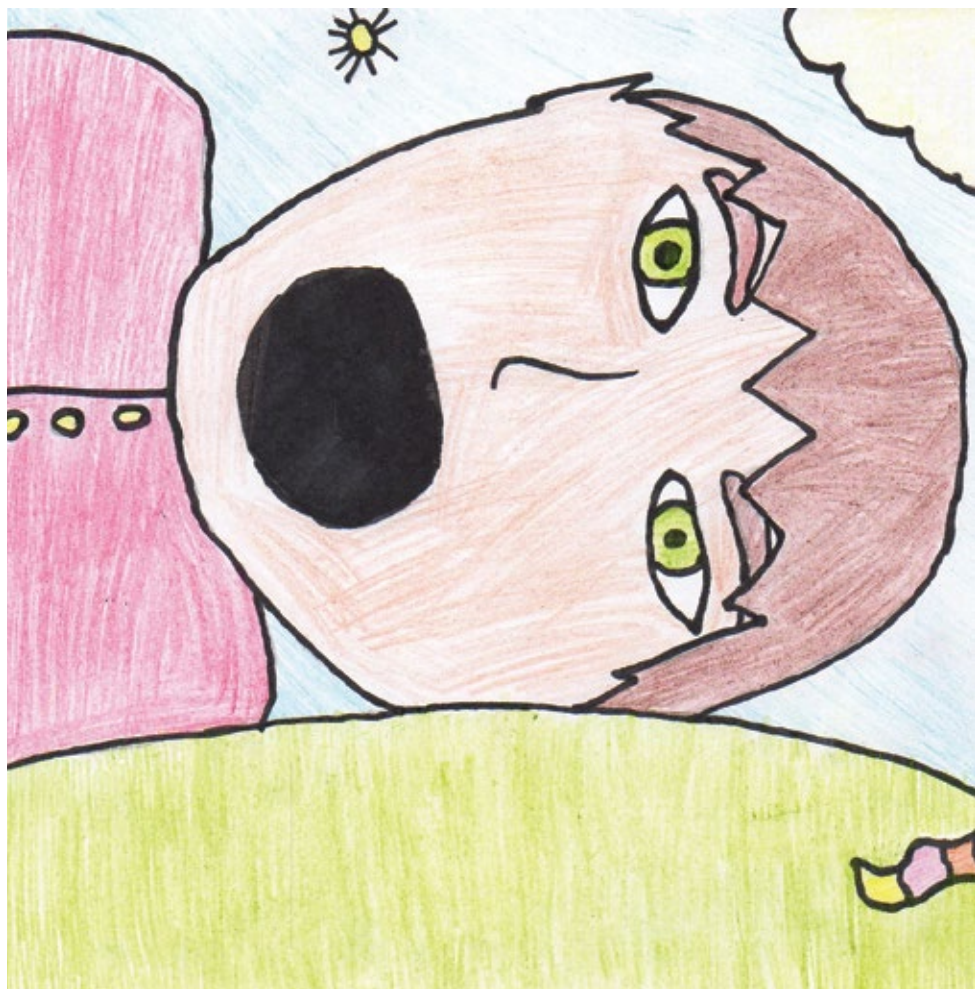
Hugh kicked over the muddy sign. “The Wiradjuri people used this park as a popular meeting place a long time ago,” the sign read.

Hugh didn’t care about that. He didn’t think it mattered whose land this was, or who used to live here.

Suddenly, Hugh spotted a colourful tail flickering. He looked closer. It was a rainbow serpent!

It turned and looked him in the eye. The snake's tail flicked...





Then, the ground opened up and Hugh fell. He hit soft grass and opened his eyes. It was the park! But hundreds of years before. Aboriginal people were busily walking about, doing their various jobs.



Hugh got swept away by an elderly woman heading towards the Lachlan River. He noticed a wooden koala on a string hanging from her neck.

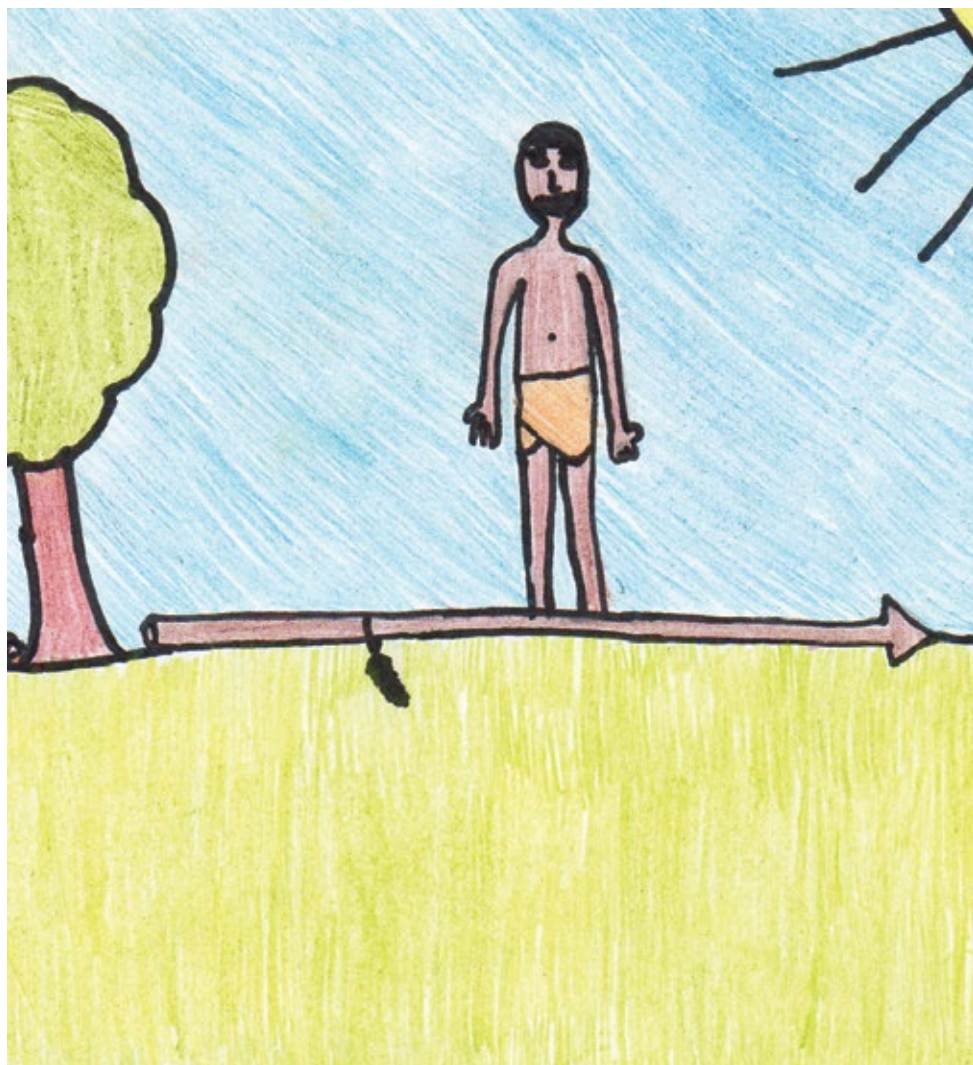
“What’s that?” he asked.

“It is my totem,” said the Wiradjuri woman.

“Totems are passed down through the families and cannot be harmed by those whose totems they are. I need to protect the woodlands to make sure the koala has places to live and things to eat,” she told him.

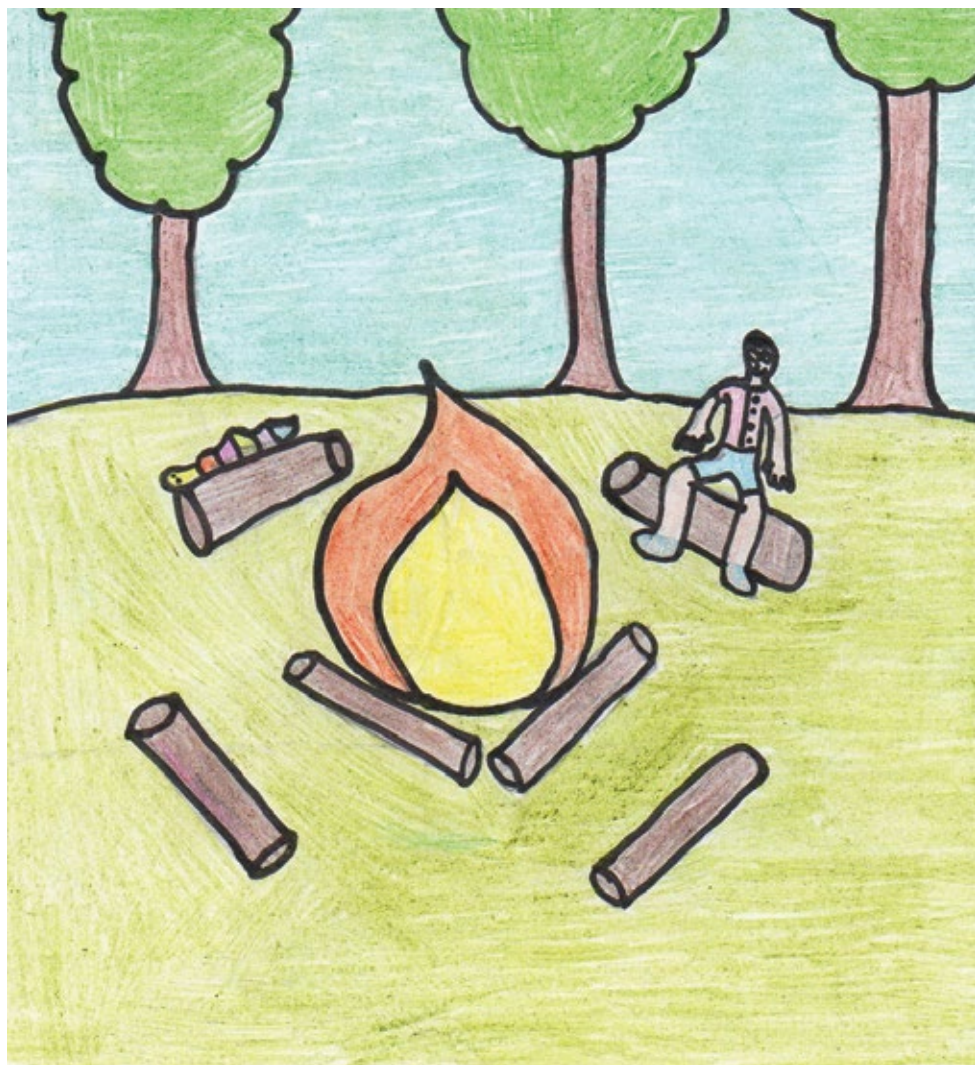


Next, he got swept away by a man holding a spear. Hugh was afraid of the spear, but the man said, "Do not worry. My spear is my favourite tool, but I do not hurt people."





"I use the spear to hunt animals for food. There are many tools like spears, sticks, dilly bags, boomerangs and fish traps. Tools aren't just used for hunting. They can be for gathering, making huts and many other things," he told Hugh.



After listening, Hugh thanked the man for his knowledge and was swept off again by a pair of young children. They played and then sat down to eat beside the campfire.



“What are you eating?” asked Hugh.

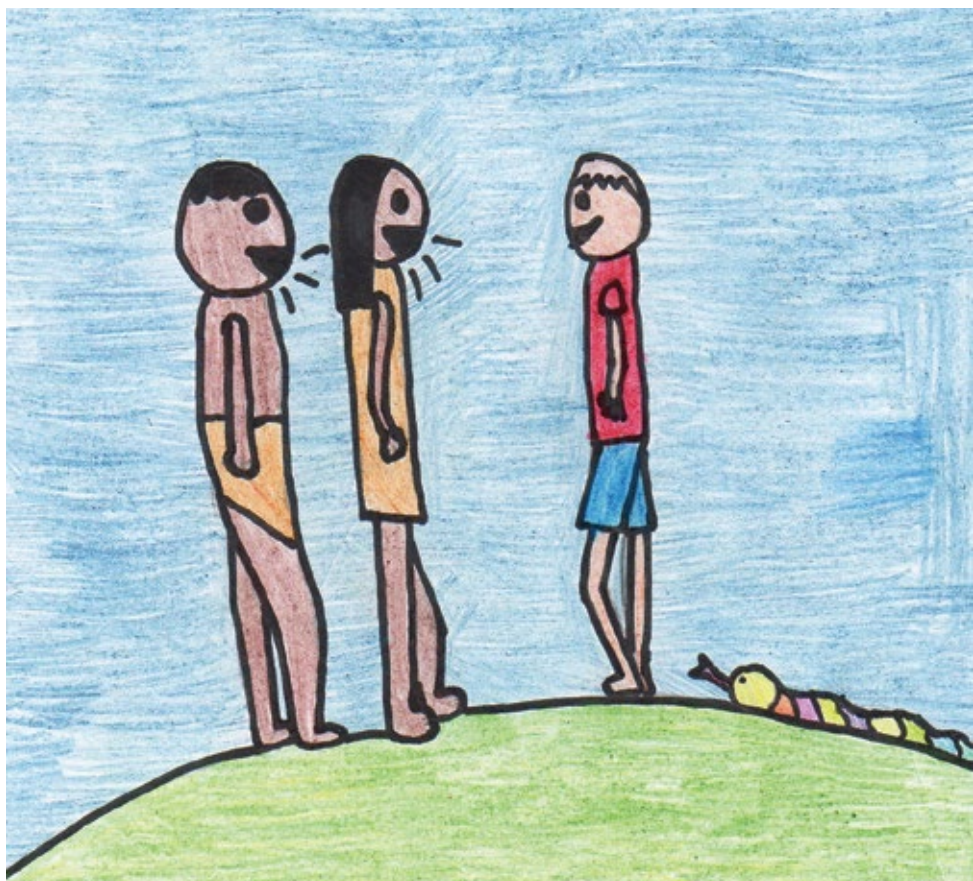
“Witchetty grubs and kangaroo,” said the girl, Alkina.

“Eels with berries,” said the boy, Matari.

Hugh thought this was very interesting.

Alkina told him that she had helped the women cook and gather the berries and witchetty grubs. Matari told him that he had helped the men hunt the kangaroo and catch the eels.

They both said it took a long time to complete these chores, but catching and preparing your own food made you respect where it came from.



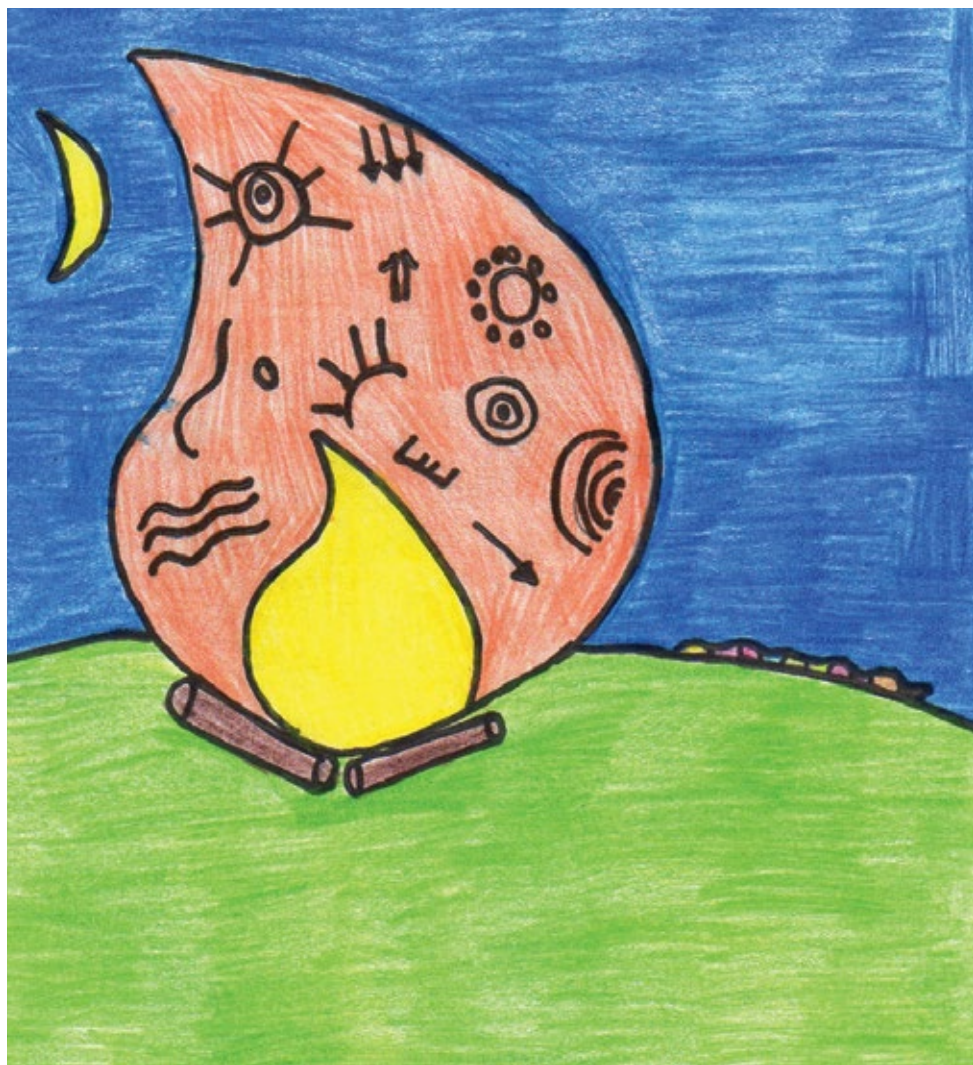


After eating, they went to listen to one of the elders tell a story. The younger children loved listening to the stories the elder told.

They were called Dreamtime stories and linked the people to each other, their ancestors, their traditional lands and their gods.

Hugh heard one called "The Rainbow Serpent," and smiled.

Hugh listened to the stories of the sun and the sky, the rain and the wind, the plants and the animals, the rivers and the lands. He learned more about the tools, totems and tucker things he had been hearing about all day.





When everyone finished, Hugh was left sitting there, thinking. He thought about the symbolism of totems, the variety of tools and the work put into making tucker. He thought of all the people he had met...



...all the things he had learned, like the richness and wonder of Aboriginal culture. He promised himself that, if he ever got back home, he would keep learning and discovering things about the Wiradjuri people. Suddenly, he saw something.



It was the rainbow serpent! It turned, looked him in the eye and slithered away.

The ground, again, opened and Hugh fell straight into his own park in his own time. He was home again!

Hugh quickly repaired the sign he had knocked over. He now had a great respect for the Wiradjuri people, their lands and their rich history and culture.



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