



YILDAAN: OUR DREAMING TRACK

Written by **UNCLE BUD MARSHALL** with **YANDAARRA**
 Artwork by **HANNAH SMITH** and **ELAINE CARMADY**

RECOMMENDED FOR: Ages 7–12 YEARS OLD (YEARS 2-6 PRIMARY)

GENRE: Non-Fiction Picture Book

THEMES: Reconciliation, fishing, Country, belonging, history, stories, Indigenous stories, family, community

CURRICULUM LEARNING AREAS:

- Across the Curriculum: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures
- History and Geography
- Across the Curriculum: Sustainability
- English: Language and literacy

NOTES WRITTEN BY: Uncle Bud Marshall, Hannah Smith, Elaine Carmady and Lara Daley

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INTRODUCTION

Giinagay, welcome, I'm Uncle Bud. I'm doing this story book with my family and I'm on Gumbaynggirr Country. I'd like to share everything with you as we live our story of the land, the river and everywhere we go. I hope it turns out deadly.

This stunning picture book from the Yandaarra collective led by Gumbaynggirr Elder Uncle Bud Marshall helps us learn some stories of the mid-north NSW coast that speak of caring for each other and for Country. *Yildaan: Our Dreaming Track* shares an important message of respect and togetherness to the wider community.

Yandaarra is a Gumbaynggirr word for a group going together, shifting camp together. This is also the name for our collective, a project led by Gumbaynggirr Elders Uncle Bud Marshall and Auntie Shaa Smith in association with the University of Newcastle. *Yildaan*, the name of this book, is Gumbaynggirr for a Dreaming Track. The Dreaming Track is a part of shifting camp. Without the one, there is not the other.

Yandaarra is a re-creation story. It's about remembering what was (what is) as part of this re-creating. This work is about honouring Elders and Custodians past, present and future. Yandaarra give thanks and acknowledgement to Uncle Benjie and Auntie Byne, who are in this book, and to all the families that have cared for the Nambucca River before us. Guidance from them is so important; it's timeless, relevant forever. Stories don't belong to one time but for all time. This story that Yandaarra are living now is relevant for then and now and for the future.

A WORD FROM UNCLE BUD

'I used to stay on that river there with Auntie Byne when I was a little fella, about nine or ten years old. Auntie Byne looked after that river every time she went out on the boat. She was the only one I ever seen stand up and row the boat like that. She cleaned up the river and looked after everything. She picked up everything that was floating in that river.

'My grandfather put his family at different places around Country, gave them different areas to look after. And they did a good job, those Old Fellas. And, you see, now it's up to all of us to keep looking after it like those Old Fellas did. To follow in their footsteps.

'This book talks about my Uncle Benjie. Mate, he was magic to me. I'd call out for him every morning and go up the river with him. He'd use a spear to fish. You'd see the mullet coming along the side of the river and he'd just spear them.

'It's important to sit down and listen to older people. That's where everything comes out and a lot you learn from them. It's really strong.

'To me, these stories I'm sharing in the book are something magic. I love doing it and I don't want to see any of our culture forgotten. Culture is the main thing. It keeps you connected to the earth. When people cut down and take the trees out of the earth, it's like they're

taking a bit of my spirit out. Once you take something out, it's hard to put it back together. Everything that belongs to the earth was put there by nature. That's what the kids need to learn.

'I want to see everyone bringing culture back, reviving the land, giving it a purpose again. Not just us taking and taking again. It's up to everyone now to follow in the footsteps of the Old Fellas.'

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITIES

BEFORE READING

Set the Scene

To support learning and create a caring and sharing environment, try sitting in a circle with students to discuss these points and undertake these activities. This small change brings a fresh perspective to the learning experience.

You might also want to sit outside if possible and invite an Elder or other Custodian to support your learning.

Uncle Bud and his nieces Hannah Smith and Elaine Carmady have contributed their thoughts and ideas throughout these notes. Their comments (highlighted in blue) add context and can be shared with students.

Prior Knowledge of First Nations Culture and History

It's important to remember that First Nations stories, culture and history are not of the past but are also in the present. They are active and continue today.

Hannah says, 'The continuum of knowledge will always be passed down through language, song, dance and our oral histories. Our history is not a past, it is very present. It will always be a part of who we are and our connection to Country. That's why we've got to look after everything. It's a very real thing for us. It's not just a story, we feel it, we live it, it's part of our DNA and it's what keeps us connected.'

Elaine adds, 'When we are telling the stories it's like we've seen it happen ourselves. It's happened and it's real. That's how strong our culture is. You could never take it away.'

Learning from Elders

Invite a local First Nations Elder or Custodian to visit your school and share some of their stories. The event could be guided by local Custodians and what they would like to share or see happen. If Elders or Custodians visit your school, remember it is up to them to decide what is appropriate to share. It is their stories and intellectual knowledge, so please make sure they are paid appropriately.

For more information visit The Aboriginal Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) website and <https://www.maiamnayriwingara.org/mnw-principles>.

Hannah says, 'I think it's really important to acknowledge and respect your Elders. Anyone can do an Acknowledgement of Country and acknowledging Elders is an important part of it. It is because of our Elders that we are here, doing what we are doing. If it wasn't for them, we wouldn't be here. You always need to remember your Elders and to respect them.'

Learning More About Country and Your Story

Purchase a copy of the AIATSIS Map of Indigenous Australia to find out more about the language, social or nation groups of Aboriginal Australia. Ask students to find out:

- What Country is our school in?
- What Country is your home in?
- What are the Countries that neighbour the Country you live in? Where do they meet?

Through generations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have passed down stories about the creation of land, water, animals and humans on Country. These stories live today and share messages about how to live creatively and respectfully with Country now.

If you are Aboriginal, have you been told any of these stories by your own family? Have Elders and other Custodians shared stories with you or your class? How do these stories invite you to think about and do things differently?

Is there a language centre in your area or any books featuring local creation stories? Are there any places with signage sharing stories from the Country where you live?

Reading Time

Today we are going to read a story from Gumbaynggirr Ngambaa Country. This area is on the mid-north coast of NSW, around Nambucca Heads. Within Uncle Bud and his family's story of following Yildaan, Auntie Shaa Smith shares a creation story that has been passed down for generations. Uncle Bud and Auntie Shaa want to pass it on to future generations so that it is never forgotten and that it is lived on Gumbaynggirr Country every day.

On the Cover

Show the cover of the book to students, read the title aloud and ask the following:

- What do you see when you look at this picture?
- What do you think this story might be about?
- Do you think the people, dolphins, ocean and the river are working together? What might they be saying to each other? How do you think they feel?
- How do you think this story might make you feel?
- How do you feel when you go to the river?

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM: ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HISTORIES AND CULTURES

Family and Togetherness

Uncle Bud says, 'Family is the most important thing in the world. Family means everything. It connects us to who we are and our belonging.'

Aunty Shaa says, 'Country is family. It is the family of people and animals and everything around us.'

- What does family mean to you?
- How do you think Uncle Bud and his family treat Country, the land and animals around them if they consider them family?
- Why do you think Elders are referred to as Uncles and Aunties?

Hannah and Elaine share that, 'In Aboriginal culture, Country brings us together as one big family. Whether you are related or not, our culture is inclusive of everyone. When you call someone "Aunty" or "Uncle" it includes them in their family and you in theirs. We all love it. It's about that togetherness.'

Togetherness, for Uncle Bud, his family and Yandaarra, is a time that we share to eat, laugh, swim, to pass down and continue stories, and to create.

Elaine says it is a time to 'eat our cultural foods, share the history and the knowledge of where we live.'

Hannah says, 'It's a time when we all come together as family to share, yarn, for cleansing, to laugh together and sing together.'

- What does togetherness mean to you?
- Can you share a time when you've felt togetherness?
- What are important foods to you and your family? Is there a special meal that you come together to share?

History and Geography

Hannah says, 'If people think our history is a forgotten past, then they can tell the story for us. But it's not forgotten, and it continues. We've adapted through ice ages, fire, and we've lived with megafauna. Our people have always been here and have always been able to adapt.'

Uncle Bud says, 'Uncle Harry Buchanan, he used to row out in a boat up to Gumma and right out to Wellington rock. He'd have a little spot out by Wellington rock where he kept his snapper. Uncle Eddie, he had a spot up at Yarriabini. There were lots of boundaries and places marked in different ways. The rivers were our songlines. Going from place to place, those were our walking tracks.'

In Gumbaynggirr Country, when a story is being told it is written in the landscape. The landscape tells you the story. So, when Uncle Bud and his family are sitting down on the river, stories just come organically. The creation stories, family stories and personal stories are instilled in those places in the landscapes. This connects people strongly to Country.

- How does the story in the book make you feel about stories that have been passed down in your family?

Yildaan, a Dreaming Track, is where the Old Fellas (ancestors) used to walk. People weren't nomadic the way you might have heard, but people were shifting camp around Country, often not very far, to adapt to the land throughout the seasons and to care for it. We still follow those Dreaming Tracks and the Ancestors are still there.

Hannah says, 'The importance of the river and the wetlands is connected to how people move around within Country. When we were shifting camp, we used our river systems as highways that follow our songlines to go from one place to the next. Each place has different foods and families to visit. These practices continue in the present day.'

- Why do you think people might shift camp throughout Country in different seasons?
- Can you think of special places you go to at a particular time of year?

Activity – Listening to Country

In this activity, like in the book, students are invited by Uncle Bud and his family to go into the Dreaming. Today there are so many modern sounds around us – traffic noise, construction, phones – it's important to take the time to just listen to the land. When we do that, we can go into the Dreaming, we can hear what it would have been like when Uncle Benjie would go up the river, spear in hand, looking for food and following the seasons.

Uncle Bud says, 'We're still moving with the times, learning and adapting to what our surroundings are. And we go by the animals, plants and everything too. There are signs that we get through the Old Fellas. Like, the butterflies that come out when the buluunggal, mullet fish, are running. There are also seasons with the moon and the stars. You've got to stop and take notice of what your surroundings are.'

- Go out into the playground and see what's happening. Be quiet for a minute, just listen for a bit. What do you hear? What are the birds doing? Which plants are flowering? Where is the wind coming from? What do these messages from Country tell you?
- If you're in Sydney, you can check out the Gumbaynggirr seasonal calendar at the Australian Museum. You could also see if you could find a seasonal calendar for the Country you live in.

Activity – What's my Yildaan?

Elaine says, 'Yildaan is our Dreaming Track, and it is our story of how we came to be where we are, following in the footsteps of our ancestors. Everyone has their own story that is their yildaan, their Dreaming Track.'

- Talk to your Elders, your grandparents, uncles and aunties. What stories do they tell about growing up? What things did they learn when they were young? Were there places that were special to them? You could share these with your classmates.
- Ask your family where your family comes from, what your family history is. Did your family travel from somewhere else to be here today? Make a visual story map of your family's story. This could include your family tree, a journey, whatever gives your family a sense of connection, identity and purpose.

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM: SUSTAINABILITY

Respect

Uncle Bud says, 'Theres' a lot of places Aboriginal people left things like a trademark and you're not allowed to touch it. You've got to tread lightly on Country and ask if you want to take something. That's been passed down to us by the Elders.'

- How can we show respect?
- How do you show respect for people and the land?
- Why do we respect our Elders?

Caring for Country

Hannah says, 'Caring for Country is caring for everybody. It's everyone's responsibility now to look after and take care of Country. What can you do to look after Country?'

Elaine says, 'We can all do it. Uncle Bud talks about revitalising the land, bringing things back and making things better again. Everyone can do and create something of their own.'

When we care for Country, we care for everyone and Country cares for us too. For Gumbaynggirr people there are seasonal plants and foods used as medicine for headaches and other illness. Pippis, oysters and cobra are all immune builders. Mullet is a good oily fish. Uncle Bud says, 'If you want to know these things you need to ask the Elders, they know what's good for you.'

Uncle Bud, says 'We are all Custodians now; we all have a responsibility to look after this earth together as one. If everyone took a little bit of that and put it into Country, it would be so amazing. It betters your life living a responsibility.'

- Why do we care for Country?
- Why do we pick up our rubbish and recycle?

- What else can we do to care for Country?
- Can you identify the seasonal plants, animals and creatures in the book? What are some of the seasonal species where you live?
- You could pick a species from the book, like the mangroves, and learn about what they do for the river and Country. How do mangroves and other species care for Country?
- The buluunggal, mullet, are a species that travels in different places. Are there mullet where you live? Where do they travel?
- In the book the wattle, butterflies and buluunggal are all connected. Can you identify any connections and relationships between any species where you live? You could make a play or write a story about how these species connect or what they do for Country.

Additional Resources

Watch *The First Inventors* TV mini-series (2023)

ENGLISH

Language: Questions for Older Students

How is tense – past and present – presented to show how creation time is lived today?

Answer: The tense moves around in the book. It shifts between past and present. The pictures also show the ways that stories live in the landscapes of today.

- What is the original language of the place where your school is or where you live?
- Muurrbay is a language centre in Gumbaynggirr Country <https://muurrbay.org.au/>
Is there a language centre in the Country where your school is?
- Go through all the Gumbaynggirr words and work out what they mean. Click on this link to listen to a recording of the story <https://www.allenandunwin.com/yildaau>
- Your class could create a glossary of the words and see if you can find out what the words would be in the original language where your school is.

LITERACY

Comprehension

Visual Literacy

Elaine says, 'Artwork is the interpretation of whoever is looking at it. In the book the artwork tells the story, it is explanatory. So, you could read the book without the words.'

- Why do you think the artists have combined artwork with photos throughout the book? What does this tell you about the how the stories live in the landscape and the connection between past and present?
- Early in the book there is a breath pattern or song coming out of Uncle Benjie's mouth and later we see the same pattern coming out of Uncle Bud's mouth. Why do you think the artists did this?

Hannah says, 'The Songline is the breath, it is the continuum shown in the book, the wisdom, the oral history heard through generations and Country, flowing along the river and flowing through us.'

- Did you notice the river flowing throughout the whole book? What do you think this relates to?
- Look at the different animals, plants and creatures in the book. Do you think they are working together? what are they saying to each other?

Activity

Print out some photos of places that are important to you or your school. You could add drawings to these photos and tell a story about this place and your community.

ABOUT THE CREATORS

UNCLE BUD MARSHALL is a Ngambaa Gumbaynggirr man of the Baga baga bari. Uncle Bud is a senior Traditional Custodian who has shared knowledge and wisdom with many people, especially young people, both near home and internationally. Uncle Bud is a senior cultural advisor and the Elder in Residence for Yandaarra, an Indigenous-led research collaboration with the University of Newcastle. Uncle Bud is Elder to many people in Gumbaynggirr Country and beyond; a guide, Uncle, leader, mentor and friend.

AUNTY SHAA SMITH is a Gumbaynggirr woman and story holder for her Country. Her mother is Gumbaynggirr and her father Bundjalung. Aunty Shaa is an artist, cultural facilitator and Aunty to many. Led by the Old Fellas and Country itself, Aunty Shaa's work shares the deep relevance of Gumbaynggirr Dreaming for today. Aunty Shaa leads Yandaarra, a research collaboration with the University of Newcastle on Gumbaynggirr Country.

HANNAH SMITH is a proud Gumbaynggirr woman, an artist, weaver, ranger/site officer, an advocate for change, preservation and protection of Aboriginal sites, culture and land. Hannah has been blessed to have grown up around a strong family of men, women and Elders that have passed down a profound respect for her culture. Hannah is passionate about passing on that taught knowledge to the younger generations through schools, universities, archaeologists, government and national parks.

ELAINE CARMADY is a proud Gumbaynggirr woman from Stuarts Point, an artist, and a Qualified Early Childhood Educator. As an artist, Elaine works in paint, pencil drawing, traditional weaving and language. Elaine loves to share her Gumbaynggirr heritage, and learning from her Elders – Parents, Grandparents, Aunties and Uncles. Elaine is passionate about reviving Gumbaynggirr language and teaching children and educators about Aboriginal culture and the importance of respecting the land and keeping culture alive.

In Gumbaynggirr language, **YANDAARRA** means 'to shift camp together'. Yandaarra is a collaboration led by Aunty Shaa Smith under the guidance of the Old Fellas and Gumbaynggirr Country, with Uncle Bud Marshall and Aunty Shaa's daughter Neeyan Smith. Yandaarra includes non-Gumbaynggirr academics Sarah Wright, Lara Daley and Paul Hodge from the University of Newcastle, located in Awabakal and Worimi Countries.

CORRESPONDING LITERATURE

(In alphabetical order of authors)

ONLINE LINKS IN FULL

Maiam nayri Wingara Principles:

<https://www.maiamnayriwingara.org/mnw-principles>

The Aboriginal Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies: Map of Indigenous Australia:

<https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/map-indigenous-australia>

Muurrbay Aboriginal Language and Culture Co-operative:

<https://muurrbay.org.au/>

Allen & Unwin: *Yilda* Additional Resources:

<https://www.allenandunwin.com/yilda>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The First Inventors TV mini-series (SBS, 2023)