

Family Anthology



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Warning to First Nations Australians

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are advised that this publication may include images or names of people now deceased.

Warning

This book contains distressing topics such as Stolen Generations and Deaths in Custody. Please read the guidance in the document: Sensitivity Statement available on Oxford Owl.



Foreword

Dr Kaye Price – an Aboriginal woman from Tasmania. She was appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia in 2019 for significant service to education, particularly through Indigenous teaching initiatives.



Family is knowing who we are, where we've come from and where we've yet to go.

From a young age, I was very much aware of family as an anchor to the everyday world. I was fortunate to be the youngest in my family with brothers and sisters who followed different paths. One a sailor, one a soldier, a carpenter and another a teacher. From each I gained different aspects of life and ambitions.

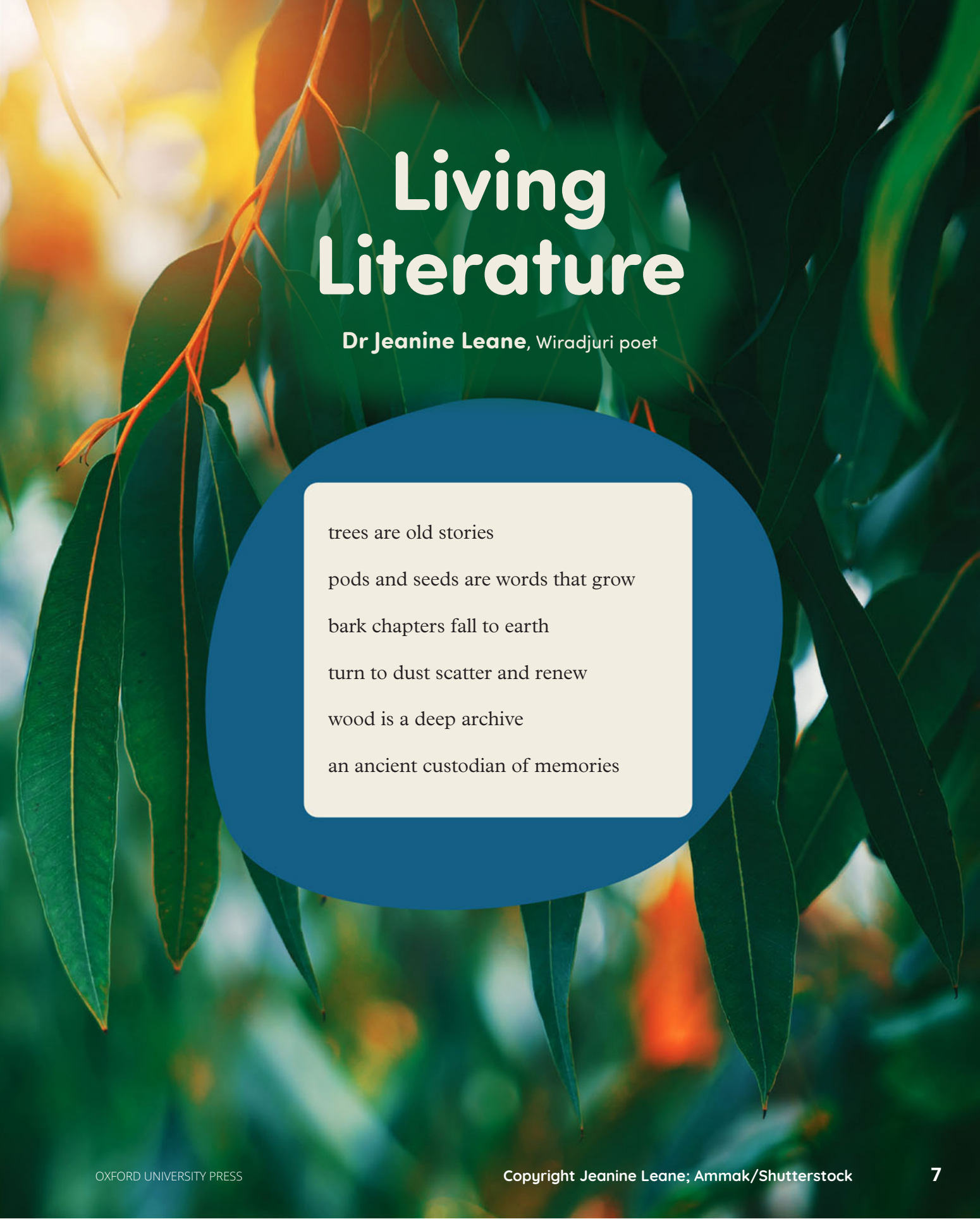
My father was a master mariner who taught me many things about our culture, especially about ordinary things in nature that predict events. My mum was initially a homemaker but later an untrained librarian. Through them I developed a love of the sea and a love of books.

Through the aunts – Grace Heffernan, Ida West, Molly Mallett and Girlie Purdon I learned more about our extended family and palawa history and culture.

As I grew older, I learned that family means different things to different people. For some, it is a comfortable place to be, but for others it can be difficult or uncomfortable, where intergenerational trauma carries through and takes up space. Family might mean searching for those who have become lost, or stolen.

In this anthology, you will read about some of those children who were lost, taken from their families at a young age. You will also read about the resilience of First Nations families, the ways we have overcome some of these barriers and how we have retained our dignity.

Above all, through my chosen family and my mentors, I came to understand education as both a cultural and academic journey. One grounded in learning who we are, where we come from and how we carry knowledge forward for future generations, creating new family wherever we go.



Living Literature

Dr Jeanine Leane, Wiradjuri poet

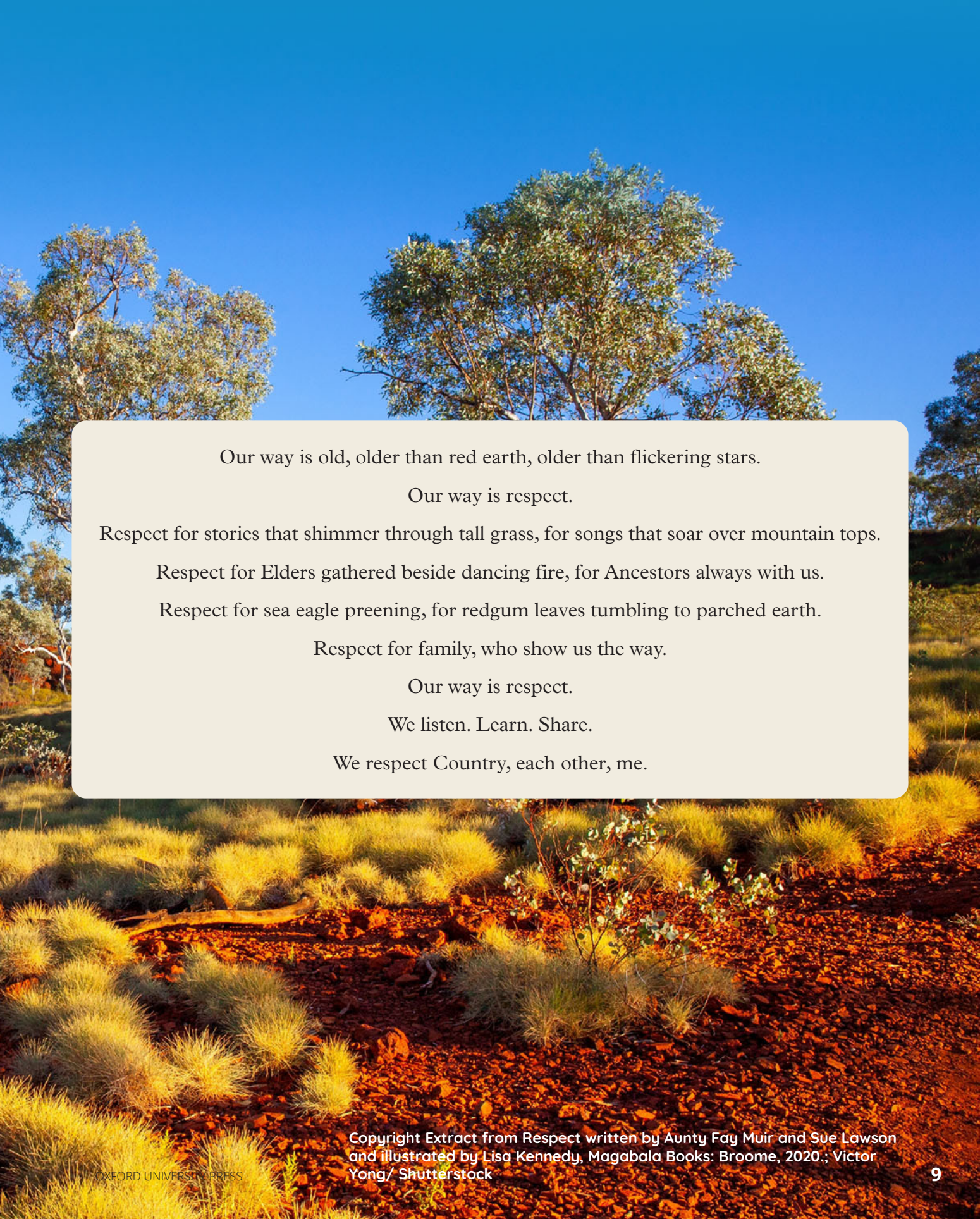
trees are old stories
pods and seeds are words that grow
bark chapters fall to earth
turn to dust scatter and renew
wood is a deep archive
an ancient custodian of memories

Respect

Auntie Fay Muir senior Boon Wurrung and Wamba Wamba Elder,
First Nations community leader and Koori Court Elder



Copyright Extract from Respect written by Auntie Fay Muir and Sue
Lawson and illustrated by Lisa Kennedy, Magabala Books: Broome,
2020.; Victor Yong/ Shutterstock



Our way is old, older than red earth, older than flickering stars.

Our way is respect.

Respect for stories that shimmer through tall grass, for songs that soar over mountain tops.

Respect for Elders gathered beside dancing fire, for Ancestors always with us.

Respect for sea eagle preening, for redgum leaves tumbling to parched earth.

Respect for family, who show us the way.

Our way is respect.

We listen. Learn. Share.

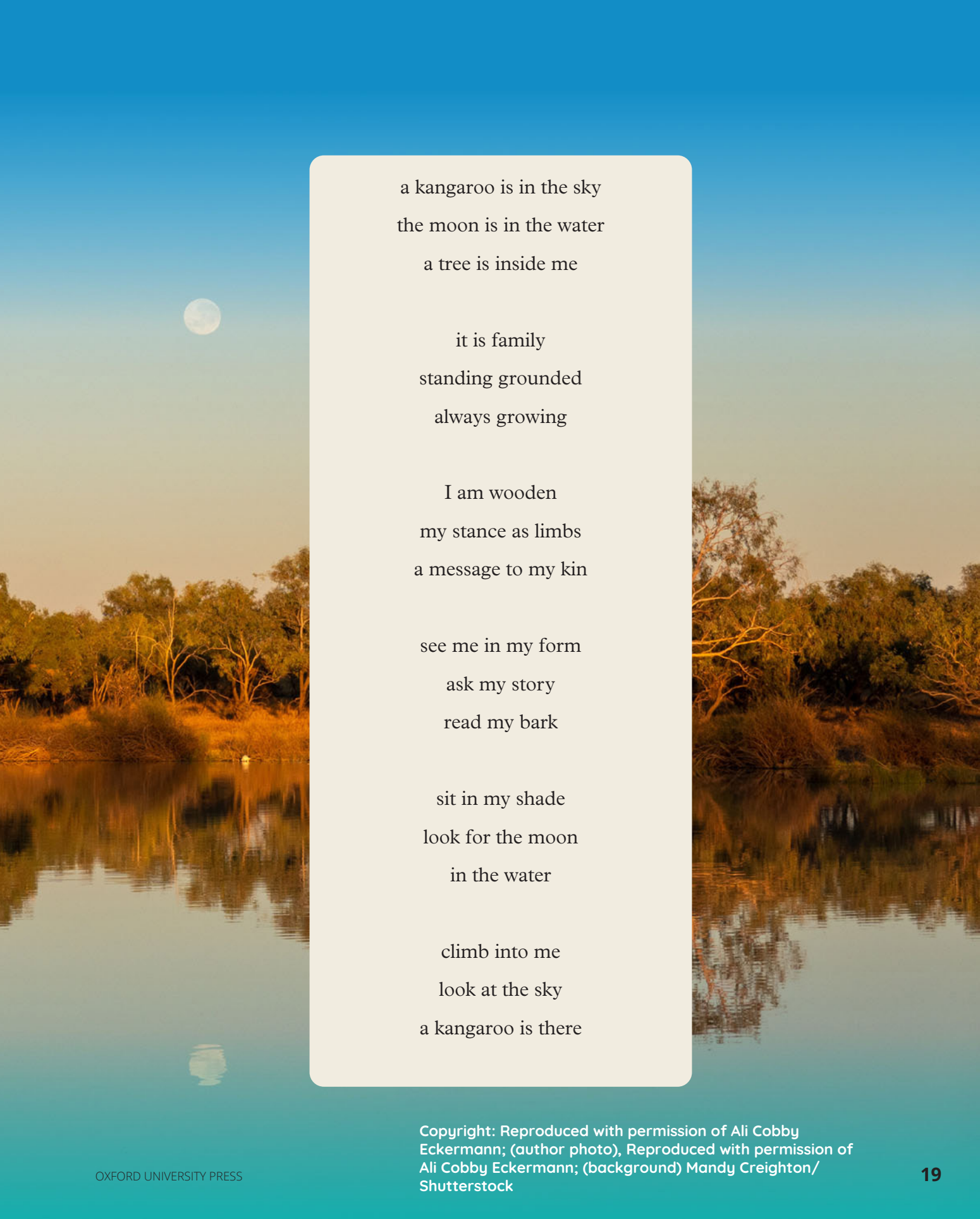
We respect Country, each other, me.

A Kangaroo is in the Sky



Ali Cobby Eckermann
Yankunytjatjara poet and artist
from South Australia





a kangaroo is in the sky
the moon is in the water
a tree is inside me

it is family
standing grounded
always growing

I am wooden
my stance as limbs
a message to my kin

see me in my form
ask my story
read my bark

sit in my shade
look for the moon
in the water

climb into me
look at the sky
a kangaroo is there

Seasonal Revelations

Romaine Moreton, Goenpul, Yagerabul, Minjungbul,
Bundjalung and Tanouta South Sea Islander



great trees do not grow overnight
they live through droughts
floods
axes
and birds
saplings wish they could comprehend
how much the earth is investing
in great trunks
but can only appreciate the strength
acquired
seasonally
and you my mothers
aunties
and grandmothers
are the greatest trees of all
and you give me the most desired
shelter and shade

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Identity Anthology



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Foreword



Dr Chris Sarra

Gurang Gurang/Taribelang Bunda man,
Executive Director at Stronger Smarter Institute

One of the great things about my job is that I get to travel all around Australia, visiting schools and seeing some of the great things happening to celebrate the positive aspects of being Aboriginal. It is truly inspiring and uplifting.

Sometimes it gets me thinking, “Gee, I wish school was like this when I was a student!”

You see, it wasn’t always the case that schools made us feel great about being Aboriginal. I was really lucky because I had such a strong and proud Aboriginal mother. If we ever went home crying to Mum that kids were teasing us because we were Aboriginal, she would say, “Yes you are Aboriginal. Don’t ever let anyone put you down because of that. It is something to be proud of!”

How lucky was I to have such a strong and proud mother? And when you think of it, she was absolutely right. Being Aboriginal is something to be extremely proud of. How many other kids in your school can say they carry the blood of the First Australians? How many other kids in your school can say they are the descendants of the oldest known human existence on the planet? That’s pretty special and only we as Aboriginal Australians can claim this.

Tragically we live in an Australian society that has, throughout history, tried to make us feel inferior and not good about who we are. Even more tragically, there were many of us who actually started to believe that we *were* inferior, and that our cultural identity meant that we had to be at the bottom of the pile. Somehow we ended up putting each other down because we didn’t think it was okay for Aboriginal people to be high achievers. We have a long way to go to overcome this, but importantly, we have started the journey.

As we realise our own sense of power in our identity, the journey becomes easier and more exciting. The power I am talking about is not the power to put other people down, but the power to set ourselves free. This is not a power that is given to us, but one that we have within us already. When we understand that nobody gives us this power, we realise that nobody can take it away from us. This is a power that is enhanced as we better understand and appreciate our connection to our family, and our Country; the Country that we as a people have walked on for thousands of years, like no other people in Australia.

The stories in this anthology will certainly help you to better understand this.



Dadirri

A Reflection

Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann

a member of the Ngangiwumirr language group

NGANGIKURUNGKURR means “Deep Water Sounds”. Ngangikurungkurr is the name of my tribe. The word can be broken up into three parts: ngangi means word or sound, kuri means water, and kurr means deep. So the name of my people means “the Deep Water Sounds” or “Sounds of the Deep”. This talk is about tapping into that deep spring that is within us.

Many Australians understand that Aboriginal people have a special respect for Nature. The identity we have with the land is sacred and unique. Many people are beginning to understand this more.

Also there are many Australians who appreciate that Aboriginal people have a very strong sense of community. All persons matter. All of us belong. And there are many more Australians now, who understand that we are a people who celebrate together.

What I want to talk about is another special quality of my people. I believe it is the most important. It is our most unique gift. It is perhaps the greatest gift we can give to our fellow Australians. In our language this quality is called *dadirri*. It is inner, deep listening and quiet, still awareness.



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Dadirri recognises the deep spring that is inside us. We call on it and it calls to us. This is the gift that Australia is thirsting for. It is something like what you call “contemplation”.

When I experience *dadirri*, I am made whole again. I can sit on the riverbank or walk through the trees; even if someone close to me has passed away, I can find my peace in this silent awareness. There is no need of words. A big part of *dadirri* is listening.

Through the years, we have listened to our stories. They are told and sung, over and over, as the seasons go by. Today we still gather around the campfires and together we hear the sacred stories.

As we grow older, we ourselves become the storytellers. We pass on to the young ones all they must know. The stories and songs sink quietly into our minds and we hold them deep inside. In the ceremonies we celebrate the awareness of our lives as sacred.

The contemplative way of *dadirri* spreads over our whole life. It renews us and brings us peace. It makes us feel whole again.

In our Aboriginal way, we learnt to listen from our earliest days. We could not live good and useful lives unless we listened. This was the normal way for us to learn – not by asking questions. We learnt by watching and listening, waiting and then acting. Our people have passed on this way of listening for over 65,000 years.



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Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann is an Aboriginal Elder, Educator, Artist and Senior Australian of the Year 2021. Miriam-Rose is a member of the Ngangiwumirr language group, and also speaks four other local languages. For more information, see the Miriam Rose Foundation www.miriamrosefoundation.org.au.