

The Land Recalls You

AUTHOR

KIRLI SAUNDERS

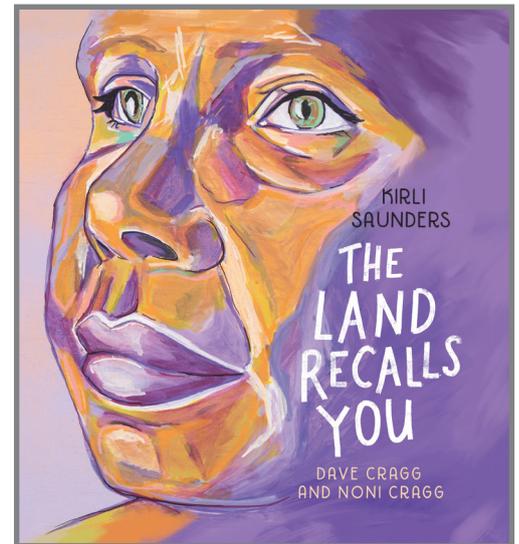
ILLUSTRATORS

DAVID CRAGG AND NONI CRAGG

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower to Mid Primary



SYNOPSIS

*Do not mourn the hands that raised you . . .
Do not weep for songs of land.*

Honouring the Stolen Generations, and all who've been taken, *The Land Recalls You* is a powerful story of returning, written with love and reverence by award-winning Gunai author Kirli Saunders (OAM) and illustrated by debut Bundjalung artists David and Noni Cragg.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kirli Saunders OAM is a proud Gunai Woman, and award-winning multidisciplinary creator and consultant. An experienced speaker and facilitator advocating for the environment, gender and racial equality and LGBTIQ+ rights, Kirli was named the NSW Aboriginal Woman of the Year in 2020, and received an Order of Australia Medal in 2022.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATORS

David Cragg is a multidisciplinary Bundjalung artist, working in Dharawal Country. He has exhibited painted works, murals, public installations and performed live art. Cragg's works often explore the effects humans have on Country through contrasting sweeping landscapes of Australian bush with industrial elements.

Noni Cragg is a Bundjalung portrait artist inspired by culture, colour and people. She has a BFA in Painting from The National Art School, Darlinghurst, and has worked as a Gallery director; a Life Drawing co-host for Gladdy Drawing Club; and has exhibited work at Ambush Gallery, Backwoods Gallery, China Heights Gallery and more.

STUDY NOTES

- Before reading the story, as a class, discuss the book cover and title. Some things to include in your discussion could be:
 - What can you see happening on the cover of this book? (Open it out so you can see the back and the front cover as one picture)
 - What does it mean when we say someone or something 'recalls' us?
 - What might *The Land Recalls You* mean? Why do you think this?
 - What do you think this story might be about?
 - Read the text on the back cover. Does this change your hypothesis about what the story might be sharing with us?

- As a class, watch a movie about the Stolen Generations. After watching the movie, discuss what you learnt about the practice of taking Indigenous children from their families, and the impact on individuals, their families, and their communities. Reread *The Land Recalls You*, and as a class, discuss what the impact of a story like this might be on some of the different characters from the movie.
- Who is the 'you' in the title of this story? Read the Author's dedication and reread the story. Does having read the dedication change your understanding of what is happening in this story? If so, why and in what ways?
- For many years, the Stolen Generations were not talked about by white Australians, what had happened was not taught in schools, and the government refused to apologise for the trauma, cultural dislocation, and inhumanity of the practice. Why do you think that the government-sanctioned and sponsored practice of taking children from their families was ignored, covered up and denied for so long? Why were non-indigenous Australian children brought up in ignorance of what the government had done, and was continuing to do, to Indigenous families?
- Why is National Sorry Day so important? As a class, discuss what you know of National Sorry Day, when it was first held, what happens in the week following, and how you personally can contribute to community awareness of National Sorry Day and its importance to all Australians.
- In small groups, research the Stolen Generations online, in the library or in the local community. Once you have completed your research, create a fact sheet sharing your findings. Include at least three quotes on the topic from people who were directly affected either as members of the Stolen Generations, or as their direct descendants. Some other things you should aim to discover in the course of your research are:
 - Who are the Stolen Generations?
 - When were the Stolen Generations taken?
 - How long did the practice of stealing children from their families continue?
 - Who stole the children?
 - What were some of the rationalisations for stealing children that were used by the policy-makers in charge of establishing the practice of stealing children?
 - Where did the stolen children go?
 - What happened to the stolen children?
 - In what ways were the stolen children's lives damaged by being stolen?
 - Why could the families not get their children back?
 - Why could many of the children not return to their families once they reached adulthood?
 - What was the long-term multi-generational impact on Indigenous communities?
 - What was the long-term individual impact on individuals who were stolen?
 - Discuss what you discovered from your research. How do you think the children must have felt when they were taken? How did being stolen from family and taken far away from country often lead to them feeling isolated, lost and alone, with no knowledge of how or where to return? How have they lost knowledge of the cultural and spiritual practices of their ancestors and families?
- After completing your research on the Stolen Generations, National Sorry Day, and Reconciliation Week, reread *The Land Recalls You*, including the author's dedication. How does rereading the story feel now? Discuss whether you were impacted by the language and artwork within this story differently now, in comparison to when you first read it. Share with your class your personal response to this story, whether it has changed since your first reading, and if so how and why.
- Individually, write a reflection on *The Land Recalls You* discussing the impact of the artwork and prose on you personally. Include specific descriptions of your emotional response to at least three different pages. Discuss how each particular passage made you feel, and attempt to analyse why you think you felt that way.
- Create a painting or other artwork inspired by your emotional response to the illustrations and words of *The Land Recalls You*.
- Why do you think the children being addressed in this story are being told not to weep or mourn?
- If you had to put the message of this story into one sentence, what would it be?
- Go on a slow and thoughtful walk through local bushland or a local nature reserve. While on your walk, look closely at the details of the land, the animals, and the plants, birds, and insects that surround you. Listen carefully to all the

different sounds you can hear, and try to describe the different scents that you encounter. Take photos of anything that catches your eye, to help you recall the details, and take notes to remind you of what you were taking in with your other senses at the time.

- When you return to class, use the artwork in the story as well as your photographs and recollections of what you saw on your walk to help you create a painting that captures the essence of the natural environment where you live. Caption your artwork with a brief (one or two paragraph) description of how being surrounded by the natural environment local to you made you feel.

AUTHOR OF NOTES
RAE CARLYLE