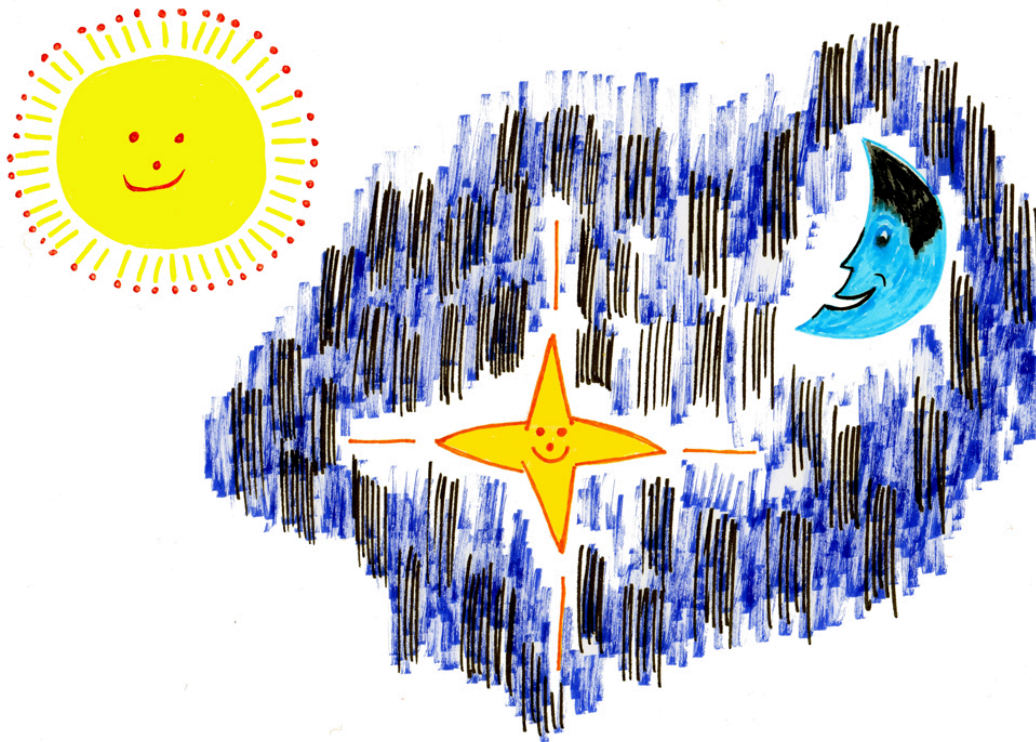


1.
The Sun Goddess brings life to the world



Picture 1. The Sun Goddess thought the Morning Star would be lonely in the sky, so she made the Moon to be her husband and keep her company.

In the beginning, the world lay quiet in darkness. There were no trees or grass. The world was not dead, it was asleep.

Then, the Great Spirit (called Baiame by some people) whispered to The Sun Goddess (called Yhi by some people); she was asleep. When she opened her eyes the darkness was swept aside by her light. She floated down to earth and leapt around in ecstasy. Where her feet touched the ground, trees and bushes and grass sprang up.

The Great Spirit told The Sun Goddess to go into caves. When she did, her warmth turned dim forms into the animals, bird and insects. They happily followed her outside to the trees and grass.

The Great Spirit told The Sun Goddess to go into caves on ice covered mountains. When she did, ice melted and formed rivers, and shapes in the water turned into fish and reptiles.

“It is good. My world is alive,” said The Great Spirit.

The Sun Goddess then told all the things she had brought to life that they were in the land of The Great Spirit, and that it was theirs to enjoy forever. She said that she would send the seasons. She said that she would soon leave to go and live in the sky, and that when the living died, their spirits would go up and live with her.

The Sun Goddess then rose back into the sky, became a ball of light and soon sank behind the western hills. The world was dark again, and all the living things were sad and afraid.

Hours passed and the living things went to sleep.

Suddenly birds started twittering. The Sun Goddess appeared again and filled the plains with light on the first morning. The living things then knew that day would follow night.

The river and lake spirits longed for The Sun Goddess' warmth and light and rose into the sky, trying to reach her. She smiled as they dissolved into drops of water and fell back to the earth as rain and dew.

Last of all, because some creatures had been afraid on the first night, The Sun Goddess sent the Morning Star to remind them that she would be returning. She then felt sorry for the Morning Star because she would be lonely, and so made the Moon (called Bahloo by some people) to be her husband.

Things to think about

There are many beautiful pieces in this story. The Great Spirit is kind and generous. The Sun Goddess does the work that she is asked to do, without complaint.

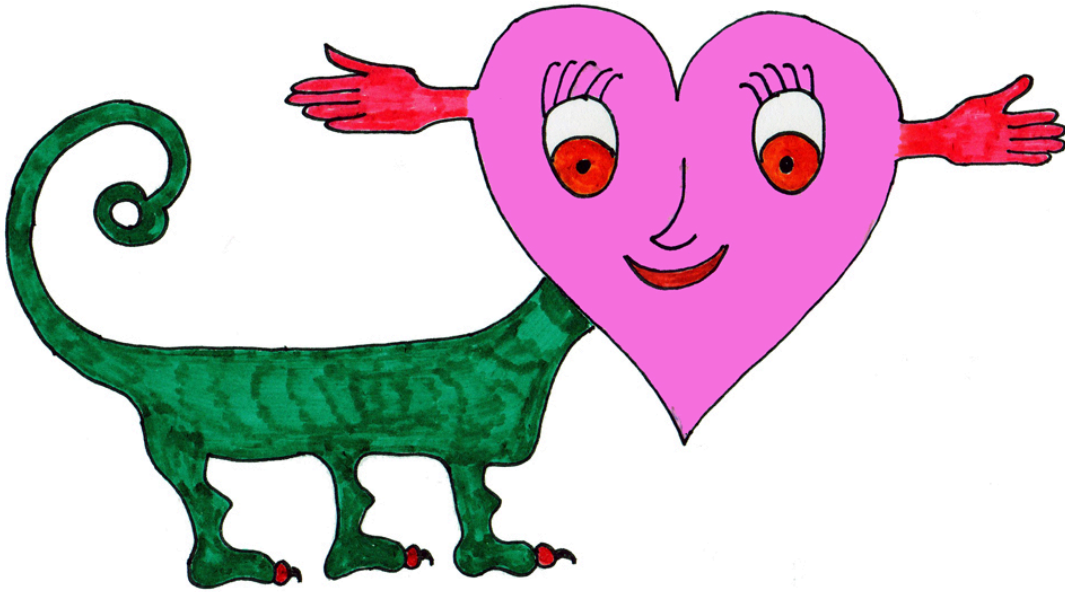
Why did The Sun Goddess create the Morning Star? Because she knew that the living creatures were afraid and she wanted to comfort them.

Why did The Sun Goddess create the Moon? Because she knew that the Morning Star would be lonely and she wanted her to have company.

In our relationships with others it is important to try to understand how they are feeling. And whenever possible, we should be helpful.

2.

The shape of the animals



Picture 2. Before the Kangaroo was changed and given strong back legs and a long tail, it might have looked like this. You might think it looked like something else.

No one knows what shapes the animals had when they were first created. However, after a time, they became unhappy with the shapes the Great Spirit had given them. Those who lived in water wanted to walk on the land, those who walked on the land wanted to fly in the air. They grew sad and hid themselves. The green plants were sad for the animals and wilted and died.

The Sun Goddess looked down from the sky and saw that the unhappiness. She came down to the earth and asked what could be done to make the animals happy again.

The kangaroo wanted strong legs so he could hop, and a long tail so he could balance himself.

The bat wanted wings so he could fly like a bird.

The lizard wanted legs so his belly didn't drag on the ground.

The Sun Goddess granted these wishes and rose back up into the sky.

However, The Sun Goddess knew these changes would not bring them happiness for long. The mopoke, for example, wanted large, shining eyes – but this would mean he would have to live in the dark and only hunt at night. The stick insect wanted to look like a twig – but this would mean he would have to stand still for hours.

Things to think about

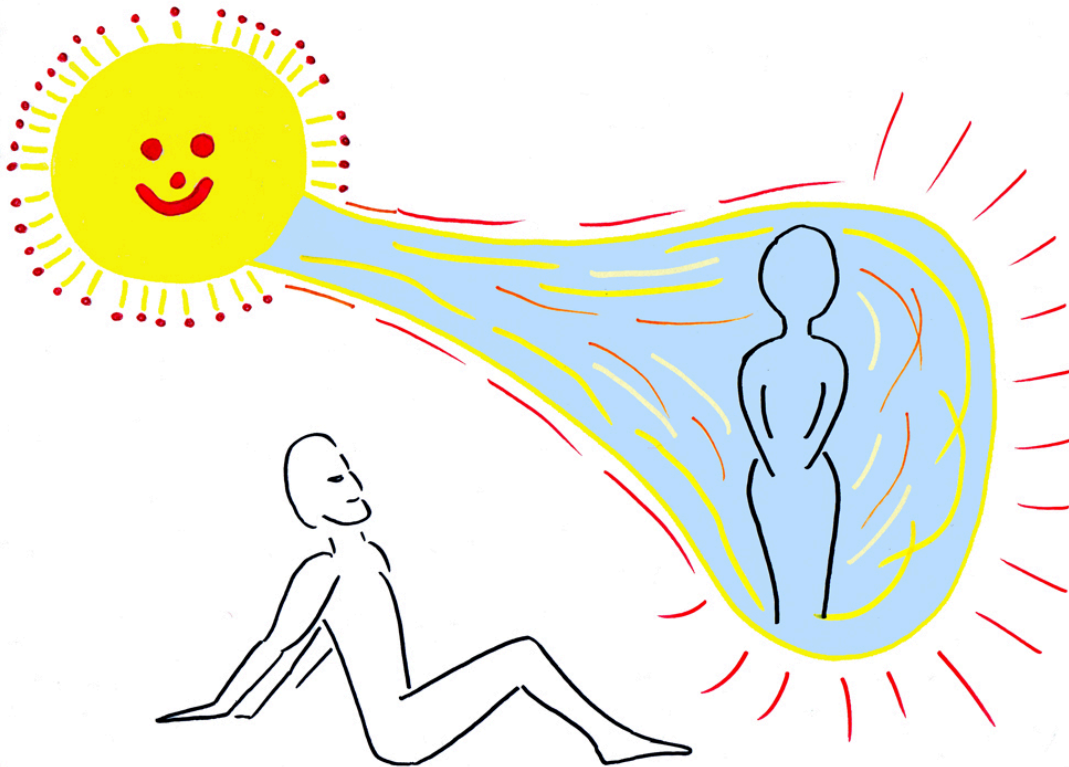
The Sun Goddess went to the trouble of finding out what the animals wanted and then tried to be helpful.

Was there anything else in this story? The Sun Goddess knew that changing our appearance, and getting exactly what we want, doesn't make us happy for very long. We soon get tired of the new thing we have or the new way we look, and want something different. Fashion clothes are an example. They only bring us pleasure the first few times we wear them. Then we are sick of them. Then the fashion changes and we want something completely different.

For long term happiness it is better if we bother more about the way we think and behave, than about changing ourselves on the outside. It is good advice to know ourselves on the inside, do what we know is the right thing, and be a good friend to others.

3.

The creation of Man



Picture 3. When Man woke up he saw that The Sun Goddess turning the flower of the yacca tree into Woman.

The Great Spirit was composed of thought, intelligence and life, but he had no body.

He put a small part of his power of thought into animals, birds, reptiles, fish and insects.

The Great Spirit wanted to appear to his creations, so he created Man. The Great Spirit gave his soul and intelligence to Man.

Man walked the earth, but he was lonely. He wanted a companion with whom he could share the wonder of the world. He had the companionship of the animals, birds, reptiles, fish and insects. He shared with them a love for the Great Spirit, but there was only a little of The Great Spirit's mind in each of those creatures, and that was not enough to satisfy Man.

Man had the beauty and the perfume of the trees, the grasses and the flowers. They pleased him, but they were not enough.

One day when Man woke up, he saw The Sun Goddess was focusing light on the stalk of the flower of the yacca tree. The stalk changed into a two legged creature like himself, but rounder and smoother. This creature was Woman.

The loneliness of Man had ended, but his obligations had begun. Man hunted for Woman and provided her with shelter. He showed her love and tenderness. Woman in return, worked with Man and loved him.

Things to think about

This is only part of the story of The Creation of Man.

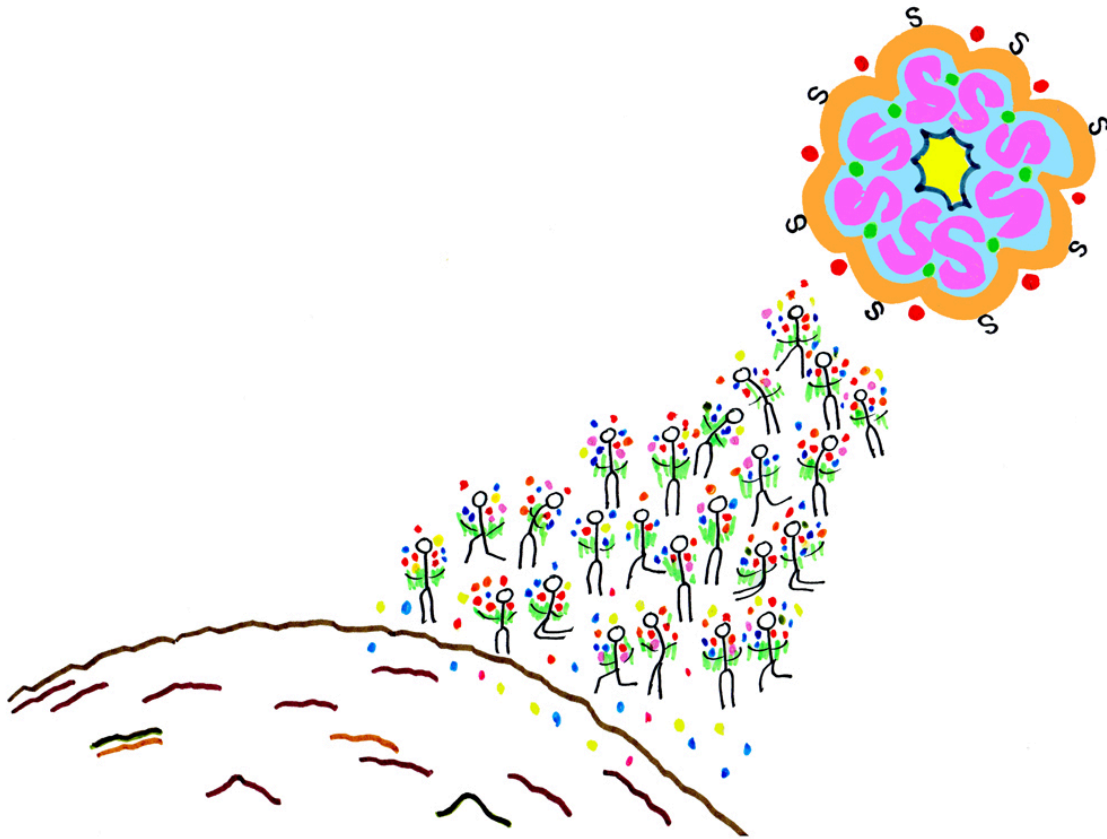
In this book we are looking for clues about how we can have a happy and successful life. In this story, Man had the beauty of the trees, the grasses and the flowers, and he had the companionship of the animals, birds, reptiles, fish and insects, who all had a little of the mind of the Great Spirit.

For people to be happy, things (cars, holidays) and animals (pets), are not enough. To live a happy and satisfying life, people need the companionship of other people.

It is one thing to have a friend. It is another to keep a friend. Whether other people remain our friends depends on how we treat them.

In this story, Man was lonely, which is a bad feeling. When Woman came along, they worked together and looked after each other. So, they had a good chance of staying together and staying happy.

4. The flowers



Picture 4. The Great Spirit took a group of people up to the sky and gave them a fresh crop of flowers to take back to earth.

The Great Spirit lived for a long time on earth in the form of a man.

One day he gathered the people and animals and told them that it was time for him to leave and go back to his home in the sky. He said that they had once needed him, but now they were fully grown. He said that if he did not leave they would never learn to take care of themselves. He said he would always be their Great Spirit, and he would come back if they really needed him.

The people and animals, of course, were sorry to see him go, but they understood his reasons.

But all the flowers died. They had no minds. They only knew that The Great Spirit had gone. They did not know he was still watching and would come back if he was really needed.

The earth was bare and brown and the bees could not make honey.

The people and the animals were sad about these changes. Generations were born and died without seeing a beautiful, perfumed flower.

The Great Spirit felt sorry for his creatures. Eventually, he gathered up a group of people and took them up to the sky and gave them a fresh crop of flowers to take back to earth.

Things to think about

The Great Spirit behaved in a caring manner.

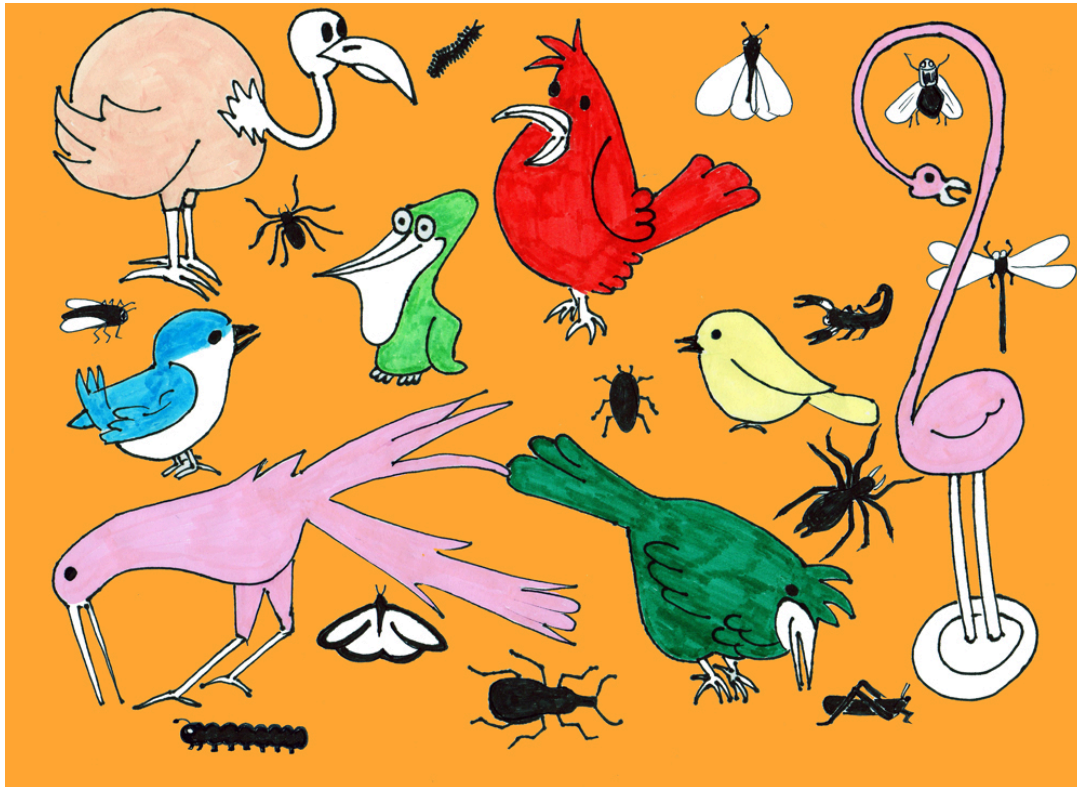
For their own good, people need to stand on their own feet. The Great Spirit said that if he remained, his creatures would not fully develop. They would always rely on him and not become independent.

It is important for us to take responsibility for ourselves and our actions.

But, we need to be sure that this independence does not come too early. The Great Spirit only left when he was sure his creatures were ready.

We don't need to have all the things we like, to survive. That is, the people liked to have the flowers, and they were happier when flowers were returned to the earth. But generations came and went without ever seeing a flower. It was "nicer" to have flowers, but they weren't essential to life (they weren't absolutely necessary). Sometimes we think, I can't live without a girl-friend or a lot of money, so, I'll kill myself. The fact is, like the people in this story, you can live without all the things you would like to have. And, if you stay alive long enough, you will get most of them.

5.
Marmoo's insects



Picture 5. The Mother Spirit and her helper spirits made the birds so they would eat the plague of insects.

Some Aboriginal people believe that The Great Spirit created all the birds, animals and insects, and that on his request, The Sun Goddess brought them to life. The next story comes from people who believe things happened slightly differently.

The Great Spirit enjoyed very much his time on earth. With his hands he made the earth beautiful, shaping mountains, deserts and waterfalls. He made the trees and plants, and the wind to make them sway. He was pleased with his work.

But The Spirit of Evil (called Marmoo by some people) became jealous. He went into the dark forest and made the insects and other tiny creatures. He made every kind of spider, beetle, snail, slug, worm and all the tiny creatures that have ever been seen. They walked, they burrowed and they flew.

The Evil Spirit released his plagues of insects and they ate the grass and bushes and trees. They moved along and left the earth bare and barren behind them.

The Great Spirit knew this was the work of Marmoo, and he was very angry.

First, he asked a very strong wind to come, hoping the tiny creatures could be blown away. But they clung on to grass and twigs or burrowed under bark and into the earth.

So, The Great Spirit went to The Mother Spirit (called Nungeena by some people) who lived in a waterfall in a green valley, and asked for help. The Mother Spirit had an idea, but to make it work, she would also need the help of others. She called on her helper spirits, because there was much to be done and little time to do it.

The Mother Spirit took colour from some flowers and made a pattern with her hands in the air. In this way, she made a lyre bird, which immediately started snapping up insects. She told her helper spirits to make birds as fast as they could.

Clumsy spirits made unattractive birds like the magpie and the butcher-bird, the spirits from watery regions made wading birds, the coastal spirits made the gulls, the night spirits made the owls, the fastest spirits made the fly-catcher and the little spirits made the wrens. The important thing was that they all ate insects. Soon the insect plague was under control.

The Great Spirit was delighted. He said that the birds were all beautiful and he would make them beautiful voices to match.

When The Mother Spirit heard the song of the crow and the kookaburra, she said that she didn't think their songs were beautiful. But, The Great Spirit disagreed.

Things to think about

This story tells about jealousy. The Evil Spirit was jealous and this led to him being destructive. When we feel jealous, we don't feel good inside. And if we are jealous and do destructive things, we feel even worse. It is natural for other people to be better than us in some things [spelling, dancing], and it is natural for us to wish that we were good at everything. Rather than feeling jealous, it is better for us to be positive towards other people, congratulate them, and feel pleased for them. This makes them feel good, and us too. It is better for us to be generous, than to feel jealous.

People like others who are winners or doing well, as long as they don't get arrogant and big headed. People are more likely to get jealous if you behave as if you think you are superior to them.

We sometimes think that we should be able to do everything perfectly, and feel like a failure if there are some things we are not good at – that is a dumb way to look at yourself.

Another thing is not to be too proud to ask for help. In this story, even The Great Spirit had to ask for help. He didn't think he was a failure because there was something he couldn't do, and he wasn't too proud to ask for help. First he asked a strong wind for help, and when that didn't work, he asked The Mother Spirit.

The Mother Spirit couldn't get all the work done in time by herself, so she had to ask for help too. The young spirits couldn't make beautiful lyre birds the way Nungeena could, they could only make ordinary looking birds like the butcher-bird. But, they didn't see themselves as failures because their birds were ordinary. They did their best and that was good enough. And in time, they would probably develop the skills to be able to make lyre birds too.

The Mother Spirit worked as hard as she could. She didn't say, it's too much work, or, I'm too tired.

At the end of the story, The Mother Spirit did not think much of the songs The Great Spirit made for the crow and the kookaburra. But, he thought these songs were beautiful. This shows that we can disagree on things, but still be close friends.

6.
The first corroboree and initiation



Picture 6. At the first corroboree the Mahdi people were turned into dogs, the Dumer people were turned into brown pigeons, the Baiamul people were turned into black swans, the Ooboan people were turned into blue-tongue lizards and yet other people were turned into trees.

One aboriginal tribe may have a different story to another. Some tribes believe that in the beginning, all the animals were men, and some were eventually turned into animals. This story is from people who have that belief, and starts before any men were turned into animals.

Many things happened around the time of the first corroboree (big celebration) and initiation. Let's look at five, one at a time.

The Great Spirit was still living on earth and was appearing to the tribes as a wirinun (wise man or medicine man). He called all the tribes together at Googoorewan.

Small story 1.

The tribes met together, exchanged gifts, made marriage contracts and sang and danced. After a few days, The Great Spirit announced that it was time to prepare the bora (initiation ceremony) ground.

This took several days. Most of the men worked hard. The men of the Mahdi tribe, however, only chattered and laughed. Many wise men cautioned them, but rather than improve, the

behaviour of the Mahdi men became worse. They insulted the workers and criticised their work, and even made insulting gestures to the wirinun.

The Great Spirit was watching closely. He was unhappy. This was a solemn and important occasion. For the good of the people, especially the initiates (the young men who were about to be initiated), order and calm were necessary.

Eventually, The Great Spirit told the Mahdi that they were proud and rebellious and had made a mockery of the occasion. He told them they could continue laughing and howling as much as they wished, but they would not be dignified men. The Mahdi men dropped on all fours and hair grew all over them. They tried to argue but only barking and howling came out of their mouths, and they ran away into the scrub as dogs.

Things to think about

This story gives us much to think about. When there is work to be done, people expect us to do our share. Also, we can expect trouble if we are rude to people and show disrespect. This story is ancient, thousands of years old. It seems that we will need to do our share of work and have good manners for some time to come.

Small story 2

The next morning, The Great Spirit came up to a group of women and asked them why they were not grinding seeds for flour. They told him that their grinding stones had disappeared. He did not believe them. As he could not see any grinding stones in the camp, he accused the women of lending their grinding stones to the Dumer women who were camped some distance away. He sent the women to the Dumer camp to get their grinding stones back.

The women knew they had not lent their grinding stones, but obediently, they went and asked the Dumer women. Of course they did not have the missing stones. In fact, the Dumer women could not find their own grinding stones. At this point, the women heard the drumming noise of The Evil Spirits (called Wunda by some people). They ran back and told The Great Spirit what they had heard.

The Great Spirit said that he may have been unfair to the women by not believing them. He set out to visit the Dumer camp himself, and the women followed at a respectful distance. The Dumer camp was deserted, but the drumming of The Evil Spirits was quite loud. One of the women saw a grinding stone slip away between some bushes, but no one was carrying it.

The Great Spirit said the grinding stone was being carried by an invisible Evil Spirit. He called to the women and they all ran to where the stone had disappeared. They then saw hundreds of grinding stones moving across the plain by themselves. Running after them were the Dumer women. Then, the Dumer women then changed into brown pigeons and flew away.

The Great Spirit and the women kept going. Eventually, they came to Mount Dirangibirra, which was completely made of grinding stones. Ever since that time, Mount Dirangibirra has been the place to find the best grinding stones.

Things to think about

We can all make mistakes. In this case, The Great Spirit made a mistake by not believing the women. The important thing when you made a mistake is to admit what you have done, and offer an apology. Reasonable people always accept an apology, and sometimes, when one person makes an apology, the two people become the best of friends.

The worst thing you can do is to refuse to admit that you have made a mistake, and refuse to apologize. We don't know if The Great Spirit apologized because the story ends, but he did say that he may have been unfair to the women, which is much the same thing. Do you think he would have apologized, or would he have been too proud?

Small story 3

This story is not particularly exciting, it is just the things The Great Spirit said about the first initiation ceremony. He said that the ceremony was to make the young men strong so that they could fulfil their duties toward the women and children. He also said it was the job of the wise men to teach the young men.

Things to think about

Here we are reminded that we should protect and teach each other. These days many women are independent of men, they make their own living and their own decisions. But, men are still need to be responsible and supportive manner toward women and children (and, of course, other men).

Small story 4

After the initiation ceremony, the young men go with older men on an initiation journey, which usually takes some weeks. After the first initiation ceremony, the men went away on the initiation journey, and the mothers decided to return and wait at in their tribal land. It was a long way, and they made many overnight stops.

One day a middle-aged woman called Millin-nulu-nubba, walked into the camp and fell down.

She was very angry. She said that she and her children could not keep up, they could not find water and all her children had died of thirst. She said that none of the women had looked back to see if anyone needed help. She said, "You were in such a hurry to get here. Now, you shall stay here." She cursed the women saying, "Goo gool gai ya!" (which means, 'turn into trees') and fell down dead. The curse worked and the women turned into trees.

The wind rushed through the trees and made a moaning noise. Far away, other women heard this noise and came to see what was happening. As they arrived they also changed shape: Baiamul tribe people became black swans and Ooboon tribe people became blue-tongued-

lizards. From the body of the dead mother came the little Millin-nulu-nubba birds, whose song is, "Goo gool gai ya".

Things to think about

Again, we are told to care for others, to look back and see if we can help someone who is having trouble keeping up. In the last story it was the men who were being told to take care of others, in this story, the women are given the same message.

Small story 5

The Great Spirit welcomed the young men when they returned from their initiation journey, and then they set off for home.

On the way back, at the spring of Noondoo, The Great Spirit's dog gave birth to pups. But these were not ordinary pups, they had the bodies of dogs and the heads of pigs. They were Eermoonans (long toothed monsters which tear travellers to pieces).

The Great Spirit was sad when he got back to his mountain home. Men had turned into dogs, women into trees, tribes into reptiles and birds, and his dog had given birth to monsters.

However, The Great Spirit knew that memories of distress would fade and the world would be a better place now the earth had trees and animals.

Things to think about

This story tells us that we should not give up when unpleasant things happen. It is normal to be a down when unpleasant things happen, but we need to remember that things will improve in time. While we may never forget unpleasant events, we can usually keep going, and good times will come again.

7.
The Great Spirit and his wives



Picture 7. When Birra-nula and Kunnan-beili jumped into the spring they were swallowed by two large Crocodiles.

While he was on earth (called Tya by some people), The Great Spirit had two wives: Birra-nula and Kunnan-beili. Old versions of this story say they were “young and foolish”, but let’s just say they were young.

One day The Great Spirit was going away to search for honey. He told Birra-nula and Kunnan-beili to collect yams and frogs and to wait for him at Coorigil spring. He also told them, very clearly, not to swim in the spring.

Birra-nula and Kunnan-beili collected a good supply of yams and frogs, and as you have already guessed, they went for a swim.

Two Crocodiles (called Kurrias by some people), the guardians of the pool, came up from the bottom and swallowed one young woman each.

Fearing The Great Spirit’s anger the Kurrias took an underground passage from the Coorigil spring to the Narran river, and swam along with such force and speed that the river bed was left dry behind them.

The Great Spirit found some honey and returned to the spring. He saw the belongings of his wives beside the spring and guessed what had happened. He knew the direction of the underground passage and ran to catch up. He found the riverbed dry and cut across the land, got ahead of the Kurrias, and waited.

When the Kurrias came ashore The Great Spirit speared one through the head and hit the other one on the head with his nullanulla. He cut their heads off and opened their bellies with his flint knife.

The bodies of his wives rolled out, covered in thick slime. He put red ants on their bodies. The ants ate the slime, ran around and bit the young women. In response to this tickling and biting, the women woke and stood up. They said they were ashamed they had disobeyed.

The Great Spirit said that their adventure had ended happily, but it might have ended badly. He asked them to promise never to swim in a pool or river without permission again.

Things to think about

This story gives an example of kindness. The Great Spirit might have been angry with his wives. Instead, he saved them, and pointed out that things could have ended disastrously. He was concerned for them and asked them to promise to be careful in the future.

As with many old stories from all cultures, there is a suggestion of male domination, and that women should do what they are told. In traditional Aboriginal culture it wasn't as simple as that, as men and women had different roles. In fact, the women provided most of the food for the tribe, and controlled many of the activities of the tribe.

The message comes through that the problem arose because Birra-nula and Kunnan-beili didn't do what they were told. However, in modern times, most people believe that those who are given an order have the right to know the reason behind the order.

There is no doubt that if The Great Spirit had explained that there were Crocodiles in the pool, the women wouldn't have gone swimming. On the other hand, if you are told not to do something by someone who has a lot of experience, perhaps you should take notice. There are different ways of looking at everything. Do you think The Great Spirit should have given Birra-nula and Kunnan-beili his reasons?