

Inspiration for Black Cockatoo

(Due for release with Magabala Books 2018)

General

The history of invasion, assimilation, stolen generation and 'do-gooders' who think they know what is right for Aboriginal people is reflected in the story of the girl thinking she knows what is best for the animal and formed the basis of the story.

The low education rate and high suicide rates in the Kimberley tells a story of children who have lost their culture and sense of self- both things that Mia strives to find in order to feel free of the restraints that society puts on her as an Aboriginal girl.

Why Mia lives with her grandparents- Both Carl and Hakea spent time living with other family members outside of their parent's homes.

Mia's memories of her time together with her brother- Inspiration for her memories comes from Carl life growing up around Halls Creek.

Stories behind the quotes

The boy approached cautiously, shanghi dangling from his hand, to inspect his catch. The dirran black cockatoo lay sprawled amongst the smaller birds he'd been using as target practice.

This element if the story was from a recount from a student/relative about how her brother had spent his weekend- shooting down birds from the tree in their yard with his shanghi for target practice.

His grandfather slowly placed his tea on the back table and collected the dead birds from the ground, all except one he threw to the gunyarr dogs. "This one is your dinner," he said to the boy, "Pluck and gut him before you bring him in."

One weekend we were out with our friend/brother, Teejay's, family in the bush. His children were exploring and came back with a dead bird and her chicks. Their father and mother made them eat the bird that they killed even though it was a tiny bird with very little meat- showing their children that we don't kill just for fun.

Inside the house Mia put the cockatoo in a dark cardboard box.

Hakea's sister was always saving animals and bringing them inside to save- their father and grandfather would give advice and guidance on how to help them heal.

No space was really that personal in her house...

Two girls at high school were talking casually about a girl that one of them didn't know. The unknown girl was described as "you know the one wearing my pink top"... The spirit of sharing and communal ownership.

Tiredly, Mia remember that one her aunties had once owned gulyulyu budgies before the cheeky neighbourhood boys had killed them in a game with rocks.

A story one night at the pub by aunty Karen whose poor fated budgies were the inspiration for this little snippet of our story.

Mia placed the cage under the large tree in her backyard so the dirran black cockatoo would have shade...

The Kimberley Hotel in Halls Creek has the white cockatoo called Jacko who was saved when he was hit by a car and lost a wing.

Sometimes it was mangirrigirri tata lizards he was hunting -- hiding them in his pockets to take to school to frighten his teachers.

Scott enjoyed bringing lizards into class to scare squeamish city teachers. One of our favourite photographs is Scott with a lizard hanging off his ear as they have lock jaw and don't let go for hours!

He hobbled to the fridge and cracked a beer.

A close family member in his worst days felt like it was all too much and would talk of tales of how to save the world, then take a sip of reality.