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## AUTHOR SHARING: AUNTY SHAA SMITH

Story holder for Gumbaynggirr Country, Aunty Shaa Smith, shares some of her inspiration & hopes for her newly published Children's book, *The Dunggiirr Brothers and the Caring Song of the Whale*.

### On Inspirations

"I don't do this for me, I do it for Country. It's our culture and we need to express it. Country is calling us in to a ceremony of re-creation.

Ceremony is that act of going into the all-time place, of being in the creation time. What's happening in the story of the Dunggiirr Brothers is there was a wrongdoing against the sacredness of life, and something had to be done to set it right again. This is what is calling us now, to do that ceremony of setting things right again. That is the intention of the story and of the book. It is a continuation of Aboriginal culture, our culture that maintains the sacredness of all life. It is acknowledging that children have a significant place in this and that the children need adults to stand with them.

Kids have a fundamental role in everything. The kids need to be prepared and supported in their own creativity. I want to help them nourish their connections with Country. A book like this is needed. It can help give children an education beyond what they might get through a mainstream approach; an education that supports their creativity and helps them to nurture good relationships with each other and with Country".

**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.



"I want to make sure Aboriginal children are supported in their culture. That is so important to me, to make sure the children aren't smothered by a mainstream approach. I want them to be acknowledged as Custodians who have the responsibility of caring for their Country. This is so significant. They are our future Elders. It is also about supporting Aboriginal families. The stories we share are important for Aboriginal children, to ground them in their strength and identity, to maintain their connection with Country, and so they can awaken to their expression of who they are.

I think it is an exciting opportunity for Indigenous parents, for all parents, to provide a space where we can think about what we actually want for our kids.

Children inspire me too. They have a lot to teach us. I love engaging with them through the book".

## On Connections with Country

"Aboriginal systems work, they have worked for so long in maintaining the sacredness of all life. This is what I really need to support.

In this time, Gumbaynggirr is becoming a part of a global community helping us all to take responsibility for our part in the state of the world. We want to bring ourselves into this relationship, with the earth, each other and ourselves. We are taking up our responsibility in the global community. Sharing stories is such an important part of that. It is about finding our way together, now, living the new dreaming. These stories are not stories of the past, of a fantasy time, they are real and they show us the way to be now, to be in good relationship with each other and with the earth".



*"I want to make sure Aboriginal children are supported in their culture. They are our future Elders".*



On some of Aunty Shaa's hopes for the book

"I hope this children's book can act as a window, a window that kids look through and see the wider, deeper world, the world where we are all connected and in relationship with Country and each other.

Kids are smart and creative. They need our support to be able to think about things, about life, and be creative with their thoughts. This is about helping them thrive beyond any kind of square framework, square mindset. If we are going to have a chance here, the kids need to be able to think outside a limiting square, to think and be with Country, to become greater beings than any of us are now.

For all of us, Gumbaynggirr stories help give a different reference point, one that isn't about 'me, me, me.' We need to go back to Country, to put our relationships with Country at the centre of everything.

I am just trying to create a window to help us go beyond our limitations, to see our relationships, to live them and nourish them. I want to support kids building relationships with Country, with trees or birds, with whales and bats. It is a matter of practice".

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## On the importance of the book

"It feels like such an important book for this time with the big changes that are happening in the world. Sometimes there is fear to speak about that with children, no one knows how to talk about it. No one can see beyond what we are in. To talk about 'other than what we are in' is hard but kids have that potential, that ability to imagine in a different way of being. They have abilities".

The **Dunggiirr Brothers and the Caring Song of the Whale** is both a beautiful picture book and a special resource that will connect children to the landscape of the mid-north NSW coast, as well as to the unique stories of the Gumbaynggirr people.

It is published by Allen & Unwin and available in bookstores and to order online.

