

Little People, **BIG DREAMS**

Dodgeroo Moonuccal



Written By 3/4B

Early Life

Little Kath Ruska (Oodgeroo), was born in 1920 and grew up on North Stradbroke Island. She is the daughter of Lucy McCulloch and Edward (Ted) Ruska alongside seven siblings. Ted was a Noonuccal descendant and Lucy was born in central Queensland, the daughter of an inland Aboriginal woman. Katherine attended Dunwich State School before being removed and placed in an institution in Brisbane at the age of thirteen.



Military Life

Oodgeroo Noonuccal (Kath Walker at the time) was in the army from 1942 - 1944 as a signaller (a person who provides communication between operating bases). The army she worked for was called AWAS (Australian Women's Army Service). Her brothers fought in World War II but sadly they got captured by the Japanese.



Young Adulthood

She left her education at the age of 13 to work as a maid in Brisbane but that ended in her 30s to return to domestic work and to support her young sons when her marriage ended in the 1950s.



In 1987, Kath changed her name to Oodgeroo of the Noonuccal tribe in protest at the Australian Bicentennial celebration.

Oodgeroo because it means paperbark tree and Noonuccal is the name of her people, the traditional owners of the Minjerribah and adjoining lands.



Activism

Oodgeroo Noonuccal protested to change the Constitution and to end state control over Aboriginal people.

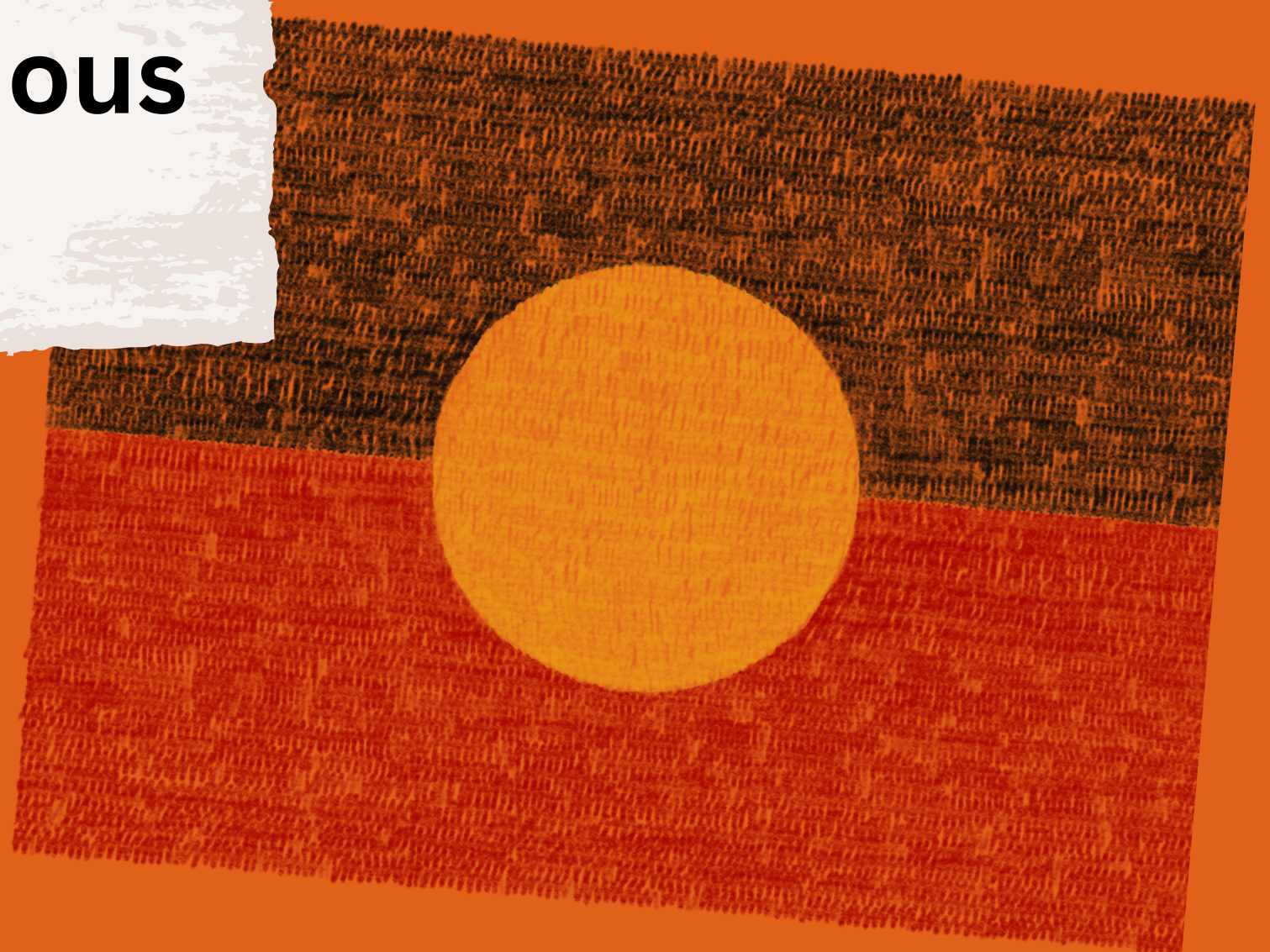
In 1960, Oodgeroo attempted to give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders the referendum. She played a major role in helping Indigenous people by helping them gain more rights like being counted in the population and giving them the right to vote. She saw her poems as expressing the voices of the community.

She believed in not just standing up for herself, but for all Aboriginal people.



Two years before Oodgeroo's first book, she got elected as the Queensland State Secretary of the Federal Council for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advancement or FCATSIA. She knew there was a need for Aboriginal leadership, and rose to the call, campaigning for equal citizenship rights.

Rights for Indigenous people



Oodgeroo worked hard for the cause she cared about, meeting with minsters, leading a delegation to the Prime Minister and writing and delivering speeches. Along with other members of FCATSIA, she traveled around the country and campaigned for equal rights for everyone, everywhere. Eventually, her campaign led to the 1967 referendum to end state control over Aboriginal people and finally count them as Australian citizens.



Poetry + Writing

Oodgeroo learnt poetry and writing skills over the years of her activism, and she began writing poetry in the 1950s. In 1964 her poem 'We Are Going' became the first poem written by an Aboriginal person to be published. Two years later, Oodgeroo wrote a book of poetry called 'The Dawn Is At Hand', but her poetry was criticised for being too "political".



She saw poetry as a tool for storytelling and passing on culture to future generations. Oodgeroo used her poetry to draw people's attention to the mistreatment of Aboriginal culture and people. She went on to writing and publishing more poetry while writing children's books and scripts for plays.



Oodgeroo's writing received many awards including the Jessie Litchfield Award in 1967 for literature and other extremely prestigious ones like the medal for the Dame Mary Gilmore achievement for a fellowship of Australian writer award and honorary doctorates from four universities!



Moving Back to Country

Later in life, Oodgeroo moved back to North Stradbroke Island where she became a teacher, a mentor and a protester for her country and people. She was very involved in environmental causes so she hated the news of mining on her island. She spoke out against it and got them to stop. She also established Moongalba (sitting down place) as an educational and cultural center



Oodgeroo Noonuccal is remembered for her important work as an Aboriginal protester, campaigner for equal rights and her role as a trailblazer in Aboriginal poetry. Today, she remains well on her way of being one of the most well-known and highest selling Aboriginal poets in history.





Oodgeroo Noonuccal Poetry Collection



We Are Going

By Oodgeroo Noonuccal

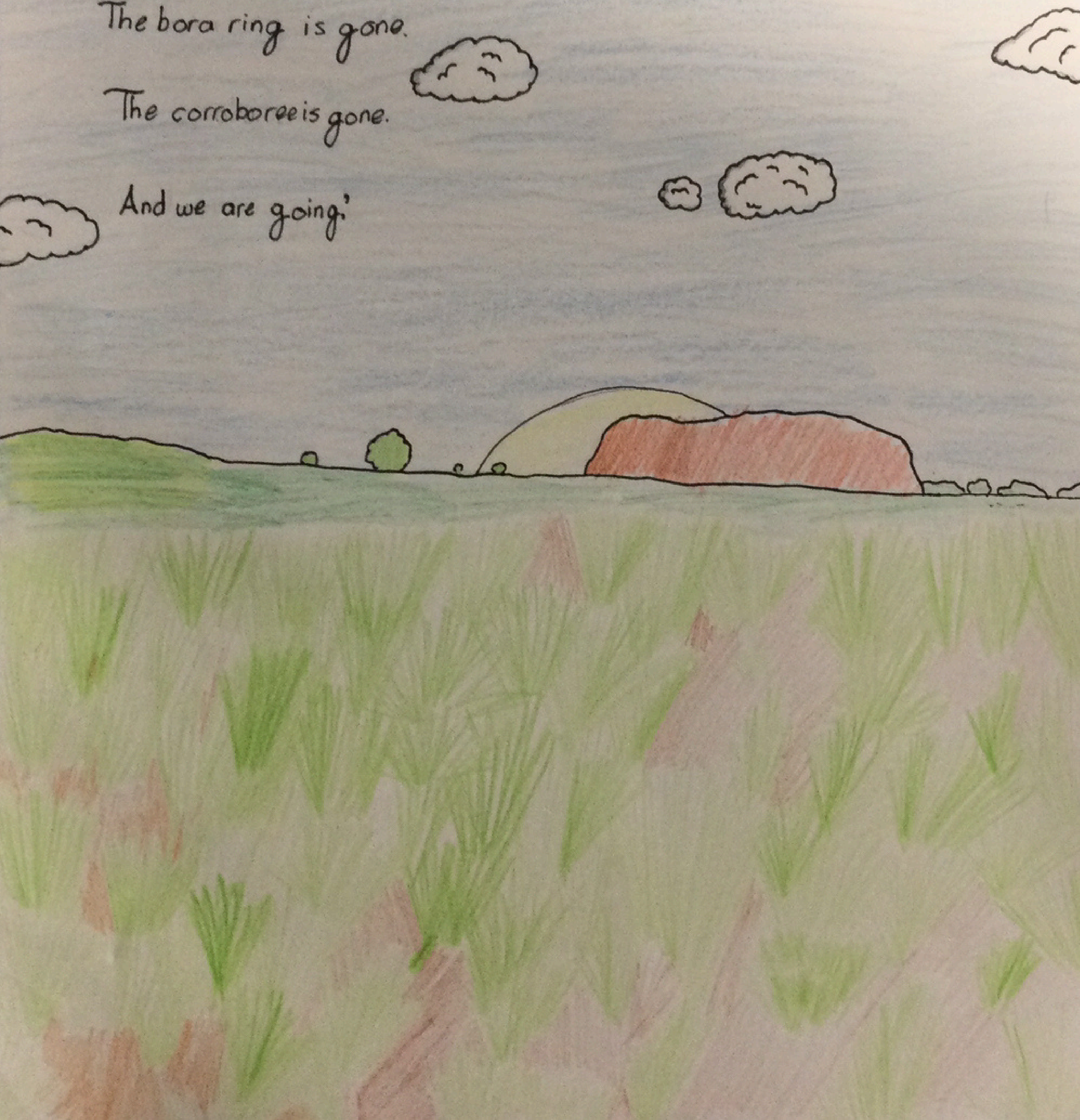
The scrubs are gone, the hunting and the laughter.

The eagle is gone, the emu and the kangaroo are gone from this place.

The bora ring is gone.

The corroboree is gone.

And we are going.

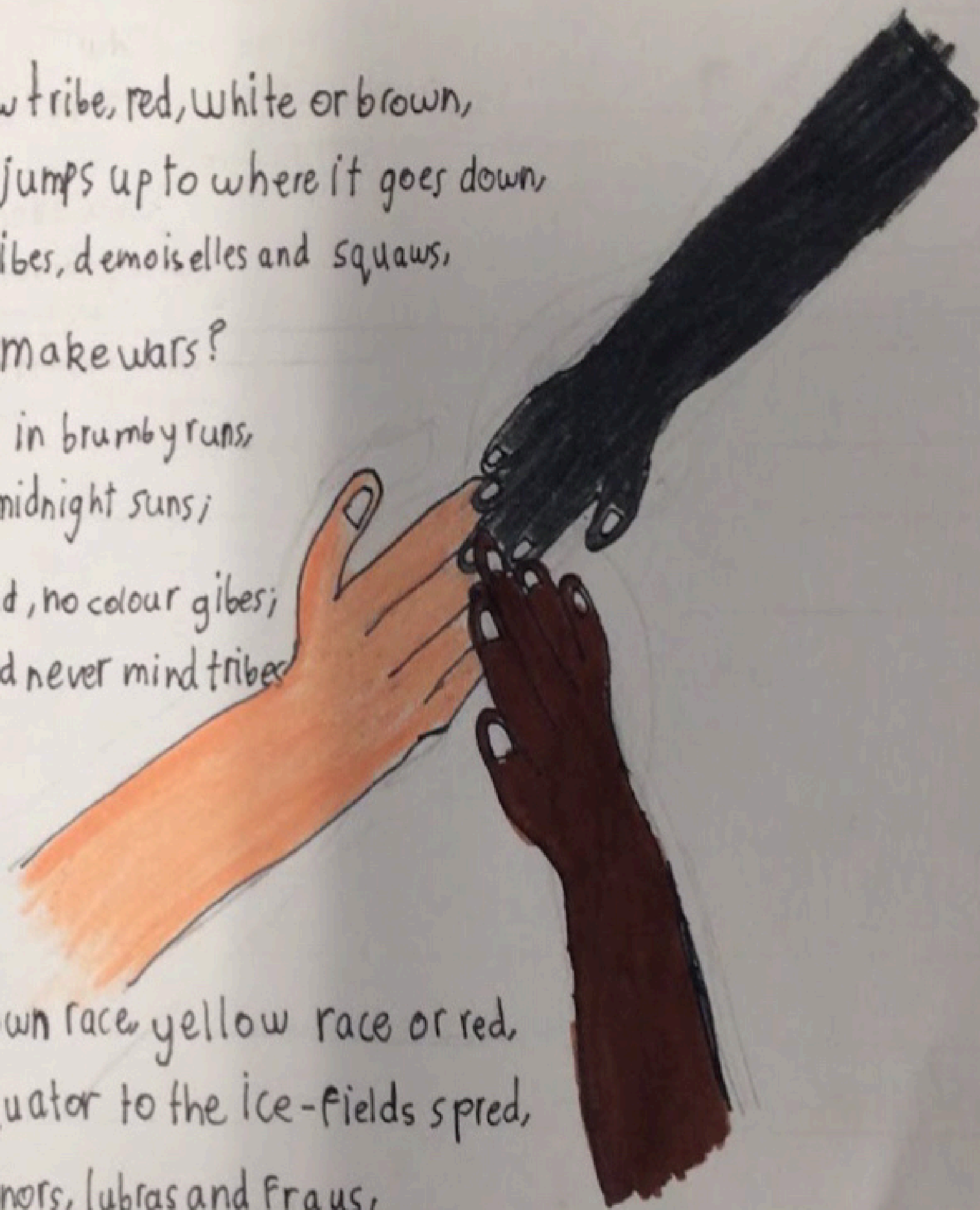


All One Race

by Oodgeroo Noonuccal

Black tribe, yellow tribe, red, white or brown,
From where the sun jumps up to where it goes down,
Herrs and pukka-sahibers, demoiselles and squaws,
All one family, so why make wars?

They're not interested in brumby runs,
We don't hanker over midnight suns;
I'm for all humankind, no colour gibes;
I'm international, and never mind tribes



Black White or brown race, yellow race or red,
From the torrid equator to the ice-fields spread,
Monsieurs and senors, lubras and Fraus,
All one family, so why family rows?
We're not interested in their igloos,
They're not mad about Kangaroos;
I'm international, never mind place;
I'm for humanity, all one race

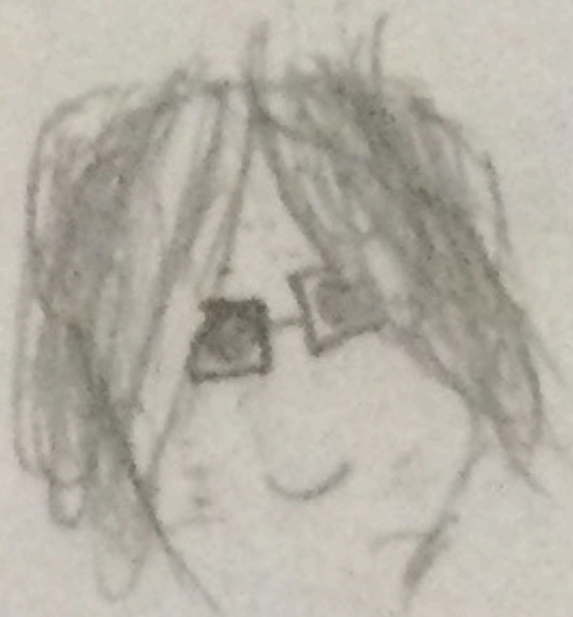
son of mine

my son your troubled eyes search me
Puzzled and hurt by colour line
black skin as soft as velvet shine
what can I tell you son of mine

I could tell of heartbreak hatred blind
I could tell you of crimes that shame
mankind
of brutal wrong that deeds malign
of rape and murder son of mine

but I'll tell you instead of brave
and fine

when lives of black and white entwined
and men and brotherhood combine
this I would tell you son of mine



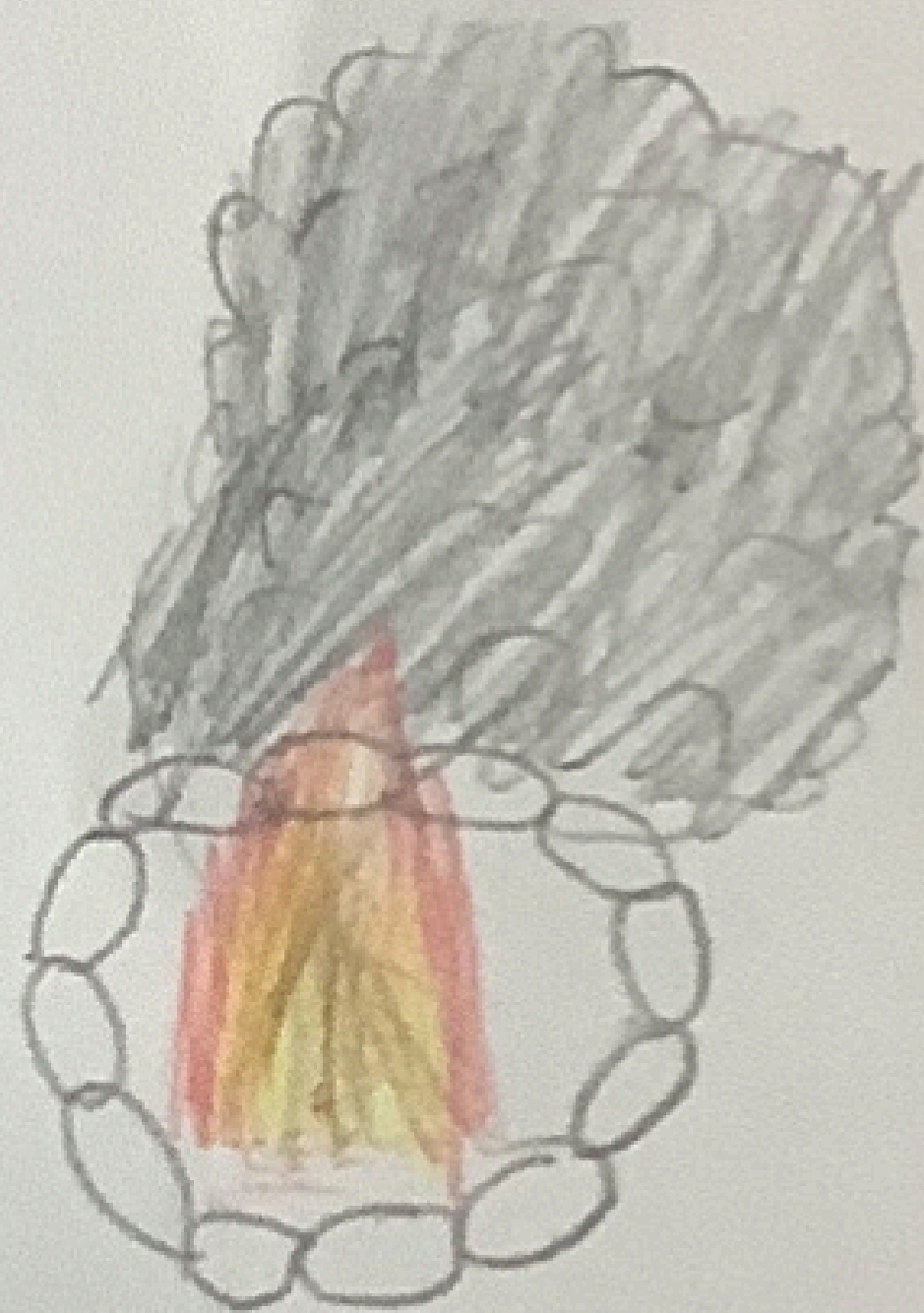
Song of Hope

look up, my people,
The dawn is breaking
The world is waking
To bright new day

When none defame us
No restriction tame us
Nor colour shame us
Nor sheer dismay.

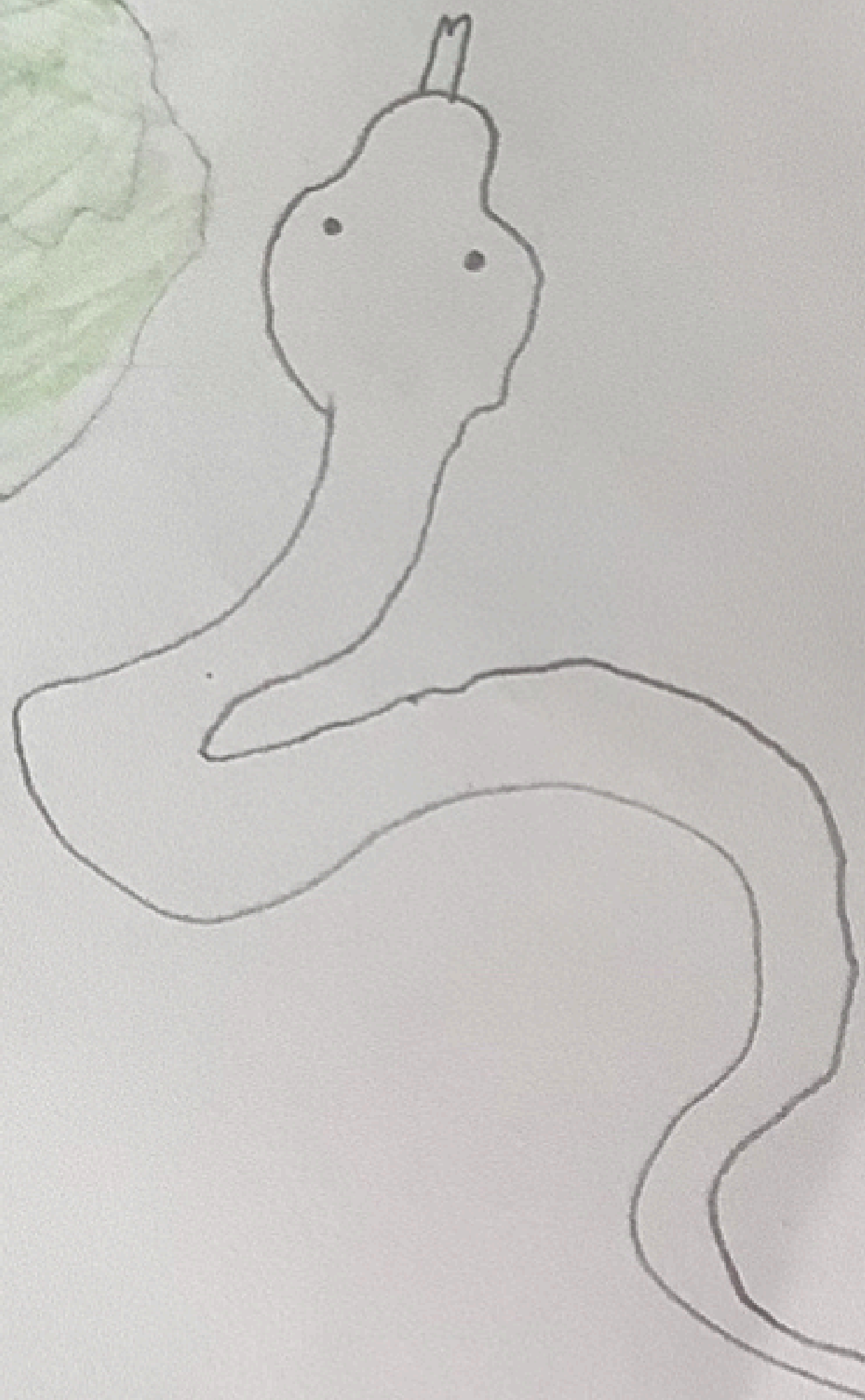
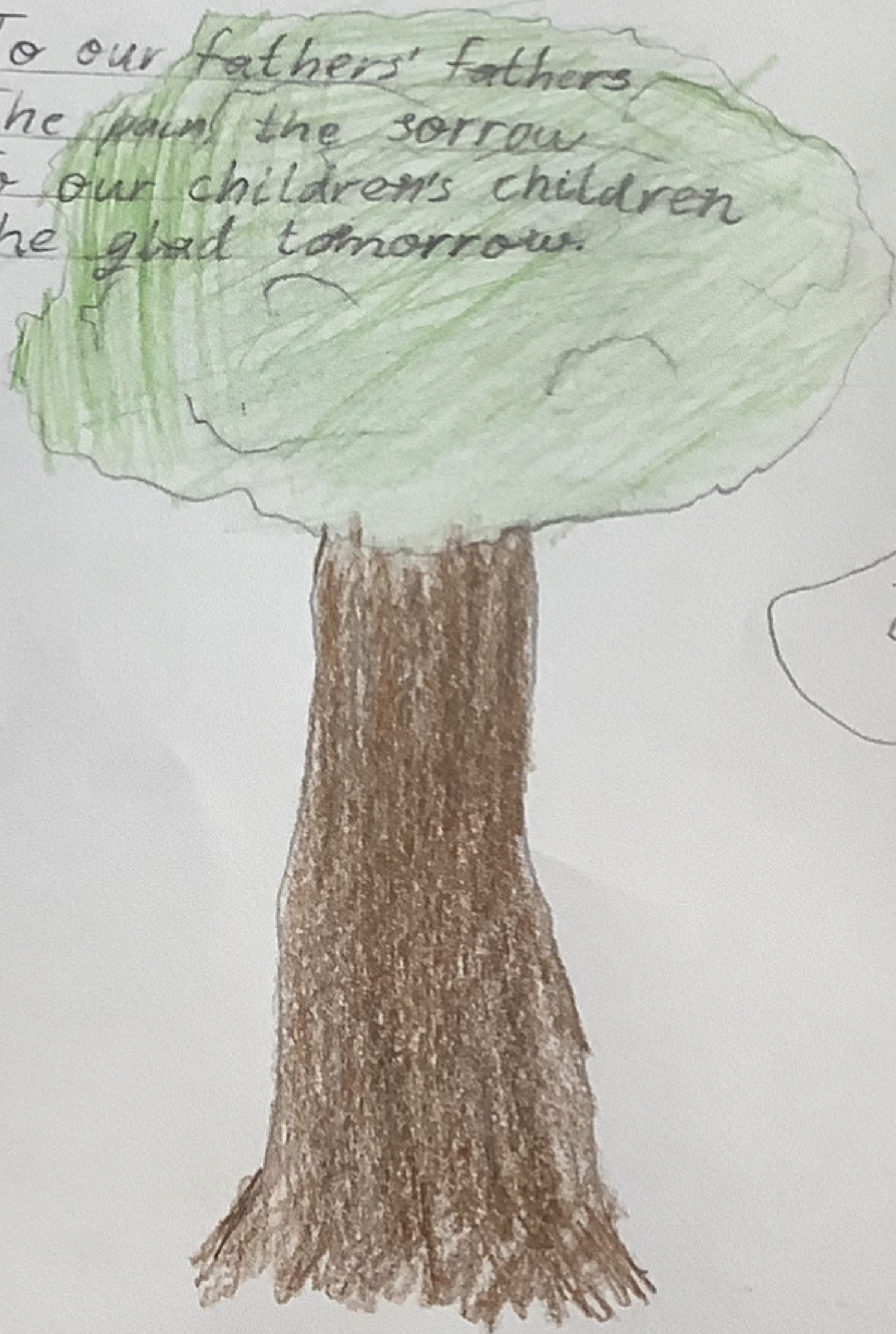
Now brood no more
On the years behind you
Shall the past replace
When a juster justice
Crown wise and stronger
Point the bone no longer
At a darker race.

So long we waited
Bound and frustrated
Till hate be hated
And caste deposed
Now light shall guide us
No goal denied us
And all doors open
That long were closed.



See plain the promise
Park freedom-lover!
Night's nearly over
And though long the climb
New rights will greet us
New mateship meet us
And joy complete us
In our new Dream Time

To our fathers' fathers
The pain the sorrow
To our children's children
The glad tomorrow.



Song

By Oodgeroo Noonuccal

Life is ours in vain
Lacking love, which never
Counts the loss or gain.
But remember, ever
Love is linked with pain.



When our last one left us
 For the Shadow Land,
 In bark we bound him,
 A weeping band,

And we bore him, wailing
 Our wild death croon
 To his lonely tree grave
 By the long lagoon



Our Wandering fires
 are now far away,
 But our thoughts are turning
 By night and day

Where he lies forever
 Under the white moon

His hunts are over
And the songs he made;
Poor lonely fellow he will be afraid
When the night winds whisper
Their ghostly tune
In the haunted Swamp oaks
By the Long Lagoon.



Dreamtime

Here, at the invaders—talk-talk place,
We, who are the Strangers now,
Come with sorrow in our hearts.
The Bora Ring the longboards,
The sacred ceremonies,
Have all gone, All gone
Turned to dust on the land
that once was ours.

Oh spirits from the unhappy past,
Hear us now.

We come, not to disturb your rest.
We come, to mourn your passing,
You who, paid the price,

When the invaders spilt our blood
your present generation comes,

Seeking strength and wisdom in your memory.
The legends tell us,

When our race dies,

So too, dies the land.

May your spirits go with us
from this place.

May the Mother of life

Wake from her sleeping,

and leave us on to the happy life,

That once was ours,

Oh mother of life,

Oh spirits from the unhappy past,

Hear the cries of your unhappy people

And let it be so

Oh spirits—let it be so

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Oodgeroo Noonuccal was an amazing Aboriginal poet as well as a political activist. Learn more about Oodgeroo Noonuccal's life story in this book.

