



ALWAYS WAS, ALWAYS WILL BE

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

2016 Schools'
Reconciliation
Challenge



NEW SOUTH WALES
RECONCILIATION
COUNCIL





The New South Wales Reconciliation Council is delighted to bring you another year of reconciliation-inspired art and writing for the 2016 Schools' Reconciliation Challenge. The project is in its 7th year and this year's theme, 'Always was, Always will be' has proved to be a popular way for young people to express their vision for a reconciled Australia. I would like to thank all of the teachers, principals, schools, parents and students who have taken the time to enter this year.

While we received over 700 artworks from across the State, for the first time this year we also offered students the opportunity to write a story reflecting the theme and their perspectives on the broader story of reconciliation. We were thrilled that over 200 entries were received.

Whilst there can only be a handful of winners, we were astonished with both the quantity and quality of art and writing received. In particular, many of the artworks were developed collaboratively, involving whole classes of students and developed under the guidance of Aboriginal artists and dedicated teachers. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our judges: Alison Faure-Brac, Marcus Hughes, Simon Davis, Peter Lee, John Blair and Gerard Sullivan for their time and consideration in selecting this year's winners and placeholders. I am sure it was no easy feat.

This year entries were received from far and wide across NSW, including: West Wyalong High School in the West of the State, St. Paul's

College, Kempsey on the North coast, Henty Public School in the South West, Homebush Public School in Sydney and Winmalee High School in the Blue Mountains. As part of this year's competition, we also ran 6 writing workshops in partnership with the Sydney Story Factory and the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences. These workshops were delivered using the Museums' digital technology and enabled us to reach over 400 students in 3 days. Through the use of tableaux, students explored different moments in Australia's history and then created stories which represented their understanding of a character's experience of what it might have been like living through a particular time period or significant event. These workshops, facilitated by the Sydney Story Factory's Indigenous Storyteller, John Blair with tremendous support from the team at the MAAS including Marcus Hughes, Karolina Novac, James Oliver and Mark Scarcella, gave us a tremendous insight into how schools across NSW are seeking ways to increase their understanding and engagement in the reconciliation process in NSW.

Congratulations once more to all those students and schools whose works have been selected to form part of this exhibition. We have been inspired, amazed and delighted by the quality of the art and the clarity with which our students express their understanding of the role reconciliation plays in creating a better Australia for us all.

We look forward to what next year holds!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gilly Dempsey'.

Gilly Dempsey

Director, NSW Reconciliation Council





The 2016 Schools' Reconciliation Challenge highlights Australia's shared history and explores ways to strengthen relationships with the many diverse and resilient Aboriginal communities across New South Wales.

This year's theme 'Always was, Always will be' explores the spiritual and cultural connection to land that Aboriginal people have maintained for many thousands of years and highlights that while we must never forget our history, we have also enjoyed shared progress.

These promising young students from schools all across New South Wales have produced exciting entries which explore the state of reconciliation at a critical point in Australia's history.

As Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, it gives me great pride to support this fantastic event which continues to bring reconciliation into focus, including achievements, challenges and work that must continue through education, healing and mutual respect.

Congratulations to all students who took part in this year's Schools' Challenge. I am confident that together we can make an important contribution towards reconciliation, and look forward to the next steps in our journey.

Hon. Leslie Williams MP
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs



It Lies in the Ground

Ryan Rubinstein
Reddam House

First Prize (Art), Secondary School 2016

My artwork investigates the merging of two cultures, both European and Indigenous and how they always have existed and can work together to form a new future. The cave painting in the background shows Australia's rich artistic past which has always been present and connects with the Indigenous artist Namirrkki's quote of how today we have come to recognise this important part of our shared history. By appropriating Warhol's soup can the audience sees a very different view of history and the priceless nature of reconciliation. Both sides to this story always was there and always will be.

Singing for the Traditional Owners

Jade Simpson

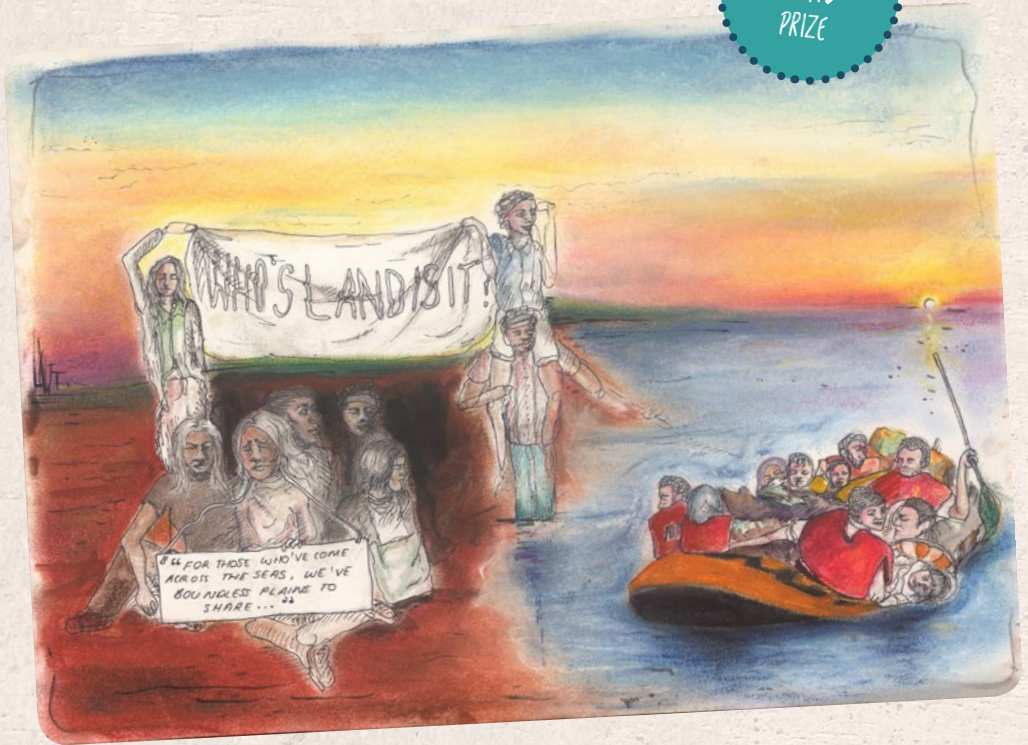
Taree Christian College

Second Prize (Art), Secondary School 2016

My artwork is about representing the traditional owners of this land by singing.



3RD
PRIZE



Whose Land is it?

Sophia Masters

Reddam House

Third Prize (Art), Secondary School 2016

Land is disputable to many, yet to others it is theirs. Life is temporary, land for a little bit longer, but 'Always was, Always will be' their culture, my culture, our culture, that stands. Their land, our land to which we share. The reconciliation of paying respect, giving back and acceptance as well as improvement, is what combines us, and what should motivate us to welcome and empower the human race.



Fabrication

HIGHLY
COMMENDED

Bethany Price
Nepean Creative and Performing Arts High School
Highly Commended (Art), Secondary School 2016

The government of Australia has a poor record when it comes to treatment of its' Aboriginal citizens. Indigenous Australians were dispossessed of their land, despised for their culture, and marginalised, abused and murdered. My artwork represents an innocent Aboriginal girl breaking out from her past into a new future in a reconciled Australia.

The Messengers

Karina Fiddling

Winmalee High School

Highly Commended (Art), Secondary School 2016

My artwork is about the crows who are the messengers, flying over the Aboriginal flag, and the Southern Cross represents the Australian flag and represents that we live in the Southern Hemisphere.

This art work relates to reconciliation because it has the crows who are flying over the flag sending the message that we are living on Aboriginal land. My artwork contributes to the theme because it means that we will always remember the ancestors.





The Land Heals Us

Sarah Whitfield

Winmalee High School

Highly Commended (Art), Secondary School 2016

This artwork reflects on the integral relationship between the land and Aboriginal people. I wanted to reflect that we as Australians can all benefit from the united relationship to our history and that 'our' history is the long lasting relationship between our land. The Land Heals Us is a return to what is most important – looking back on our past but moving forward together with the landscape as our life force.

"Family of Foreigners"

The dew settled on the deadened grass, dampening all that touched it. I could see others already lighting their campfires, preparing for another day of fighting for our rights. There was a feeling of impatience, stronger than yesterday settling over us like a thin blanket of fog. It was brewing. We had become a family, strengthened by our shared discrimination, we would fight as one.

We were seen as foreigners in our own land, aliens pushed aside and belittled. We didn't matter individually, we couldn't make a difference but as a community we would stand for what we believed in. Opposite the Parliament House we shouted, we hollered, we waited.

We had no land, we were homeless trying to support our case as well as support our families. The founders of the embassy continued to spread hope and peace throughout the camp but people were becoming restless. We needed some evidence that our protest was being heard. As a community, we presented a list of demands, pleading that someone would understand our situation and join the fight for justice.

As the original owners and custodians of this land, we deserved our say. Not only had they severed the connections between us and our land, our sacred sites but they murdered us mercilessly. All we wanted was legal titles and rights to our own land but we were denied and rejected. Discarded, viewed as though we were scum on their shoes.

We were ordered to leave. Then the police came, swarming our embassy, trampling our tents, signs, possessions. Anything that was in the way was destroyed. Many stayed to fight, as a last attempt to stand for what we believe in. Where else had we to go, we had nothing to lose. What had taken years to build up, took moments to tear down.

Now, once again, we were standing up for our beliefs. Our tents re-erected, the tension growing stronger, a sense of apprehension was in the air as we waited patiently outside the white, sterile Parliament House. We were 200 strong as we held our position waiting for the police force to come, and come they did. Once again turning over our tents and assaulting those who stood in the way. Our peaceful protest was no more.

A gruff policeman wrenched my arm causing me to scream in pain. I writhed in agony as he placed his leather boot against the nape of the neck. "You don't belong here you abo, so go back to where you came from" he spat, crouching down, his stinking breath brushing my ear. As he left, I scrambled to my feet. I belonged here, I would fight for my cause until my last dying breath.

Those who left were more determined than ever because this was and always will be our land and our home. No one could change that.

Family of Foreigners

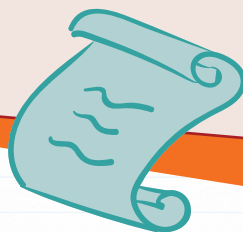
Freya Roberts

Hornsby Girls High School

First Prize (Writing), Secondary School 2016

1ST
PRIZE

My story, Family of Foreigners, relates to reconciliation as my story acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional owners of this land. It conveys this message through statements for example 'I belonged right here' and 'always be our lands and our home'. This story relates to the theme as it recognises the fact that Australia has always been their land and their home, no matter what circumstances. I created the character because she had an interesting and relevant perspective and I could describe strong emotions.



“Unity and Diversity”

The clear blue sky stretches out over 40,000 angry Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The fresh morning air is a relief from the dry heat of the past few days.

Audrey clutches her flag and waves it around in excitement. “Daddy, Daddy,” she hoots with joy and tries climbing up his back. David lifts Audrey’s plump body up onto his shoulders with ease. Her red, black and yellow flag dances happily in the air with all the others. Audrey digs her hand deep into her father’s dark locks. A smile creeps onto my face as I see her chubby lively face light up with fascination.

“Australia Day equals invasion day. Don’t celebrate 1988,” recites Audrey as my smile stretches to my ears. Audrey laughs and yells with all her might, but her words are lost in the sea of agitated voices around her.

“White Australia has a black history!”

“That’s right darling,” says David.

“I’m proud to be Aboriginal, Daddy and I’m glad I don’t have to live with a white family like you and mummy.” Audrey’s face still shows signs of excitement, but in her eyes, mixed emotions swim. They mirror my mind.

Memories from my past flood my head and salty tears pool in my eyes. I can only just remember my mother’s soft dark hands running through my hair, untangling the knots. My father’s big rough hands holding both of mine in his. He pressed a little wooden doll, he carved himself, into them before the authorities took me away. That’s when the memories turn bad. They said I could have a better future with a white family so they took me away. That’s where they went wrong. You can give a black person a white name, but you can’t turn a black person into a white person. You can’t change them on the outside, but more importantly you could never change them on the inside.



What is there to celebrate about Australia Day? The 26th of January 1788 was the day everything changed for the Aboriginal people. The English thought they could come to Australia and take over. They brushed us away like we were flies, but we kept buzzing around them. So instead of moving somewhere with no flies they killed the flies. They have no respect for us, neither do modern day Australians. They celebrate Australia Day like it's something to remember, but it's not. These people around me think they care, but if they did why don't they say sorry to the Stolen Generations.

I wipe the tears from my eyes and touch the wooden doll hanging at my neck. I gaze at Audrey and Noah, grateful that I can be a mother and raise my children without the thought of them being taken away. Noah sleeps in my arms. His tiny feet wiggle as he stirs. His big brown eyes gaze up into mine and I kiss his soft forehead.

Gary Foley's words are hard to make out from the roar of the crowd. "...it's so magnificent to see black and white Australians, together in harmony. This is what Australia could and should be like." I just wish Australia could've realised sooner.

Unity and Diversity

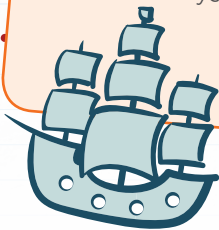
Sarah McCaskie

West Wyalong High School

Second Prize (Writing), Secondary School 2016

2ND
PRIZE

I wrote from the perspective of someone unhappy with celebrating Australia Day as she and her husband are part of the Stolen Generations. My story relates to 'Always was, Always will be' because it shows how people celebrated 200 years of white settlement in Australia when nobody celebrated Indigenous settlement. I wanted to write about someone a part of the Stolen Generations, so I imagined being taken away from my family and then people celebrating it.





Back to the Future

Juliana Sanders and Loreli Malicia

Point Clare Public School

First Prize (Art), Primary School 2016

The girl in the picture represents freedom to be whatever we want to be and for a reconciled future. This past, present and future are represented by the rewind, play and fast forward 'button' symbols on the photo. The dot paintings and background of land show no matter how far into the future we go, the Aboriginal people can proudly say 'Always was, and Always will be'.

Heading in the Right Direction

Maarij Ahmed, Zena Karim, Ahmad Daher, Wassim Dandan,
Nurideen Mohammad and Hussein Sleiman
Chullora Public School

Second Prize (Art), Primary School 2016

In our artwork, 'Always was' is represented by the river that spirals back to the beginning of time. Aboriginal and Torres Islander people and others who have made Australia home are together on the river, working with each other to make things better. If they don't work together the people won't make it because everything and everyone is connected. Along the way there are islands showing important events like special landmarks. The river keeps going, off the page and continues into the future on the journey to reconciliation and that represents the 'Always Will Be'.





Friendship

Tiana Ilic
Brighton-Le-Sands Public School
Third Prize (Art), Primary School 2016

My artwork is about two people coming together, one Indigenous and one non-Indigenous, saying sorry for what has happened throughout the years. My artwork relates to reconciliation because of how my two people are becoming friends. My artwork is saying always was, always will be your homeland, your place to call home.



Always

Kiara Lively, Zachary Moore, Dean Cimera, Danny Vuong, Cindy Dinh,
Mathew Olic, Creston To'omata and Billy Sdrolais
Mt Pritchard Public School

Highly Commended (Art), Primary School 2016

When we reflect on the words 'Always was, Always will be', we immediately think of a timeline. As a result, the focus of our artwork is based on significant events in Australia's history that have shaped who we are as a people and a nation. The barbed wire symbolises the Stolen Generations.

The glorious red poppies are in recognition of our brave Indigenous soldiers during wartime in 1914. We said Sorry to Indigenous Australians for past injustices in 2008. The First Australians will continue to be a major stakeholder in current and future news stories in 2016.

Always the past...
Always the future...
Always...



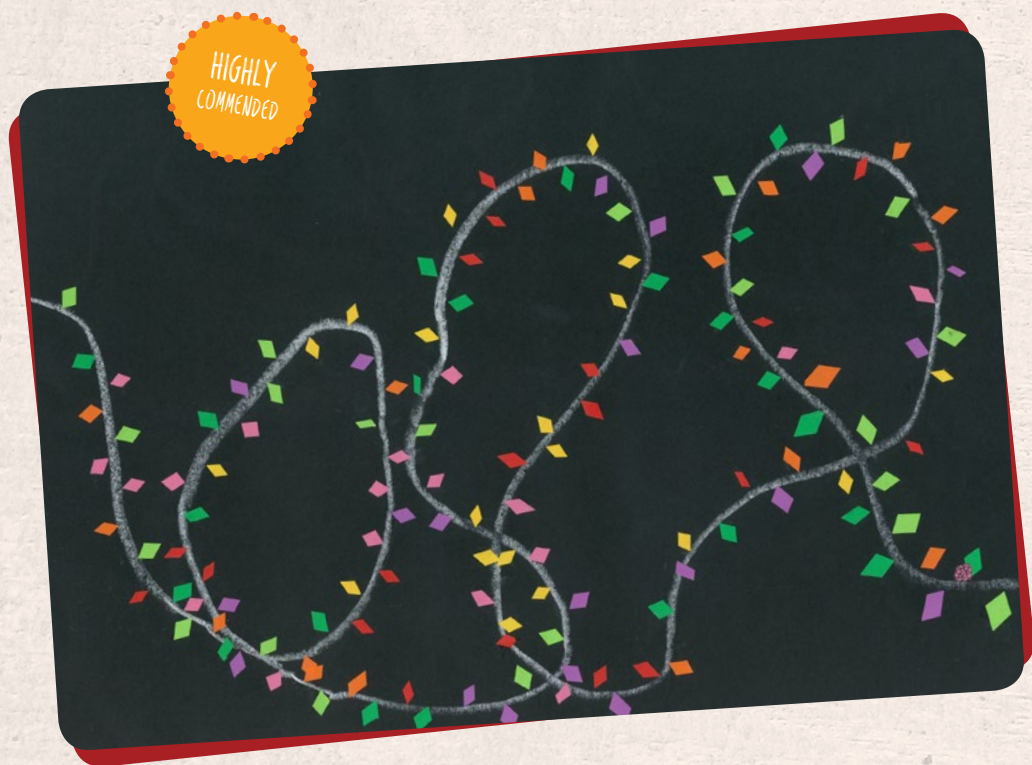
A Blossoming Rose on a Growing Vine

Sarah Cornwell

Killara Public School

Highly Commended (Art), Primary School 2016

The vine represents when the Aboriginal Australians owned this land and that is always. It also represents that we will always live in Reconciliation. The small rose represents when the British arrived here.





HIGHLY
COMMENDED

Walking Through Time

Genevieve White

Henty Public School

Highly Commended (Art), Primary School 2016

My artwork relates to Aboriginal culture and dreamtime stories. You are walking through the timeline of Aboriginal culture. The hand stretching across the page symbolises the never-ending culture of Aboriginal people.

"The Stolen"

They ran
Like free birds in the
open sky
They swam
Like ducklings paddling in
water

Didn't they know of the
danger awaiting
They were the chickens
and the geese
Vulnerable to the fox
The prey was found

The white ghosts had
come
Like mist on red land
They were taken
They were stolen

The children cried
For their families
They were loved
But now in need

No answer was given
To their desperate cries
They were taken
To places Unknown

The children were trained
To learn white ways
Black forgotten
New embraced

For they were the
"half-castes"
The middle of the river
Now swept to a side
They were stolen

They wanted love
But brutality they got
Given beds and pots
Rather than open sky
and parents

But little they could do
For their lives had
changed
Their memories forgotten
Their hearts taken

They were never forgotten
The thousands of miles
The dusty roads
Could not stop their love

Their parents wished
That their children return
Disheartened they were
For they were
gone forever

They were trained
As maids and workers
They were taught
The way of the ghosts

The ways of thieves
They were never loved
Only trained
Once old they
were released

Out into the world
A world of selfish
monsters
But no choice they had
Their lives had
been broken

Their families old
For they were older
A child of many, an adult
of few
They had changed

Their country taken
Made into a growing nation
A prosperous place
Their spirit had died

No longer did they see
thousands of miles of
open sky
Smoke wafted from
chimneys
Their country was taken
They were broken

No longer did they see
their tribes
Their ceremonies
Their hunting
Their culture

But change arose
A change hunted
A change resurrected
A change theirs

He had spoken
That leader
They hated
But now thanked

No longer did they hear
Dreamtime stories
The splashing of water
The snapping of twigs as
they ran

He spoke
That leader of monsters
Of savages
Of thieves

For he had changed their
lives
Broken their chains
Bonds amended
Laws gained

No longer did they know
True happiness
True love
True passion

He spoke
To say sorry
To say he was sorry
To say they were sorry

They were once the stolen
The taken
The thieved
The broken

Their bonds broken
Their chains fastened
To a life of pain
Agonising pain

He spoke
For all of them
For the lying thieves
For the devilish fools

Now they were the loved
The cherished
The comforted
The happy

Their hatred grew
For the ghosts of afar
As years passed
Their admiration perished

He spoke
To say sorry
Sorry
Sorry

For they knew
This would once happen
For the land was theirs
This beautiful red nation

It was theirs
For once they roamed
On the bare red land
That is now taken

Tears streamed
Like the river of life
Never ending
Never stopping
Once their paths had
changed
Now they were heading the
right way
A way to reconciliation
A way to love

The stolen knew
That Australia
Always was and always
will be
Theirs



The Stolen (Previous Page)

Aarya Phansalkar

Blaxcell Street Public School

First Prize (Writing), Primary School 2016

1ST
PRIZE

My poem, *The Stolen*, relates to reconciliation as it is about the life of Aboriginal people during the period of the Stolen Generations. It refers to the horrid times of torture and thievery, explaining the emotions of Aboriginal people as they experienced many horrible times. My poem relates back to the theme 'Always Was, Always Will Be' as it describes years when Aboriginal children were taken unjustly from their birth parents. They always were and always will be a part of their Aboriginal families, culture, heritage and land. When I was writing this poem, I attempted to imagine myself in the shoes of an Aboriginal person watching her people being stolen and taken to British camps to learn their foreign culture. I tried to think about how it would feel if I were taken away from my family and this influenced my writing as I added melancholy words and phrases. This poem has greatly impacted my thinking about the Stolen Generations and Aboriginal people in general.

Although the Memories Will Never Leave, We All Need to Reconcile

Liam Golden

Point Clare Public School

Second Prize (Writing), Primary School 2016

2ND
PRIZE

My poem tries to highlight the awareness of a little boy who witnesses firsthand the violence against Indigenous Australians and the removal of their children from their parents. Even though this little boy does not realise that what he is witnessing, is "the Stolen Generations" playing out in front of him, these events haunt him into adulthood.

While as a young boy, he was traumatised by the horror he saw. In writing this poem, I have also tried to show how the boy grows up and becomes an adult, the memories then turn to horror in the reality of what he actually witnessed. Although the now grown man, knows that he cannot change the events of the past, he believes that we all need to be made aware of the true events of the past. There needs to be understanding of the wrongs in order not just to ensure that we never forget them, but that we learn from them in order to ensure that they NEVER happen again. It is essential for this to occur in order for us to be able to reconcile.



"Although the Memories Will Never Leave, We All Need to Reconcile"

I've woken up
a day on the farm
It is so muggy and hot,
on sunburnt country we've found.

The day has come to a slow end
Dad's mates come around
They say they're going black slaying
and that they're going to steal
their children.

Dad says I have to come
my heart is pumping faster
and my smile is getting bigger
at last, after so many years, I'm
going out with dad.

When we arrive at the village
Everything is quiet
the men wait for the word
my mates and I are silent.

When the captain gives the word
our fathers' start to charge
My friends yell in encouragement
for the fun has begun.

But after a while
I start to see
the evil we are committing.

I stand up and lower my head
I am ashamed of what we have done
I turn around and walk
I walk all the way home.

The evil that I saw that night
still gives me nightmares today
that night I finally realised
we all need to reconcile.

Although the memories will
never leave
The torment will never leave
We are all Australian
We are all one

No matter if we are black or white
We all need to reconcile.





“Reconciliation”

Long ago there was a little Indigenous girl named Adina who lived in where we now call Sydney. Her parents were Indigenous Australians. Her father who was never accepted as a person, enlisted to go to war when she was four years old. Adina didn't quite understand what was going on.

Tragically, Adina was kidnapped by white people. Terrified, angry and grief stricken, her mother screamed in anguish and in her native language “GIVE ME BACK MY CHILD!”

White strangers took many children to the detention centre where they were raised to be white. Adina missed her mother every minute of every day. She longed to be back with her family and despised the harsh environment forced upon her.

After six months Adina decided to escape. During a lesson at school she asked to go to the toilet. She crept silently down the hallway praying the nuns wouldn't hear her. Then she climbed up the five metre fence, ignoring the pain of the wire cutting into her bare flesh.

In her haste, Adina had forgotten about getting her shoes to protect her feet. Once free of the enclosure she walked non-stop for days and days, trying to find her mother and her tribe's people. Despite being scared of what might happen if she was caught, she was determined to go home. One day she stumbled into a camp starving and dehydrated, barely able to talk. At last she had found a group of women she could trust. When she could hold down a sip of water, Adina told them what had happened and what she was trying to do. They pointed her in the direction of her mother's camp and Adina thanked them so much.

Adina walked for four more days and decided to make camp. She made a simple bark lean to, picked some berries and with a full stomach, fell asleep. When she awoke, the sun was in the middle of the sky. Adina continued her journey across the hot barren landscape, until finally, she heard familiar sounds.



When her mother saw her lost child, she was in awe. She was so proud and couldn't believe that Adina had risked her life to come home. As Adina breathed in the scent of home she saw pain and torment etched into her mother's face. That afternoon Adina and the tribe went for a swim in the river and caught fish.

Years went by quickly and life changed dramatically for her people. Years of pain and hardship were endured by numerous young girls like Adina. Their lives were filled with sadness and despair; their families, their only hope and happiness.

In 2008 Kevin Rudd in Parliament announced a proper apology. Long overdue and witnessed by millions, he said on behalf of our nation, that Australians were SORRY for past wrongs.

He stated that we as a nation should experience the unique and rich culture, tradition and history of Indigenous Australians. Reconciliation means that Australia Always Was, and Always Will Be.

Reconciliation

Gemma Mills

Ballimore Public School

Highly Commended (Writing), Primary School 2016

HIGHLY
COMMENDED

My story relates to Reconciliation because it is a journey. The Stolen Generations 'Always was and Always will be' part of Australia's history. I started off thinking of the most important events in our timeline. The Aboriginal men who went to war, the Stolen Generations and the "2008 Apology". Then I put myself in the character's shoes and thought what would I do? How would I feel?



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Barangaroo



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Sydney Story FACTORY