

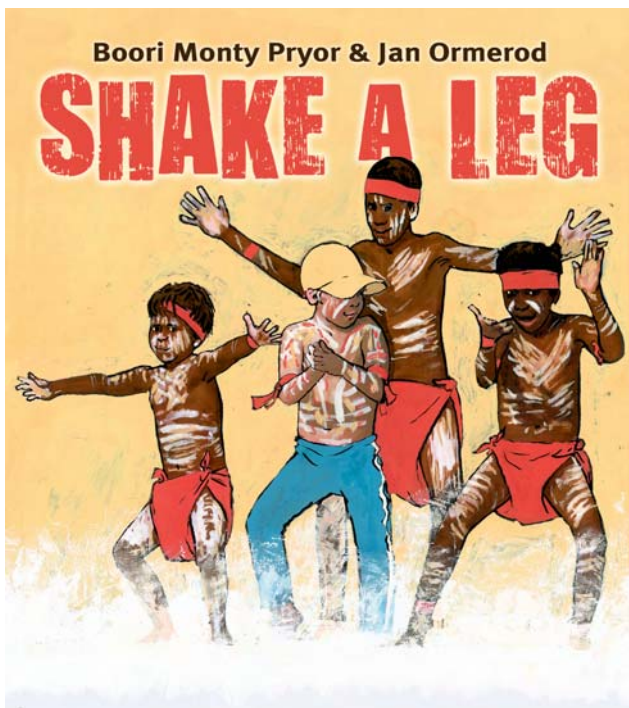
Teachers' Notes **by Jan Deans (Primary)** **& Phil Egan (Secondary)**

Shake A Leg by **Boori Monty Pryor**

ISBN 9781741758900

Recommended for ages 6-10+ yrs

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| <p>Introduction.....2</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">In the classroom2</p> <p>Creative Dance for Early Years3</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Planning.....3</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Early Years Learning Framework.....3</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">The <i>Shake A Leg</i> class.....4</p> <p>In the Primary classroom.....7</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Reconciliation through engagement in children's literature.....7</p> <p>In the secondary classroom.....8</p> <p>About the writers & illustrator..... 11</p> |  |
|--|--|

INTRODUCTION

Shake A Leg is an eye-opening story which promotes cultural understanding in a lively, non-didactic manner. This innovative picture book follows a group of boys 'hunting for pizza' in north Queensland. Their preconceptions are shattered when they enter Bertie's Pizzeria and are confronted with an indigenous pizza chef who speaks Italian and makes a 'deadly' pizza. Over a crocodile-shaped pizza, the chef regales the boys with traditional stories from his culture, and introduces them to the crocodile dance and the honey-bee dance.

The boys are enraptured and eager to learn more, so the chef invites them to meet his family: his daughter, Jemma, who is training to be a nurse, and his sons, Jai, a sound engineer, and Jason, who is mechanically-minded and helps with his father's business. In an urban twist on tradition, the boys are 'painted up' with tomato sauce and flour rather than ochre. They are then taught the exuberant 'shake-a-leg' dance, the finale to all the other dances. The dust of the flour and the rhythmic reverberations from the dancers' feet stirs the spirits of the ancestors: the pizza shop transforms into the *bora* ground, as all take part in the joyous ritual of welcome and acceptance.

The central message of *Shake A Leg* is that there are stories everywhere, provided people are willing to listen. It is a book about challenging stereotypes, portraying Aboriginal people in modern, culturally diverse environments, not 'standing on one leg, leaning on a spear, looking for emu'. At the same time, the book emphasises the resilience, richness and integrity of indigenous culture, showing how it maintains its authenticity and unique spirit as Australia changes over time.

Shake A Leg is a remarkable storybook collaboration, a unique fusion of two distinct visions – that of Boori Monty Pryor, an influential indigenous author, speaker and performer, and the artist Jan Ormerod, renowned for her soft, tonal paintings, more representative of a 'European' illustrative style. In its very nature, then, the book embodies the notion of cooperation and cross-cultural understanding.

IN THE CLASSROOM

At all year levels, study of *Shake A Leg* should ideally accompany a school visit by Boori Monty Pryor and it is recommended that one of the class teachers establish contact with Boori prior to the visit for advice on what pre-planning and action could be undertaken to maximise his time on site. Bookings can be made through Boori Pryor's agency: Glen Leach Management Pty Ltd: Young Australia Workshop, 332 Victoria St, Darlinghurst NSW 2010, Ph 02-9332 1911, toll free ph.1800 227 095 or <http://www.youngaus.com.au/>.

IN THE EARLY YEARS & PRIMARY CLASSROOM

In these notes we present a dance unit of work which links to the **Early Years Learning Framework for Australia** and an example of a prize-winning unit of work undertaken with Boori Monty Pryor by Heatley State Primary School in Queensland.

IN THE SECONDARY CLASSROOM

Shake A Leg allows secondary students and staff to explore Australian culture and identity and its wide diversity. Through group discussion and individual projects, students will be able to better understand the value of the diversity of our cultures, beginning with an exploration of who they are individually. To understand our own and our family's culture identity goes a long way to valuing and tolerating the different cultures of the world around us.

Curriculum Areas Covered

- History
- Personal Development
- Environmental Health
- Politics

- Indigenous Studies
- Dance/Drama/Music Studies
- English
- HISE/SOSE

CREATIVE DANCE FOR EARLY YEARS

PLANNING THE CREATIVE DANCE CLASS

Every teacher will bring his or her personal, individualized and creative approach to the design and implementation of the lesson. Creative dance provides children with the opportunity to express their ideas and understandings through their bodies, to practice skills and share their ideas with friends and teachers.

Each part of the lesson can be freely interwoven with another but, as a rule of thumb, teachers can consider the following framework:

Welcome: The children enter the space and gather together in a designated space for sharing of news and introduction to the content of the class. This space is the 'safe haven' where children regularly return during the class and where they sit to enjoy the dances of others.

Warm Up: the children are invited into the space to make a 'starting body shape'. During this part of the class children are encouraged to 'sense' their bodies in movement and stillness, in parts and as a whole and also to look and listen to ambient environmental stimuli and to particular sounds either in the recorded music or in the percussion instruments used.

Whole group movement exploration and practice of skills: pre-planned content based on the selected movement material. Using a guided improvisation approach children explore a wide range of skills with engagement facilitated through questioning, verbal and physical suggestions, teacher modelling and social contagion.

Solo and small group improvisations: the children have the opportunity to perform their personal responses to the class material that has been explored as individuals, small groups or as a whole group. The teacher can use a thinking routine such as 'I see, I think, I wonder' to guide child audience feedback.

Solo and small group free-dance: the children are invited to either, individually or in half groups, share their dances with their friends. The teacher can accompany these dances with the hum-drum or selected music. The teacher keeps verbal input kept to a minimum although affirmation of individual contributions is recommended with the teacher helping the children to 'find and ending'. Respectful audience behaviours are expected from the children who are observing and the performers and the audience are invited to talk about the dances with the teacher employing the 'I see, I think, I wonder' thinking routine to structure verbal feedback.

Relaxation: the children are asked to find a space in the room in which to lie with the main purpose of this part of the class to allow children a chance to unwind. Quiet, relaxing music allows for the establishment of a relaxing and reflective ambience.

Reflective Drawing/telling: the children are provided with drawing boards and A4 white paper and lack fine liner pens and asked 'to draw something remembered from the class today'. Upon completion of their drawing the children are asked by the teacher to 'tell me about your drawing' and these words are written on children's individual drawings.

MAKING LINKS TO THE EARLY YEARS LEARNING FRAMEWORK FOR AUSTRALIA

<http://www.det.wa.edu.au/education/ece/docs/The%20EYLF%20for%20Australia%20-%20PDF%20version.pdf>

The EYLF articulates a vision for children's learning that encompasses the idea of *Belonging, Being and Becoming* with emphasis placed on children's development of a strong sense of self, connectedness to the community and a capacity to develop knowledge skills and understandings that support positive attitudes to people and learning. The three inter-related elements of the framework – Principles, Practices and Learning Outcomes are fundamental to early childhood pedagogy and curriculum, with educators required to guide their programming in response to the clearly articulated Learning Outcomes, namely:

- Children have a strong sense of identity
- Children are connected with and contribute to their world
- Children have a strong sense of well-being
- Children are confident and involved learners
- Children are effective communicators

The following program provides teachers with a step-by-step guide to support the implementation of a creative dance class for children aged 3-5 years. Learning Outcomes from the EYLF are also included for additional program support.

THE *SHAKE A LEG* CLASS

Objective: For the children to explore the range of body movements illustrated in the story *Shake A Leg*. EYLF Learning Outcomes 1-5.

Rationale: Children learn by using their bodies to explore the world. Through expressive movements, gestures and body shapes children have opportunities to communicate and integrate their knowledge, understandings feelings and thoughts about the world they live in. The skilful manipulation of sound, silence, stillness and movement make dance a powerful art form that transforms the ordinary into something very special.

What you will need:

- Spacious room or open space
- The book *Shake A Leg*
- Wooden clapping sticks,
- Didgeridoo music
- A4 drawing paper, black fine liner pens, clip boards or thick cardboard to be used as hard surface for drawing
- Red streamers or ribbons

What to do:

Place a coloured piece of material on floor and gather children together. Ensure that shoes and socks are removed.

EYLF Outcome 1

- Children learn to interact in relation to others with care, empathy and respect.

EYLF Outcome 2

- **Children develop a sense of belonging to groups and communities and an understanding of the reciprocal rights and responsibilities necessary for active community participation**

Introduce the book *Shake A Leg* to the children focusing on the parts of the story that lend themselves to movement exploration e.g. arm and leg gestures, dancing in the dust, crocodiles, snakes butterflies, bees, stamping, crawling, jumping, group dancing, line dancing, solo dancing.

EYLF Outcome 5

- **Children engage with a range of texts and gain meaning from these texts**
- **Children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media**

Invite the children one by one to enter the space to make a stationary shape. Use the clapping sticks as accompaniment.

EYLF Outcome 1

- **Children develop their emerging autonomy, interdependence, resilience and sense of agency**

Once all children are in the space introduce a full body warm up paying attention to shaking knees, stretching arms up and out, stamping and jumping. Use the clapping sticks as accompaniment and children can use vocalizations. Move to the sound of the sticks, stillness when the sound stops.

With the accentuation of whispering and silence the sticks exude a spiritual power. When the clapping sticks stop playing, complete stillness can follow.

Experiment with free flow movements that demonstrate elements of the movement material discussed earlier. Sequence three movements such as shake-a-leg, stamping and jumping. Accompany this movement exploration with a didgeridoo CD soundscape and children can be provided with red streamers or ribbons to tie on their wrists.

EYLF Outcome 5

- **Children interact verbally and non-verbally with others for a range of purposes**

Introduce the idea of group line dances with half group dancing and the other half watching from the designated safe space. Begin children at the end of the room moving forwards with stamping. On the loud sound of the clapping stick children stop and perform their shake-a-leg with arms outstretched and end their dance in stillness. Children in the audience are asked to describe what they saw, what did they think about the dance, how did it make them feel? Groups to change over and repeat the sequence.

Invite children to create individual / small group dance movements using the movement material already explored. Ask for the dancers to begin in stillness and to end in stillness. Talk to the children about choreographic form – a dance has a beginning, middle and end.

EYLF Outcome 5

- **Children begin to understand how symbols and pattern systems work**

Invite small groups to perform for the rest of the group. The safe place is the designated audience space.

EYLF Outcome 1

- **Children develop knowledgeable and confident self-identities**

Gather the children together on the safe space and create a visual image through words - "Imagine that you are out in the Australian desert where there is dry earth under your feet. The sky is huge and blue and you are with your mob. You need to make up a warning dance to tell others about the stinging bee". Invite all children back into the space for one last 'Shake-a-Leg' *Warrima* Dance.

EYLF Outcome 4

- **Children are confident and involved learners**

Ask the children to find a place to rest to the sounds of the didgeridoo. While the children are resting distribute the drawing materials to each child. Ask the children to draw something they have remembered about the dance class. Moves around the room and writes the children's comments on their stories or ask the children write their own sentence. Take the drawings back to the classroom and compile them into a book for further reference.

EYLF Outcome 3

- **Children have a strong sense of well-being**

Please note: additional classes can follow the same format outlined above. All that is required is for the teacher to select from the following movement content:

- Arm and leg gestures
- Shaking movements of hands, feet and legs put the shaking into knees to create the 'shake-a-leg' motif
- Stamping feet, crawling, jumping
- Body shapes in space
- Crocodiles, snake, bee, butterfly movements
- Hunting movements- creeping, spearing
- Individual, small group, whole group dances
- Line dancing - moving forwards and backwards, moving and stillness, sound and silence
- Remember that you can support your teaching with:
- Moving body parts – heads, hands, feet, legs, arms, faces, heads, backs, elbows, knees
- Everyday body activities – walking, running, jumping swinging, turning, stretching, spinning, bending
- Dynamic variations - fast/slow, strong, light, smooth, jagged, stillness
- Movements through the space or in place – high, low, forwards, backwards, diagonal,
- Individual dances, small group or whole of group
- Guided imagery
- Props such as ribbons, face paint
- Accompaniment - percussion and CDRom
- U Tube video footage

IN THE PRIMARY CLASSROOM



The following unit of work earned Heatley State Primary School in Townsville, Qld, a Primary Schools' Citizenship Award for 2010, awarded by the Order of Australia Association, Qld Branch. You are welcome to contact the school for more information about their work with Boori and Shake A Leg. (the.principal@heatleyss.eq.edu.au)

SHAKE-A-LEG: RECONCILIATION THROUGH ENGAGEMENT IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Abstract:

Children's author, Mr Boori Pryor has been an annual artist-in-residence at Heatley SS for the past 4 years. This year, Boori worked with all Year 5 students and teachers in a 5 day literary immersion project on his latest book, *Shake-a-Leg*. Together, they danced, made and ate crocodile pizza, drank milkshakes, painted and wrote about the story. They became the story.

Outline of the project:

Background: Heatley State Primary School opened in 1971, is co-educational and located in Townsville, North Queensland. It has an enrolment of 630 students from Prep to Year 7 with a wide spectrum of cultural backgrounds including: Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (30%), European, Asian or those from the South Pacific. 10% of all students are in a Special Education Program (SEP) and participate in regular classrooms with varying degrees of support.

An Early Childhood Development Program for SEP students and a once weekly Family Playgroup for local families was established in 2008.

The Project: Was born out of an evolutionary process, beginning 4 years ago when Mr Boori Pryor began to regularly visit Heatley State School to tell his stories and inspire students to engage in-depth with reading and writing. Each year, as Boori worked closely with class teachers, he would build on his workshop processes. All the while, his story of "Shake-a-Leg" was gestating into notes and beautiful interpretive drawings made by Jan Ormond out of some photos Boori had taken when at a Laura dance festival. At every visit he would share the progress of this story including the huge amount of production work that goes on behind the scenes until it finally becomes a published book. The school's P&C Association has accepted Boori's invitation for the school to be the site for his book launch of *Shake-a-Leg* on 2 October, 2010.

Who Participated: All Year 5 students (3 classes totalling 85 children) and their 3 teachers worked together with Boori every day for 5 days from 9am - 3pm in a series of multi-media, performing and visual arts activities.

Aims: The structure of the week immersed all children in the story with its messages of recognition of cultures and of identity, and what it means to be committed to, and proud of, being an Australian.

Learning Outcomes: Every child who participated had a positive comment about what they learnt. (An opinion survey was conducted in the following week). Their teachers believed this immersion experience provided such a very rich opportunity for students to deeply engage in literate practices of reading and writing comprehension that it will now become an annual feature in their Year 5 curriculum, teaching and assessment program.

| MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce Boori • Boori to discuss & introduce students to work in pairs to perform <i>crocodile dance</i> • Boori to discuss & introduce students to work in groups of three to perform <i>honey bee dance</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boori to tell students <i>the frog story</i> • Re-read book to allow students to recall yesterday's learning • All students do two dances | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooking pizza – <i>crocodile dance</i> – check recipe • Students to be placed in groups of 6 • Students make a topping card and to write down 5 things about life they do and do not like • Students gather in groups with same toppings e.g. all the cheeses, all the ham etc. • Each group to discuss their differences and similarities – this allows them to understand that even though we may all like the same things we still have differences. • Making milkshakes – <i>honey bee dance</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion about pizzas – what they learnt • Making milkshakes • Whilst groups are making milkshakes, rest of class to write out their version of the dances | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing activities • Students to work in pairs discussing personal experiences relating to happy, scary, sad, funny • Responses to be placed in to word document and displayed by data projector |
| Recess | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss Laura Dance Festival • Look at photos – this sets up for discussing illustrators • Discuss meeting illustrator Jan Ormerod and how art work came about • PowerPoint of book • Look at each page and read the story • Re-look at pictures and students write what they think picture is telling them • Encourage students to think about past, joining cultures etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students share some of their writing and thoughts • Students to continue with their art • Once they are happy with their first drawing they are then to do the drawing of the second dance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooking pizza • Write recipe • Topping discussions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss milkshake activity • Boori to tell stories and play didgeridoo • Students to prepare for dances by applying tomato sauce and flour to arms and faces • Year 6 to be part of audience • Students to explain to year 6 what the dances mean and what they have learnt from <i>shake-a-leg</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing activities • Continue with sharing experiences • Teachers to role model writing by using one experience from each feeling and turning it into a story • Students then to write drafts • Each draft is brought to teachers for assistance with editing and extending writing. |
| Lunch | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students to form groups of 4 – 5 • On butchers paper draw either <i>honey bee</i> or <i>crocodile dance</i> • Display different chapters (notes in folder) • Outline plans for rest of week | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue with drawings • Edit drawings • Talk about tomorrow's activity - cooking • Display and discuss | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Story time - Boori • Practise dance • Continue with art | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transferring drawings to calico • Continue this during next art lesson • All completed work displayed on float at cultural festival and during October book launch | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing activities • Continue with editing during language lessons and display finished stories during book launch in October • Students perform dance • Students listen to music • Students discuss and share what they have learnt this week |

IN THE SECONDARY CLASSROOM

Shake A Leg allows secondary students and staff to explore Australian culture and identity and its wide diversity. Through group discussion and individual projects, students will be able to better understand the value of the diversity of our cultures, beginning with an exploration of who they are individually. To understand our own and our family's culture identity goes a long way to valuing and tolerating the different cultures of the world around us.

Curriculum Areas Covered

- History
- Personal Development
- Environmental Health
- Politics
- Indigenous Studies
- Dance/Drama/Music Studies
- English
- HISE/SOSE

THEMES, DISCUSSIONS & ACTIVITIES

Cultural Perceptions & Acceptance

The students and staff involved in the module of work will have the opportunity for a greater understanding of themselves and a better appreciation of the different cultures that make up their community.

1. Before reading the book, discuss what preconceptions the class has about Aboriginal people. Are there any indigenous students in the class? Do they know anyone personally? (It is vital that these conversations take place in a forum where all students feel safe and validated. If this is a concern, this activity could take the form of a personal reflection or journal entry.)
2. What is your understanding of culture?
3. What do you think defines Australian culture?
4. After reading the book, how have people's ideas about Aboriginal culture changed?
5. Create a poster designed to promote cultural tolerance or challenge stereotypes.

Style

Dialogue is presented in comic-book-style speech bubbles that change during the storytelling, from traditional ovals into irregular, jagged-edged shapes which convey the energy and animation of the dance. By the end of the book, the borders encircling the speech have gone completely and the text sits on the page without demarcation. This reinforces the erosion of the boys' preconceptions and their inclusion in the world of the bora ground.

Jan Ormerod uses two distinct illustrative styles throughout the text to further this idea of cultures mingling harmoniously. Bold, multi-panelled comic-style illustrations are alternated with more 'painterly' double-page spreads. Rich earthy colours are further used to convey key ideas.

The double-page spreads begin when Bertie explains that raising dust when we dance is a way of dancing with our ancestors: [The old people] 'tell us we're all family here on earth, dancing with the dust.' From this point on, the illustrations become larger and freer, as Bertie gets the whole town dancing. The final illustration takes us beyond the town to the infinite stars, the Dreamtime, the togetherness of all people: 'our arms stretch wide to *warrima*, to shake-a-leg, to welcome you.'

1. Consider the opening double-page spread. What do the enclosed, comic-book style panels convey about urban life? Look at the closing pages. What does the panoramic spread suggest

about the power of nature? Consider the end pages. What cultural traditions do the white serpent and the map represent? Where are the heads of the serpent pointing? Why does the illustrator 'enclose' the story with these images?

2. How does the use of maps influence our understanding of the book's themes? Examine the endpapers, title page, and especially the double page spread where Jai paints the boys up.
3. Write and illustrate stories based on the students' own cultural background. If possible, incorporate some of the illustrative techniques used in *Shake A Leg* e.g. comic-book panels, double page spreads.

Language

The language used in the book is strong, simple and colloquial in order to engage readers of all ages. Chants and songs are incorporated, adding rhythmical energy and creating an authentic indigenous voice. Words such as *murri* and *warrima*, examples of an Aboriginal dialect, sit alongside Italian phrases such as *benvenuti*, explicitly foregrounding multiculturalism.

Direct speech is frequently used to create the impression of a spoken voice, highlighting the importance of the oral tradition of storytelling. The conventional narrative opening of the book, 'Three hungry boys are hunting for pizza', effectively transforms the reader into the audience of a spoken tale. In this opening line, the humorous juxtaposition of 'hunting' and 'pizza' signals to the reader that this is a story which will challenge their traditional assumptions about indigenous culture. This motif of the traditional world fusing with the modern underpins the story, evident in such details as the Aboriginal pizza chef, the crocodile-shaped pizza and the tomato sauce body paint.

Secondary students could investigate further sophistication in the text by 'discovering' what is not said directly. The honey-bee dance can be seen as a metaphor for the European invasion of Aboriginal land; the crocodile dance is about respecting the instructions of your elders. In his dialogue and stories, Bertie the pizza maker touches on a number of issues that could be contentious but he does so without rancour: the expectation that Aboriginals all live a traditional lifestyle; the invasion of the honey-bee; or the main street of town going over the ancient *bora* ground.

Boori Monty Pryor foregrounds joy, resilience and cultural integrity rather than the damage done – but he doesn't forget the damage. The entire book implicitly addresses reconciliation and places it in the context of multiculturalism. Furthermore, this text also shows that all individuals have choices to make about engaging with 'their' culture and the cultures of others.

Identity & Diversity

1. How do you identify yourself within your family and community?
2. Illustrate who you are through art and share with the class as a group.
3. Research culture for its meaning and relevance to Australia today. Discuss outcomes with the class as a group.
4. Have class members talk about their cultural backgrounds. What do they see as unique or distinctive about their culture? What preconceptions or stereotypes do other people have about these cultures? How does it make them feel?
5. Investigate continuities and disjunctions students experience between their personal, family, cultural and social identities. What choices will they make in establishing their own identity?

Indigenous History and Future

1. Discuss and draw out any understanding from the class about the Indigenous people of this place and their future here.
2. Using your internet and the library explore the true history of the region or area you live in from an Indigenous perspective.
3. Explore these two people from their roots to their occupations today, and their contributions to the modern world in which they live.

Barack Hussein Obama and Boori Monty Pryor

Answer the following questions:

- Who is he?
- Where does he live?
- How does he identify himself?
- How is he perceived by the people in the country in which he lives?

Similarities & Differences

1. Discuss as a class what is different, and what is the same, despite our diversity of culture within our class and community.
2. Pose the question to the class – are we really that different?

ABOUT THE WRITER & ILLUSTRATOR

BOORI MONTY PRYOR

Boori Monty Pryor was born in North Queensland. His father is from the Birrigubba of the Bowen region and his mother from Yarrabah (near Cairns), a descendant of the Kungganji. Boori is a multi-talented performer who has worked in film, television, modelling, sport, music and theatre. He is also an accomplished didgeridoo player who has performed with the Brisbane Symphony Orchestra and appeared in many schools.

Boori has written several award-winning children's books with Meme McDonald including *My Girragundji*, *The Binna Binna Man* and *Njunjul The Sun*. His memoir *Maybe Tomorrow* was re-released in an anniversary edition in 2010 and its message for reconciliation is as relevant as ever. Boori lives in Melbourne, but spends much of the year on the road. His stories are about finding strength within to deal with the challenges without, and his skill is to create positive visions of the future for both indigenous and white people.

JAN ORMEROD

Author and illustrator **Jan Ormerod** grew up in Western Australia. She now lives in England. She is known in particular for her picture books, which depict everyday family life and resonate with young children and adults alike. Her first published book, *Sunshine*, a textless picture book, won the Mother Goose Award (UK), was CBCA Australian Picture Book of the Year and was highly commended for the Kate Greenaway Medal. Since then she has had more than 50 books published, including *Lizzie Nonsense*, an IBBY Honour Book in 2006, and *The Water Witcher*, shortlisted for the WA Premier's Award and 2007 CBCA Picture Book of the Year.

JAN DEANS

Jan Deans is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Melbourne and Director of the Early Learning Centre, which is the research and demonstration preschool attached to the Melbourne Graduate School of Education within the University. She is a long time advocate for teaching and learning through the arts and has worked both locally and internationally in early childhood, primary, tertiary, and special education settings. She has broadly-based expertise in relation to early childhood education and service delivery and her recent research interests include learning through dance, social emotional competence, art and story as a vehicle for cross-cultural learning and environmental education. In 1997 she established Boorai -The Children's Art Gallery which is now involved in projects with children and teachers in all parts of the world.