

From *Terra Nullius* to Self-representation

Throughout Australia's history the indigenous aboriginal population has been ignored, dismissed, exoticized, vilified and exploited. We find evidence of these attitudes being portrayed and conveyed to Australian children through their books. Here we want to focus on the struggle among aboriginals to wrest their stories from being appropriated by white Australians. Colonists who took an interest discovered the rich folklore of the people living beside them. In 1896 K. Langloh Parker published a collection of folktales, *Australian Legendary Tales*. She indicated clearly that she had collected them from neighboring Noongahburrahs. However, many "authors" appropriated without attribution. For example, David Unaipon's *Native Legends* (1929) was acquired by W Ramsay Smith, who republished the stories under his own name in 1930.

As the aboriginal campaign for rights and recognition continued, interest in their lore and their dreamtime stories grew. More and more amateur ethnographers collected and published books containing stories gathered from tribes they had come to know. However, the story-tellers themselves were rarely identified or given credit. In the 1960s change began to emerge. The government established the Aboriginal Studies Press. In the 1970s the trend grew with the Institute for Aboriginal Development Press and the creation of the Papunya art movement. Slowly, aboriginal writers and illustrators began to publish under their own names. Progress was slow. Remarkably, often children's books led the way. In this paper

we will examine how aboriginal writers for children fought back against appropriation of their stories and culture to claim their own voices and the right to represent themselves.