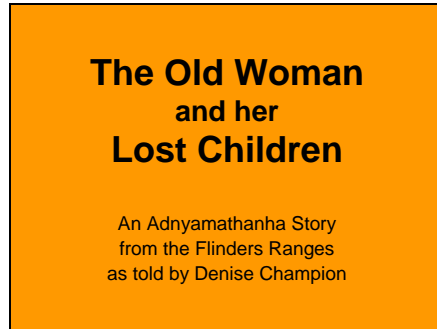


Slide 1



The Old Woman and her Lost Children

This story is told by Denise Champion, an Adnyamathanha (Ud-nya-muth-unna) woman from the Flinders Ranges in South Australia.

Slide 2



There's a place just north of Copley. It's a little hill, a very small mound that is all very white and yellowy ash in colour that just sticks out on its own because the surrounding earth is very different to it.

That's a place called Nguthunanga Mai Ambatanha. (Ng-ooth-unna My-i Uмба-tunna)

It means 'the dreamtime spirit cooking the damper'.

Nguthunanga (Ng-ooth-unna) is our Adnyamathanha (Ud-nya-muth-unna) word for "maker". The dreamtime spirit is our maker.

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The story is all about an Old Woman who, during a time of famine, went looking for food and took her two children with her.

We call her Virkathanha (Vilka-thunna) in Adnyamathanha (Ud-nya-muth-unna) - Old Woman.

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They went on a journey and came to this place, a camp.

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Slide 6



Slide 7



The old woman said to her two children, “Go out now and find some wirti (wirti: short vowel i after w) sticks for the ardla (udla – short vowel u) campfire.”

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While the Old Woman was preparing the campsite the two children went out to look for wood. The children split up and went in two different directions.

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After a while the Old Woman realised that her two children had not returned. She became worried.

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And so she set about trying to find them because the sun was going down and she was getting quite anxious.

Slide 11



She thought to herself, “My children have been away all day, they’ll be hungry. Maybe the smell of cooking will bring them home.” So she cooked this giant damper, a huge damper in a ground oven.

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The damper rose and made this little mound. The little hill north of Copley called Nguthunanga Mai Ambatanha (Ng-ooth-unna My-i Umba-tunna) is symbolic of that giant damper.

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The smell of the damper didn't bring the children home so she set about doing something else to find her children.

She made some steps in the side of a hill near Nepabunna.

She thought she would be able to get up on top of the hill so she could see her children. So she did that but when she got to the top she couldn't see them at all.

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By this time she became very worried as any parent would do. She became very anxious, very afraid as the sun was going down and it would soon be dark.

Slide 15



After she had done everything possible she could think of to find her children the song of the Bellbird came to her.

Slide 16



The Song went like this. . . .
(playing soundfile vakuvaku.mp3)

Slide 17



The song of the bellbird led her to
where her two children were.

Slide 18



The girl was found up at Lake
Lettie – (Valdha Marti Nipanha),
and the boy was found at Mount
McKinlay – (Wyanha).



When my children were little I always told the story to teach them not to go too far from the camp and always let people know when you are going to return home. It's also a good story to remind parents to always be watchful for your children. My rule is always keep them in eyesight.

This story is very relevant to us as Indigenous people because we have had to go through one of the most traumatic periods for us in the history of this nation and that was when children were removed from their parents and many of them were lost to their parents forever. Some are only making their way home now but some will never be reunited with their families.

Another way to look at the story is that the camp is God's camp (the Church) and for one reason or another people have gone away from the camp and found themselves lost. As in the story, God as a loving parent has done everything possible to find those who are lost.

And so this is a good story to tell to talk about feelings of being lost, of going away and not being able to find your way home, and it is a good story to tell about the fact that God, through his spirit, the Holy Spirit, pursues us until we are found and we are brought back home.

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The Old Woman and the Lost Children

Story told by Denise Champion, an Adnyamathanha lady from the Flinders Ranges in South Australia and a member of the UAICC. Vakuvaku song sung by Denise Champion. Illustrations by Peter Russell

Reconciliation Sunday has been established by the Presbytery and Synod of South Australia to be celebrated annually on the first Sunday during Reconciliation Week.

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