

stories about stories Took the children Away

Warning for Torres Strait Islander and Indigenous readers: The following story contains photographs and mentions of deceased persons.



Archie Roach and Ruby Hunter, 1990's. Photo: Tim Webster

Inspiration for the book

'I met Ruby when we were both teenagers and homeless. Our stories are the same. We were both taken away from our families.' Archie Roach

Archie Roach's introduction to the anniversary edition of his picture book, *Took the Children Away*, with illustrations by his late partner and musical collaborator, Ruby Hunter. The book was published by Simon & Schuster in October 2020, on the 30th anniversary of Archie's iconic song from his debut album, *Charcoal Lane*.

A SONG

Stolen Generations survivors, Ruby and Archie were both taken from their families as young children. But it wasn't until later in life that Archie learnt exactly how he was taken away, from his Uncle Banjo Clarke.

'Uncle Banjo heard I was writing songs and asked me to write a song about when I was taken away. I told him that I was only two years old and so did not remember. He looked at me and said, "Yeah, but I do".'

After Archie heard the story he thought, 'this isn't just about being taken away, it's also about who we were taken from. So I wrote *Took the Children Away*.'

'This song is so important to me because it's part of my healing. It was the only way I could release the trauma of being removed from my family, to get it out.'



Young Archie and Young Ruby.



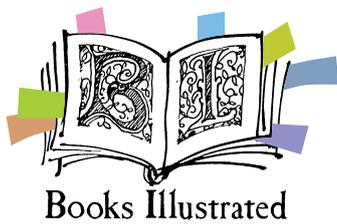
Archie and two of his sisters were taken from their family on Framlingham Mission and sent to the Salvation Army Girl's home in East Camberwell, Victoria.



Archie with his Uncle Banjo Clarke. Photo: ABC



Archie Roach's father outside their home on Framlingham Aboriginal Mission.

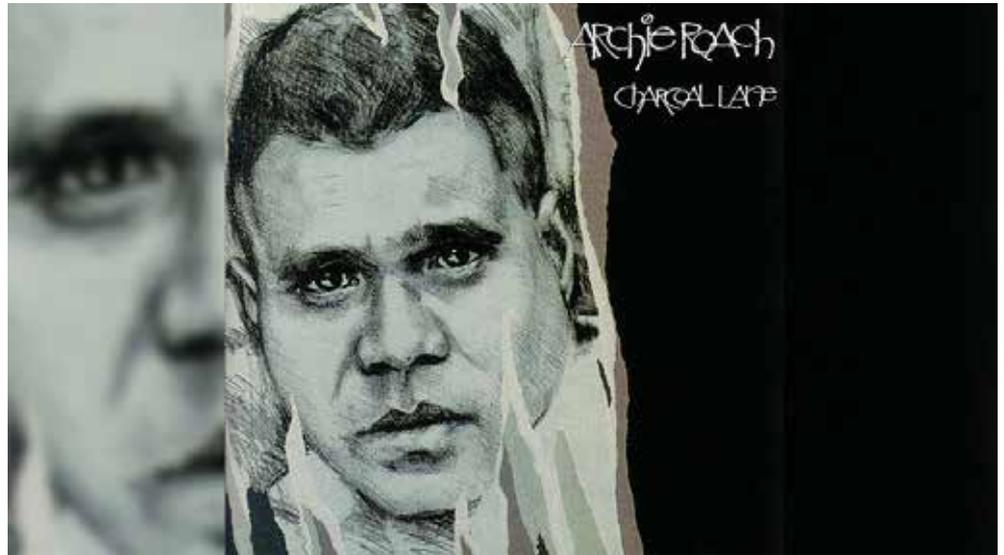


Archie's song, *Took the Children Away*, was released on *Charcoal Lane*, his debut album in 1990.

It was the first song to receive a prestigious Australian Human Rights Award.

It has become an iconic Australian song and an anthem for First Nations people internationally.

To mark 30 years since its original release, a reimagined version of *Charcoal Lane*, *The Songs of Charcoal Lane*, is being released. The album was recorded in Archie's kitchen in southwest Victoria during lockdown with musicians Stephen Magnusson and Sam Anning, along with recording engineer Hadyn Buxton.



Charcoal Lane, Album cover, 1990. Illustration and design: Pierre Baroni

The Songs of Charcoal Lane can be pre-ordered through Archie's online store archieroach.com/store with all proceeds going to the Archie Roach Foundation.

A Picture Book

As well as writing songs and performing, Ruby and Archie worked on a special project together. They created a picture book based on the lyrics of *Took the Children Away*, illustrated with Ruby's paintings and drawings.

Sadly, Ruby died in 2010. Their book was published by One Day Hill publishing in 2011.



Line drawing by Ruby Hunter, 'Horsemen with children'. In her illustrations throughout the book, Ruby was showing the many ways that the welfare took the children away, including on horseback.



Painting by Ruby Hunter, 'Taught us all the white man ways'

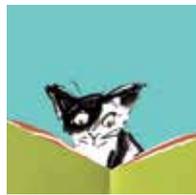
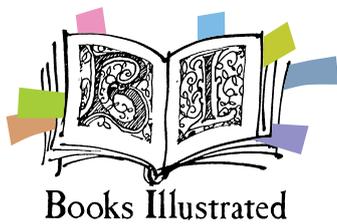


Drawing by Ruby Hunter

30th Anniversary Picture Book and Resources

To coincide with the 30th Anniversary of the song, *Took the Children Away*, an ambitious project was conceived. A special edition picture book would be published in 2020, including informative support resources for schools and families.

It became a 'COVID 19' project with a very tight deadline and all the associated restrictions. A fabulous success story of wonderful collaboration, it was indeed successfully published and released on October 7, 2020!



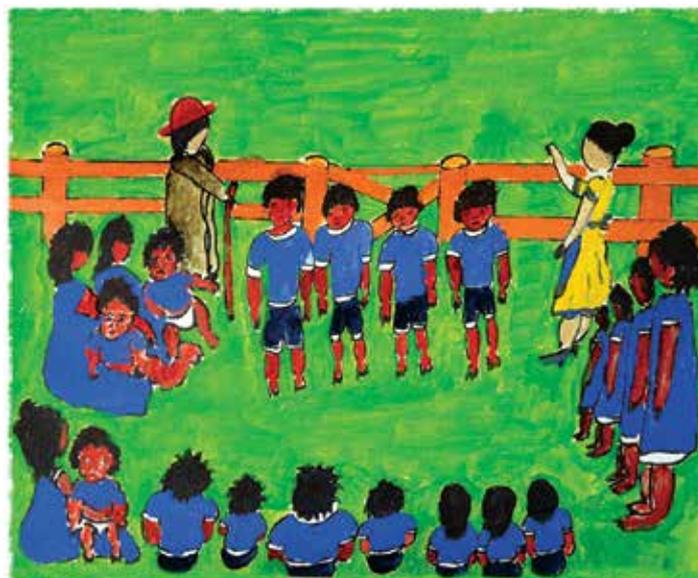
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This painting, included in the book as part of the rich visual background story, is by Rosslyn Richards, Ruby's sister-in-law. It is called, NO:RI has landed. NO:RI is a Ngarrindjeri word meaning Pelican, Ruby's Dreaming spirit.



Archie, Ruby and their boys in the backyard at home, 1990s. Photo: Who Magazine



How they fenced us in like sheep, illustration by Ruby Hunter.

The Book

Publisher Simon & Schuster engaged an expert Australian team which included publishing consultant and editor Erica Wagner, designer Jo Hunt and illustrator Craig Smith. They liaised closely with Jill Shelton, Archie Roach's long-time manager, as they worked on this complex project.

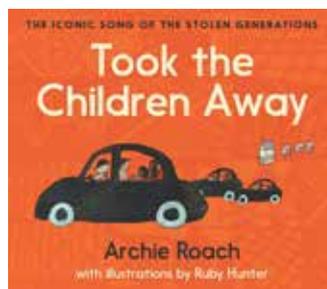
The basic ingredients were the lyrics of Archie's famous song and Ruby's paintings, but what was the vision? Erica stated her vision in the project brief:

The plan is to create a beautiful, quality picture book edition of Took the Children Away, to educate and inspire... I'm imagining a beautifully designed and produced 32-page picture book that reflects the iconic status of this song and the deep emotional meaning it carries for so many people.

This format – offering the words of the song as well as information about how and why it was written, historical information about the Stolen Generations, and why Australia must engage with this part of its history to find pathways to healing – is such a beautiful way to honour Archie and Ruby and their extraordinary lives and legacy and to make sure all Australians know about it.

The book's designer, Jo Hunt, suggested book dimensions and shape to best suit the artwork. She designed the book to suit the rhythm of the song, with space and time to pause and reflect on key lines, as well as giving space for the historical material.

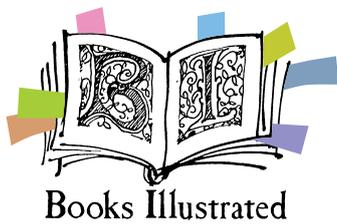
The aim was to forefront Ruby's art and reproduce it in its original form unless there were strong reason to make modifications, on which Craig Smith would advise. For example, the cars and buildings on the cover are coloured versions of Ruby's original scanned drawings.



Archie and Jill were keen to showcase art from other Gunditjmarra artists alongside Ruby's paintings including artwork by Archie's niece, Tracy Roach, which is used as a background behind the song lyrics, as well as the magnificent Lake Condah possum-skin cloak design on the front and back cover.



The choice of a tactile cover, matched with striking images and design elements created the 'specialness' that they aimed for.



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Resources

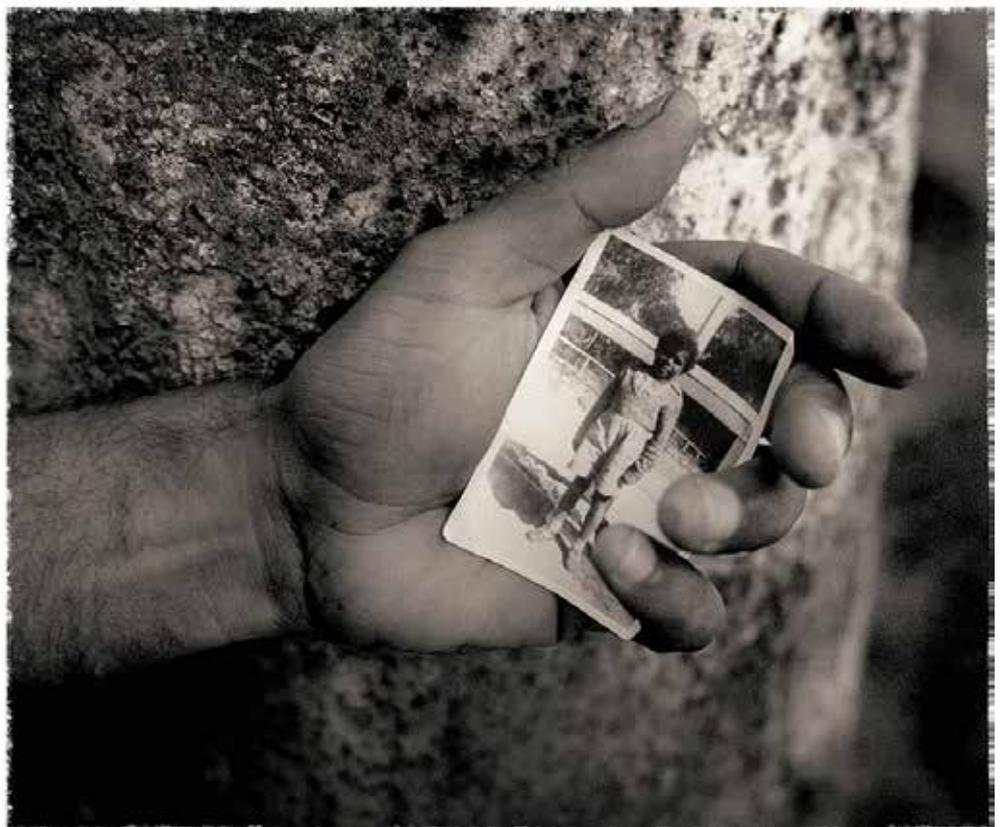
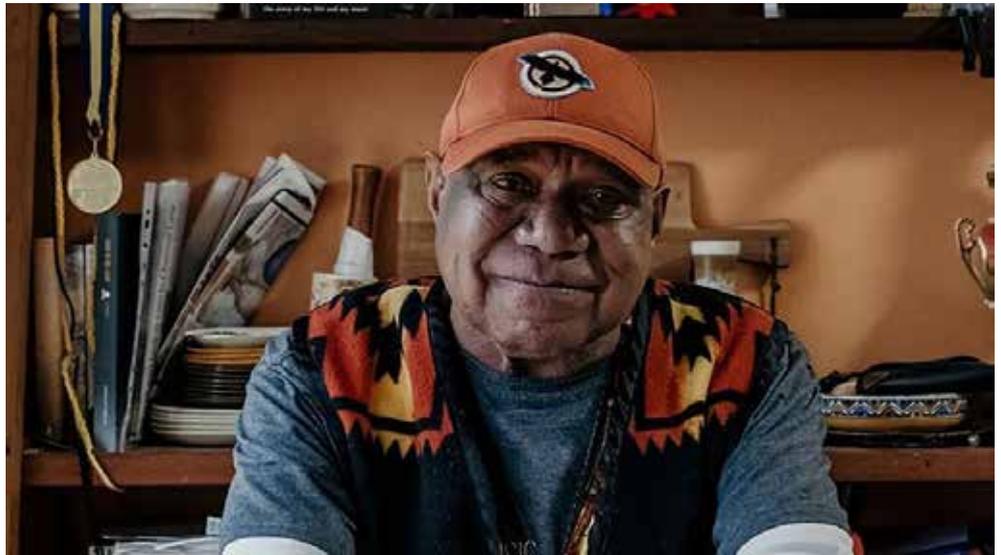
Young people need to understand that the Stolen Generations is an Australian story; it's part of their history as well and not just the history of First Nations people, but all our history, all our story. It's the only way we can move on in this country. Archie Roach

The Archie Roach Stolen Generations Resources is a suite of filmed conversations with Archie and a group of Elders from around Australia, as they discuss the themes of Cultural Identity, Stolen Generations, Telling Our Truth, and Healing Through the Arts, and includes comprehensive educational support materials. Through these resources it is hoped to ignite a sense of place, belonging, community and identity for all Australians.

Hosted by ABC Education, this critically important legacy project was developed and produced by [Culture is Life](https://www.cultureislife.org/) in collaboration with the [Archie Roach Foundation](https://www.archieroach.com/).

Tell Me Why A young adult edition of Archie's award-winning memoir, *Tell My Why*, including reflections from Elders and young people, will be an important addition to **The Archie Roach Stolen Generations Resources**. *Tell Me Why for Young Adults* will be published in March 2021 by Simon & Schuster.

These resources can be useful for both families and educators in relation to reading and discussing *Took the Children Away* and related topics.



Archie Roach Foundation
<https://www.archieroach.com>



Culture is Life is here: <https://www.cultureislife.org/>



ABC Education where the resources are live:
<https://education.abc.net.au/home#!/topic/3717751/archie-roach>