

# Parent Trees are talking

We would like to acknowledge the Wurundjeri people who are traditional custodians on the lands upon which we gathered to develop this project. We pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging and thank them for welcoming us onto country.

In particular we would like to thank Uncle David Wandin (Wurundjeri Elder), Ralph Hume and Indigenous Fire Practitioner, Victor Steffensen.

We also would like to acknowledge the late Dr Tommy George and Dr George Musgrave elders of the Kuku Thaypan Clan for their wisdom and guidance in enabling clans from across Australia to reconnect with traditional fire practices.



**Enquires to:**

Yarra Ranges Council  
P.O. Box 105, Lilydale Vic 3140 [03] 9294 6905  
EmergencyManagement@yarraranges.vic.gov.au

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**Project partners include:**

Yarra Ranges Council, Dixon's Creek Primary School, Wurundjeri people, Uncle Dave Wandin, Ralph Hume, Victor Steffensen and Brett Ellis.

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**Project Coordinator:**

*Jennie Schoof, Emergency Management Project Coordinator;  
Yarra Ranges Council*

**Book production, design and layout:**

*Jennie Schoof and Jodie Kimpton; Jobo Design*

**Photographs:**

*Jennie Schoof*

**Art work:**

*Grades 3, 4, 5 and 6 students from Dixons Creek Primary School*

**Stories:**

*Grades 3, 4, 5 and 6 students from Dixons Creek Primary School*

**Produced:**

*Affiliated with the Return of the Firestick Project*

# Youth Fire Stick Project

## Introduction to Youth FireStick project

The youth firestick project 'Shhhhh the Parent Tree is Talking,' was produced as part of the return of the firestick project in partnership with Uncle Dave Wandin Wurundjeri Elder, Victor Steffensen Indigenous Fire Practitioner, Yarra Ranges Council and Dixons Creek Primary School.

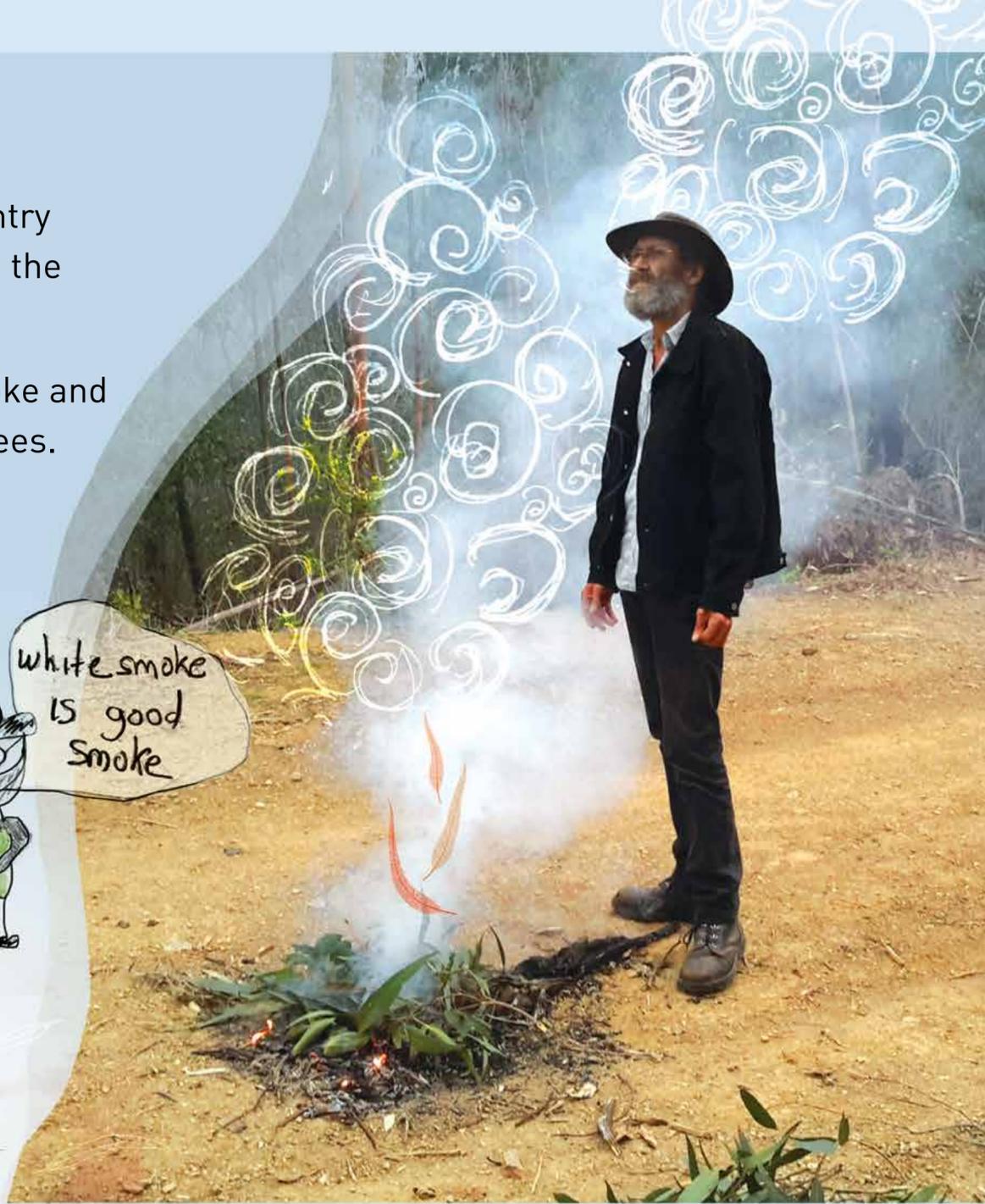
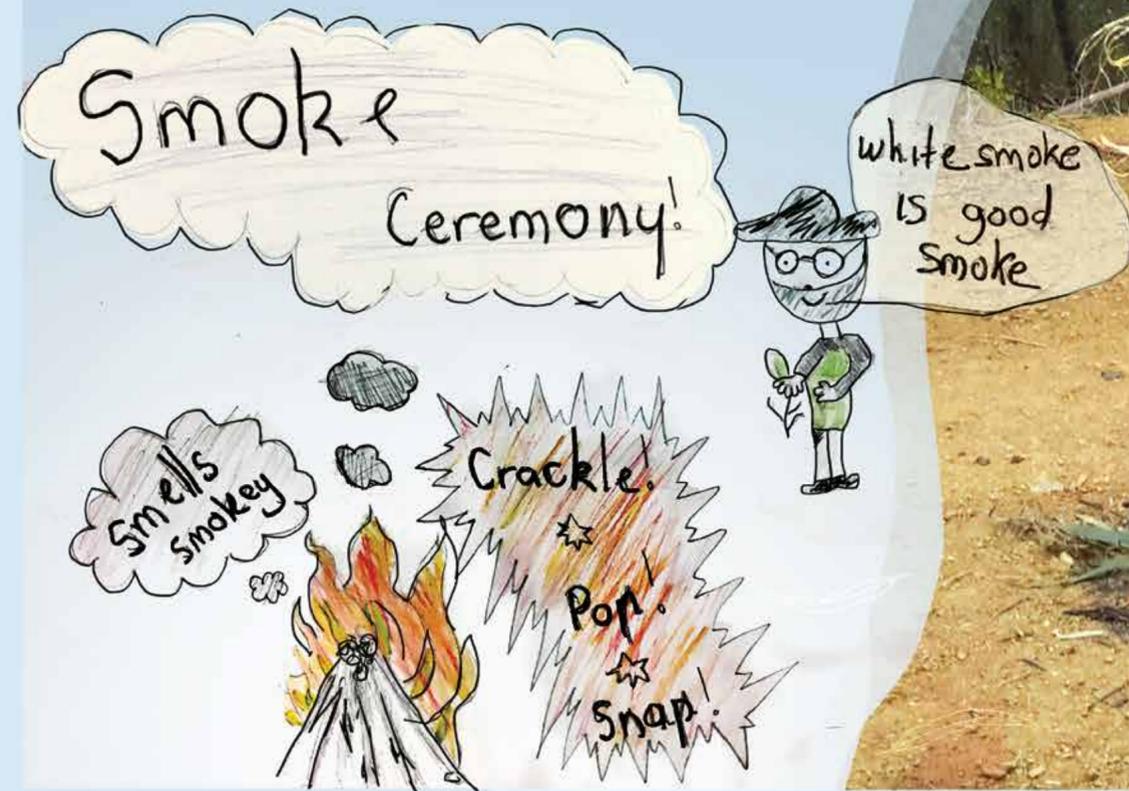
Dixon's Creek Primary School students from grades 3, 4, 5, 6 were asked to write and draw their learnings whilst walking on country with Uncle Dave Wandin.

Their work was then collated and utilised in the development of 'Shhhhh the Parent Tree is Talking' book.



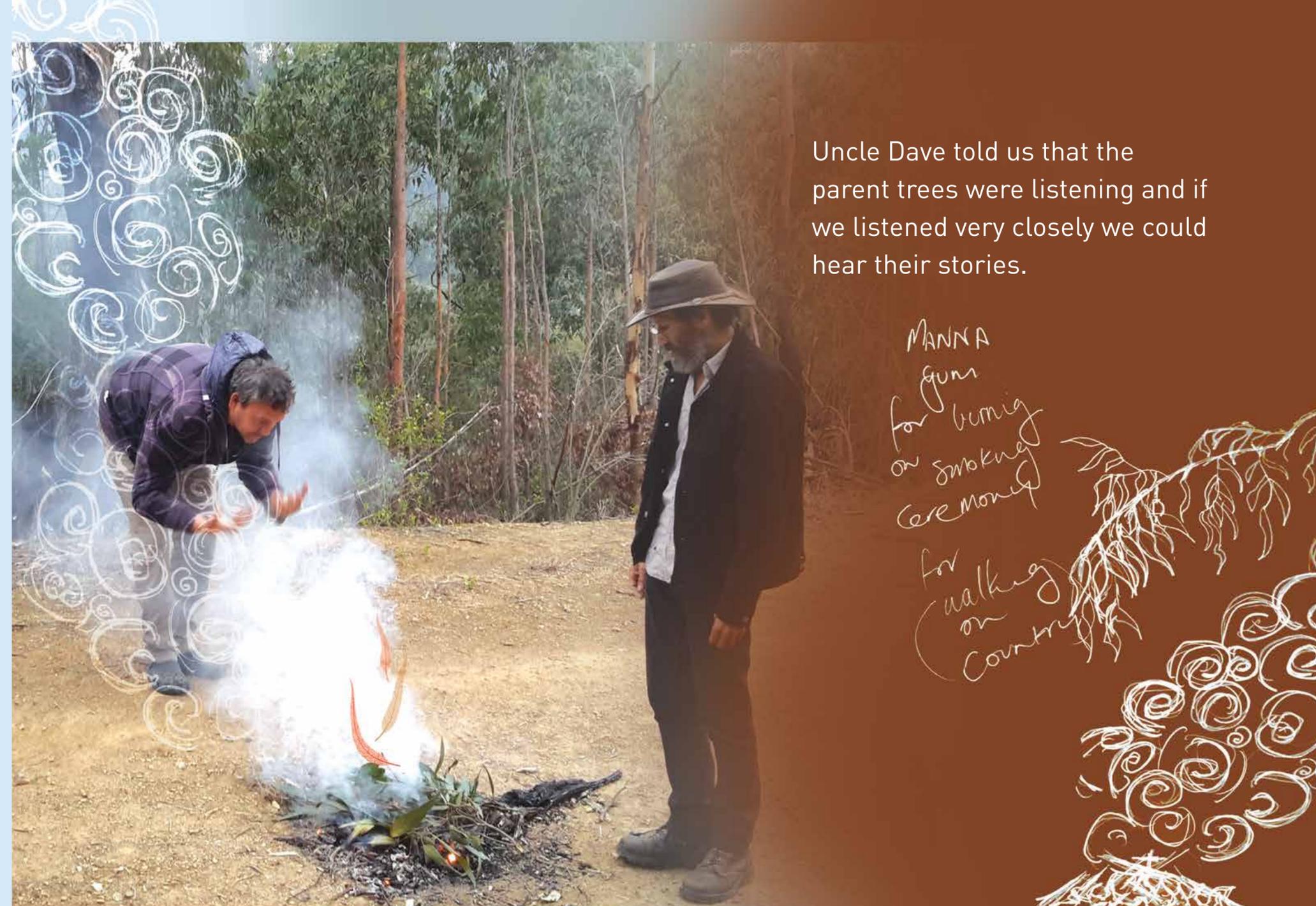
Uncle Dave welcomed us on to country with a smoking ceremony and to let the parent trees know we were there.

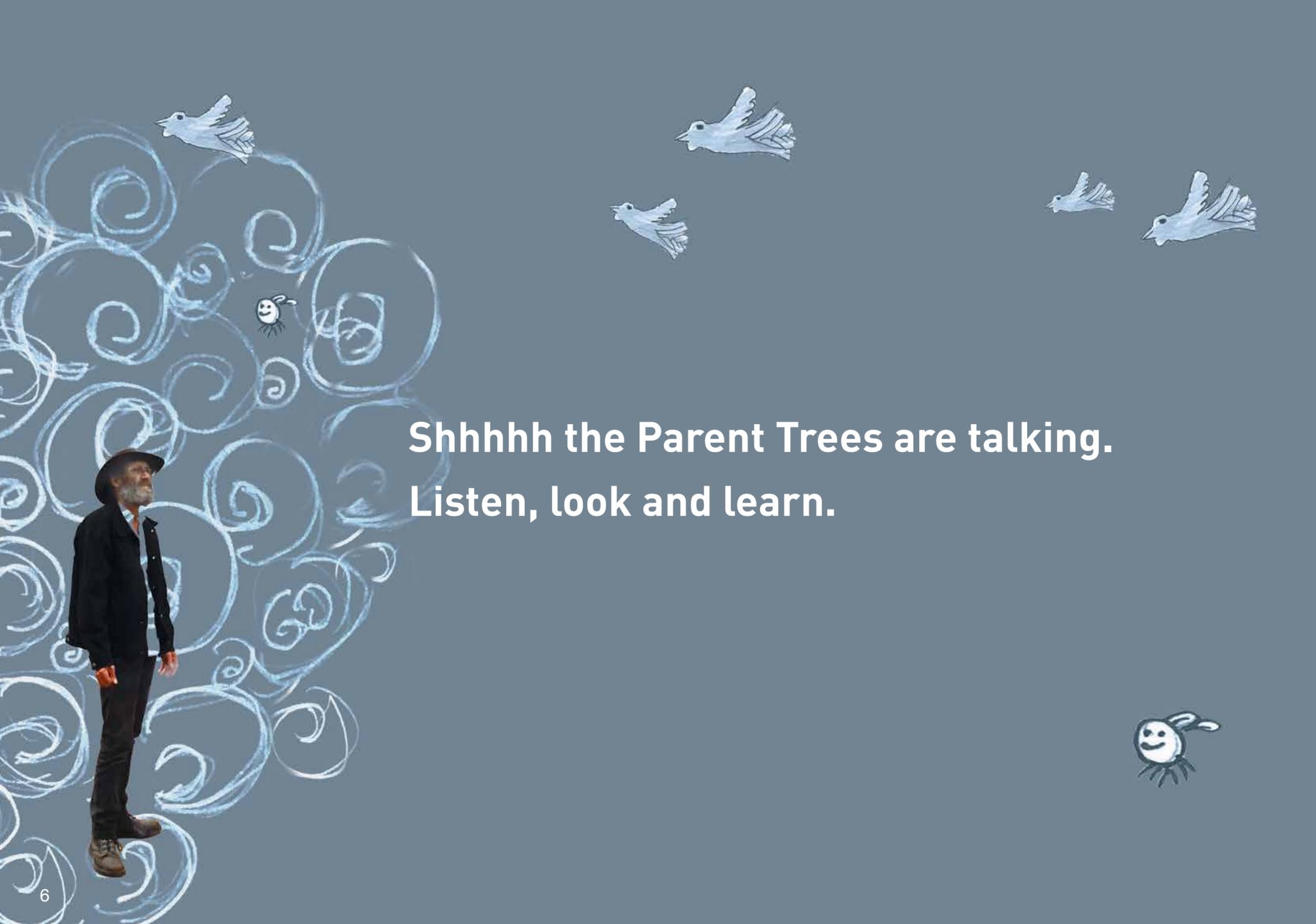
We were cleansed by the white smoke and given a gum leaf from the parent trees.



Uncle Dave told us that the parent trees were listening and if we listened very closely we could hear their stories.

Manna gum  
for burning  
on smoking  
ceremony  
for walking  
on country





**Shhhhh the Parent Trees are talking.  
Listen, look and learn.**



**Shhhhh the Parent Trees are talking.**

Listen to the wind swooshing and swirling  
amongst the leaves.  
The parent trees are talking.  
They bring stories from far and near.  
They want us to look, listen and feel the country.  
Shhhhh children the parent trees are talking  
Listen, look and learn the return of  
the firestick is here.

## Shhhhh the Parent Trees are talking.

Aboriginals look after their country, because their country has looked after them.



Respect the trees like you  
Respect people

## Shhhhh the Parent Trees are talking.

The country gave them tools, food, clothing, medicine and shelter.

Aboriginal people want to protect the land and keep it safe and strong.

Aboriginals  
looked after their  
country because their  
country looked after them,  
giving them  
tools, food, clothing, medicine  
and shelter





Older trees are parent trees

### Shhhhh the Parent Trees are talking.

The earth is not being heard.

The trees are sacred; they are the Parent Trees.

Trees need to grow straight up to be strong.

If you look, listen and feel the country you will learn that the trees here are not as old as they should be.

The land is sad because we are not listening to it.

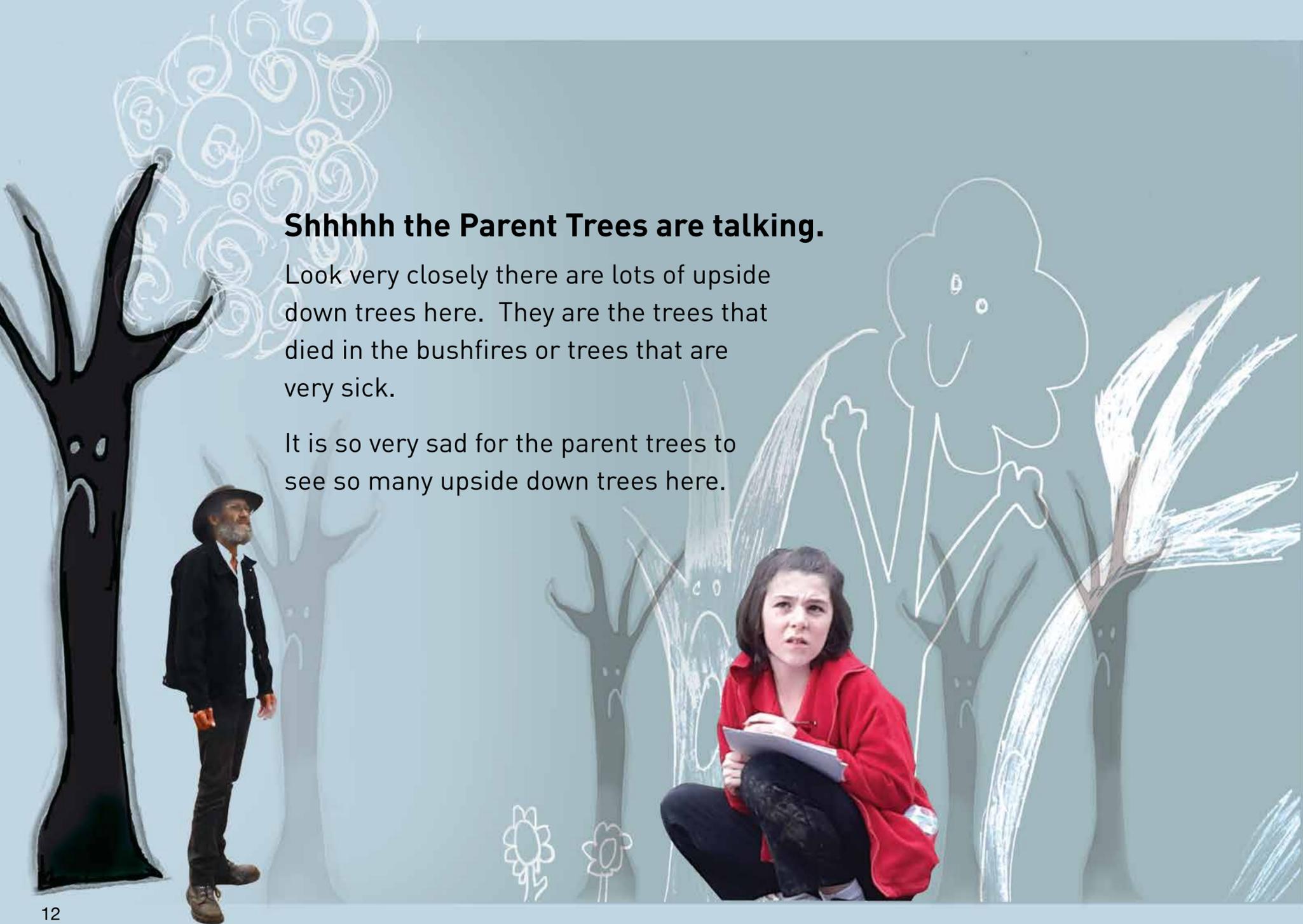


### Shhhhh the Parent Trees are talking.

They want you to look, listen and feel the country.

We need to help the trees, nature and the land, we are their medicine and we can help them.

Parent trees are the tallest and wisest of all. They provide the new trees the shelter, needed to survive and grow big and strong.



**Shhhhh the Parent Trees are talking.**

Look very closely there are lots of upside down trees here. They are the trees that died in the bushfires or trees that are very sick.

It is so very sad for the parent trees to see so many upside down trees here.



**Shhhhh the Parent Trees are talking.**

Some spots in the bush are becoming healthy. We need to help the trees, animals and nature.

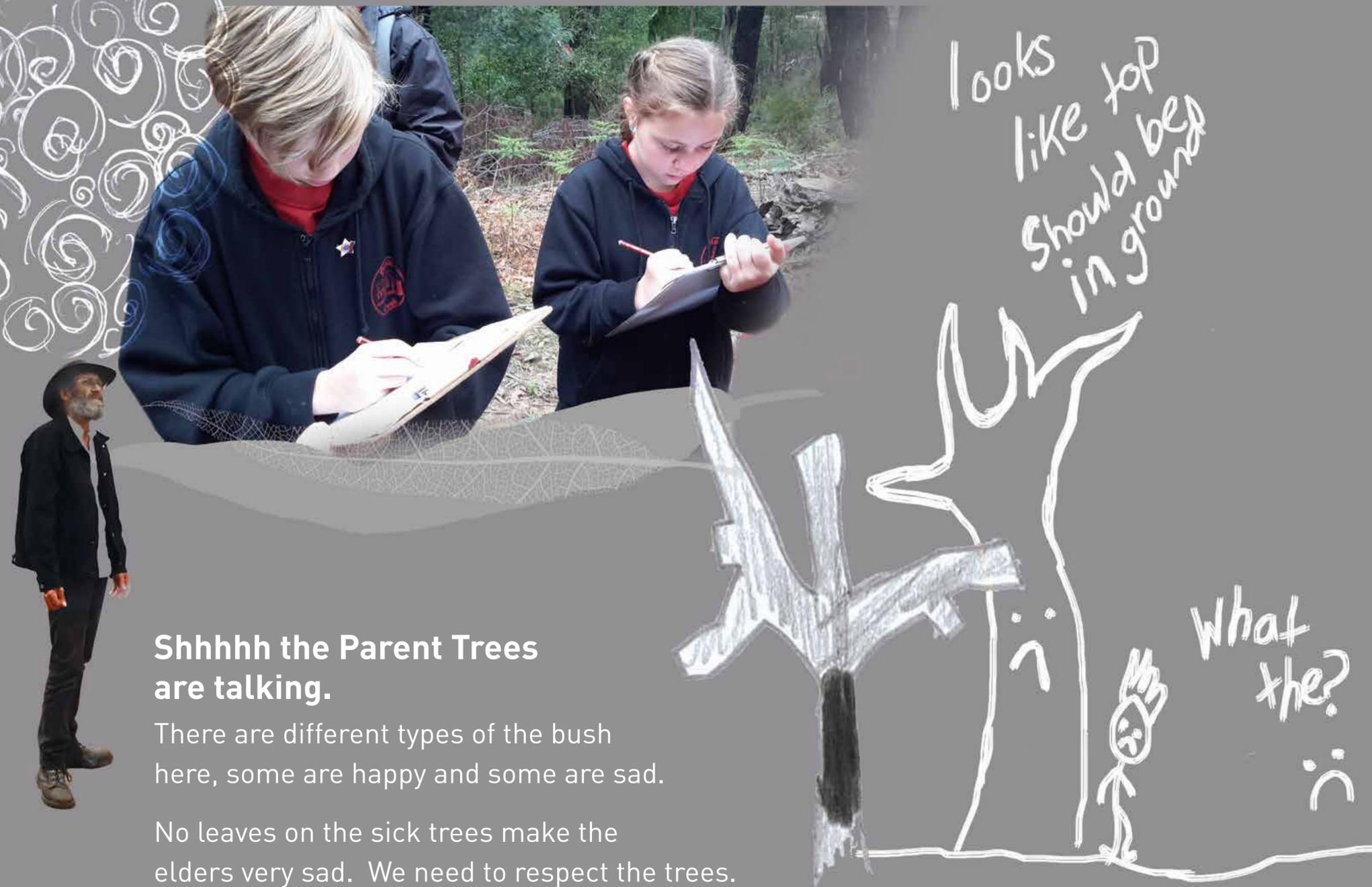
We are their medicine and we can help them. The return of the firestick can help the country be healthy again.



### Shhhhh the Parent Trees are talking.

Look closely and listen very carefully, you will see good things and problems here. We need less of the saplings trees and more of the parent trees.

Too many saplings trees are strangling the plants. Where have all the parent trees gone?



### Shhhhh the Parent Trees are talking.

There are different types of the bush here, some are happy and some are sad.

No leaves on the sick trees make the elders very sad. We need to respect the trees.

## Shhhhh the Parent Trees are talking.

The land is sacred to Aboriginal people; it is their job to take care of the land. They are the custodians of the land.

If we learn how to care for the country it will be happy again.

Everything on the land depends on each other and we need to learn that. We need to take care of the land.

It is really important that Aboriginal people bring back the firestick to look after the land.



## Shhhhh the Parent Trees are talking.

Aboriginal people are named after the trees and animals; it is their role to look after the country.

They check the health of the bush by walking across the country. They will see good trees and sick upside down trees.



## Shhhhh the Parent Trees are talking.

There are different types of the bush across the country; look, listen and feel the country to learn.

If you look very closely you will see that some of the country is happy and some is unhappy.

If we learn how to care for the country it will be happy again.



## Shhhhh the Parent Trees are talking.

The land is being smothered with dry sticks and dead trees.

This is creating fuel for big fires to cross the land.



## Shhhhh the Parent Trees are talking.

With the return of the firestick we only burn the grass not the trees.

If we burn everything there will be black smoke. Black smoke burns all the food from the trees and makes them sick.

We need the trees because they help the plants and animals live and the forest thrive.

cool burn  
is the  
right burn.

If our  
Country is  
happy we  
are

## Shhhhh the Parent Trees are talking.

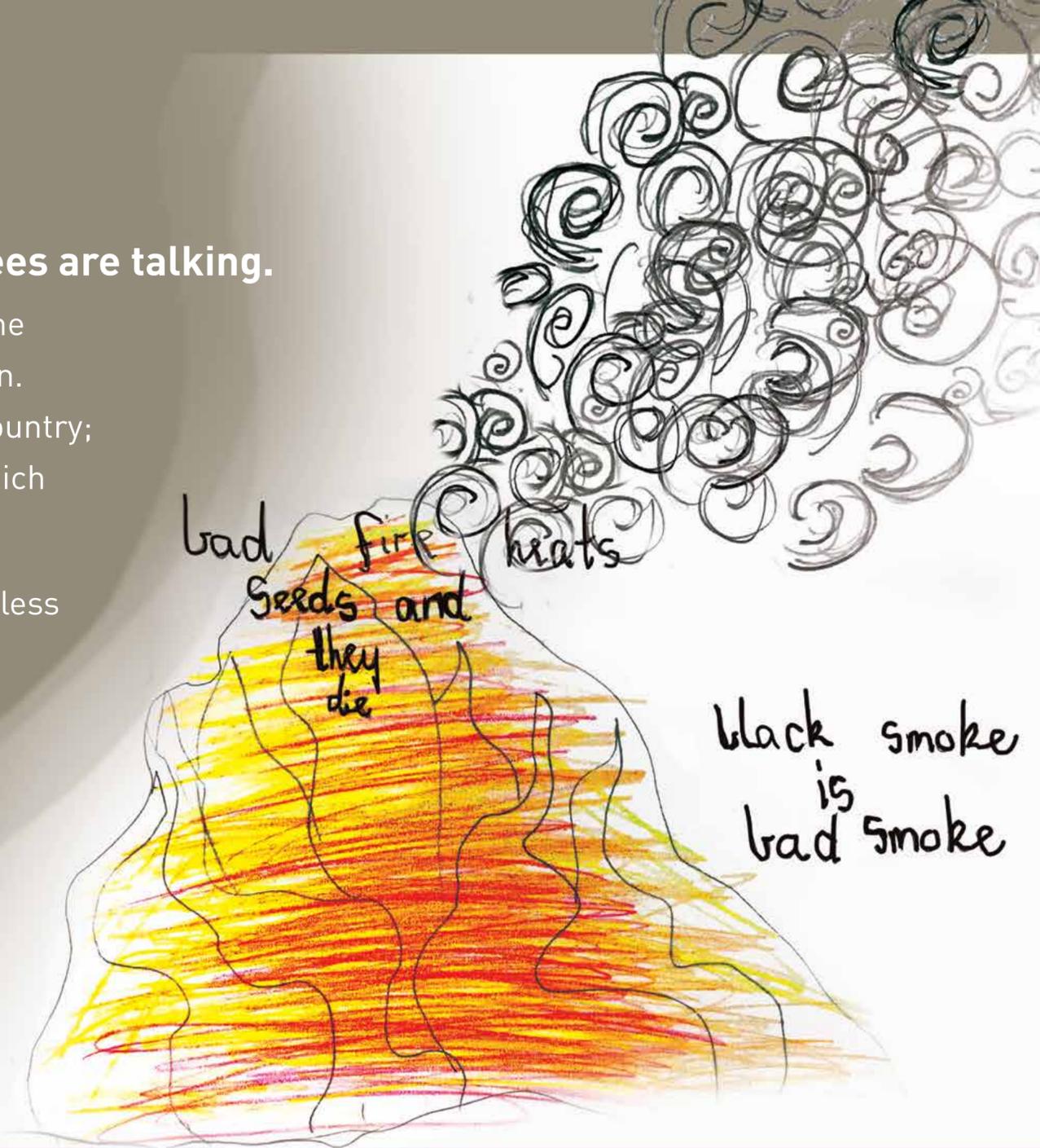
Indigenous burning is trickle fire. It allows low cool burning and produces white smoke, this is the firestick way.

White smoke is healthy smoke for the country; it is first aid for the land.

## Shhhhh the Parent Trees are talking.

If we learn how to care for the country it will be happy again. Hot burning is bad for the country; the soil absorbs the heat which leads to fewer trees.

This will mean there will be less trees and no shade.

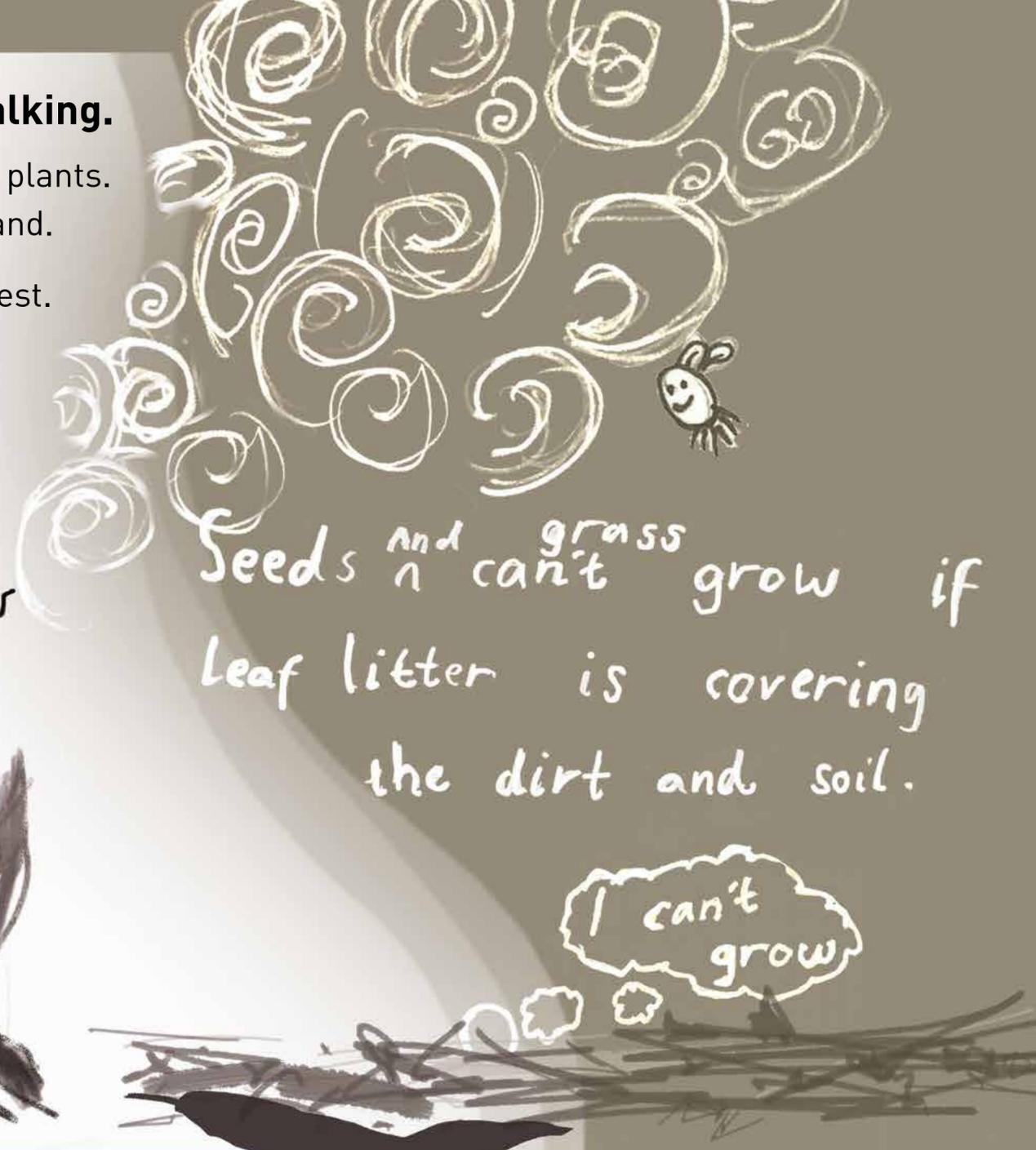


## Shhhhh the Parent Trees are talking.

The firestick helps animals, trees and plants. It also helps the regeneration of the land.

The firestick is like first aid for the forest. Grass comes back and the trees shoot up again. Without fire nothing new will grow, not all fire is bad.

Without fire nothing new will grow.



Shhhhh the Parent Trees are talking.



We need to look after the country.

If you look very closely you can see the insects and animals have started to disappear. If there are no insects for the lizards and birds this would be very sad.

Birds need to eat to stay alive. If there is no grass or insects a lot of the Australian animals will become extinct.

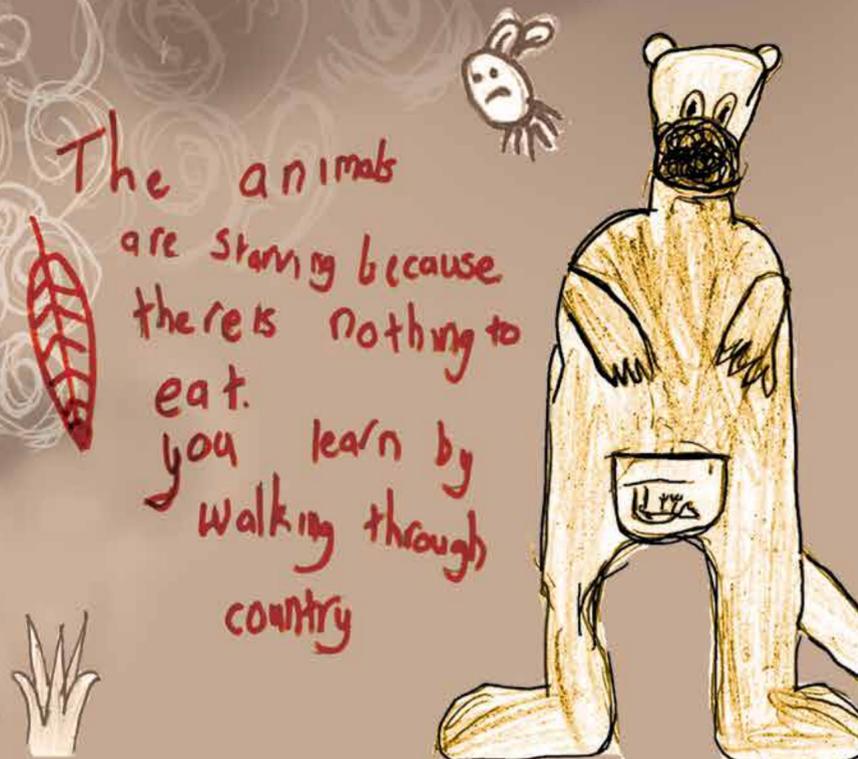
Shhhhh the Parent Trees are talking.

There is not much variety in the grasses here anymore and the wallabies do not like this.

If there is no food in the bush for the animals they come to our house looking for food. The animals are sad.



The animals are starving because there's nothing to eat. You learn by walking through country



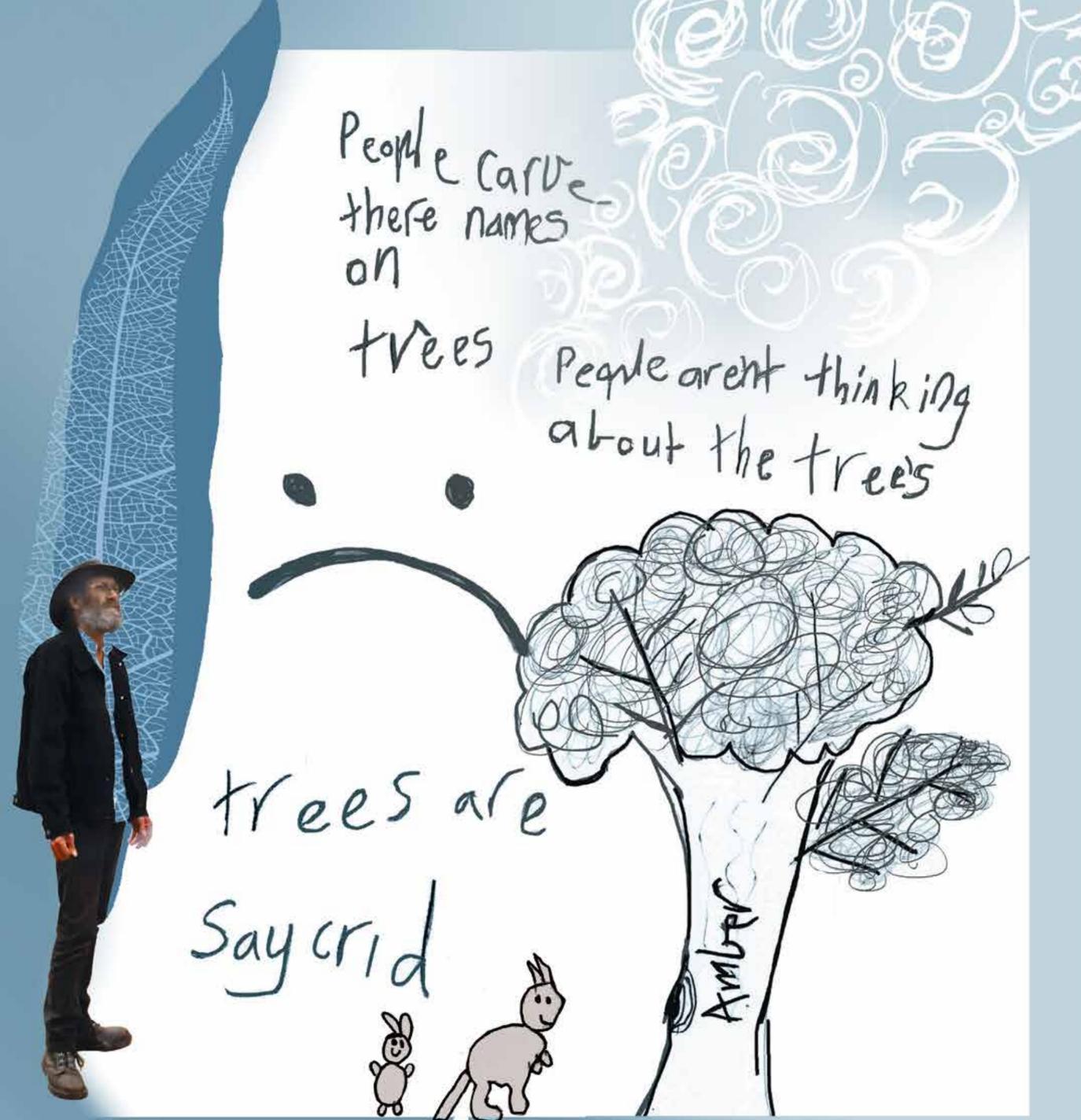
**Shhhhh the Parent Trees are talking.**

People are not thinking about the trees, plants and animals.

Did you know people even carve their names in the trees; look, listen and feel their pain.

These trees are so very sad.

The trees are sacred. We need to look after the parent trees.

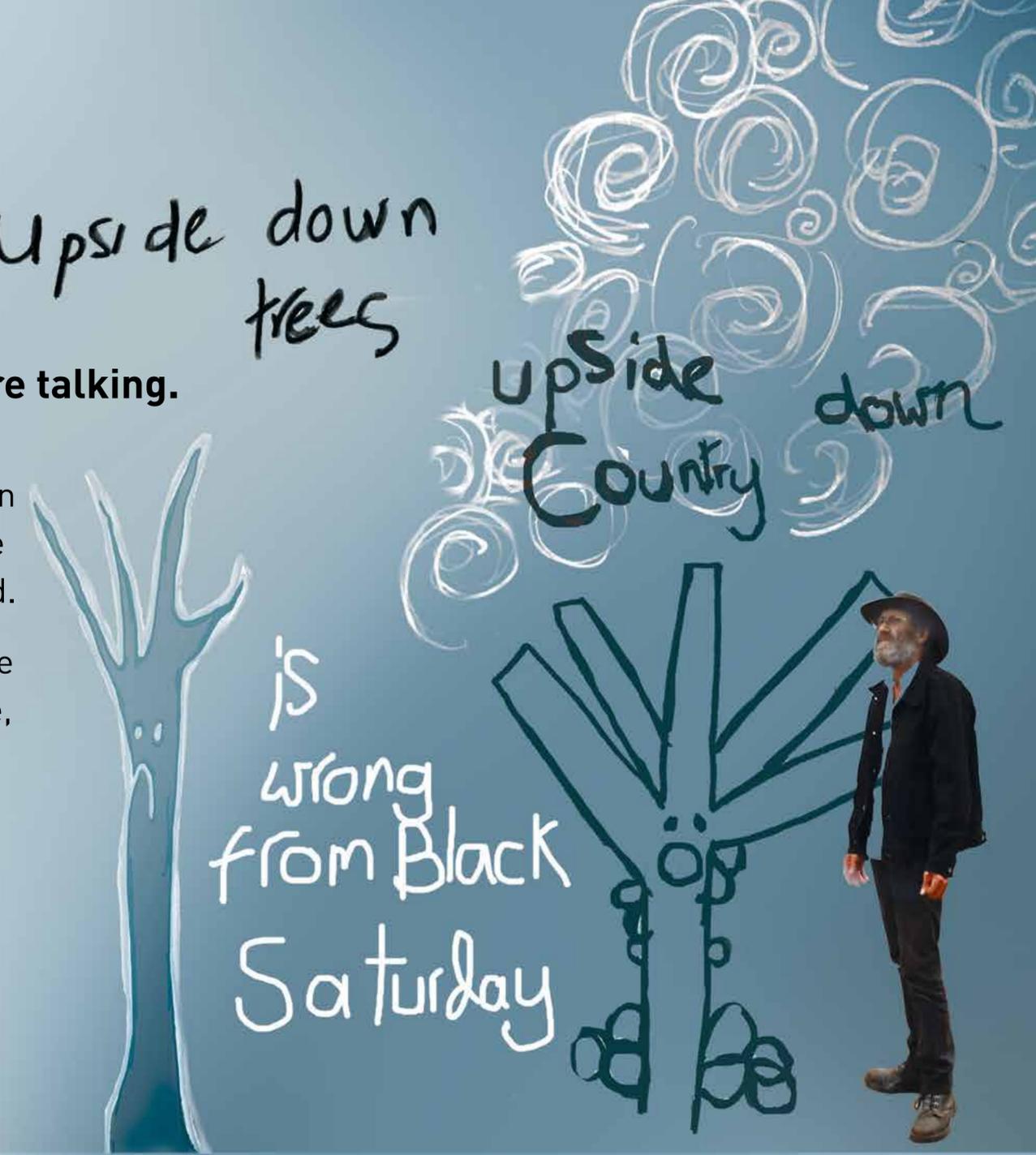


Upside down trees

**Shhhhh the Parent Trees are talking.**

Look, listen and feel the country. Can you see all of the upside down trees? The upside down trees are the right way up but they are dead.

If you look very closely it looks like the roots are at the top of the tree, not in the ground. Can you feel their pain? Can you see their sadness?





**Shhhhh the Parent Trees are talking.**

The upside down trees do not provide the forest canopies needed.

The upside down trees makes the land look sad.

Your upside down

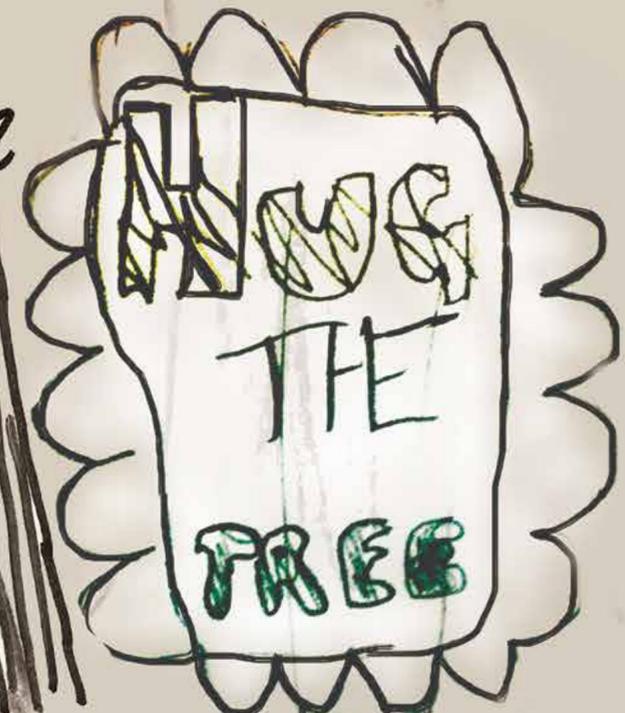


**Shhhhh the Parent Trees are talking.**

There are big trees here, but not many old parent trees anymore.

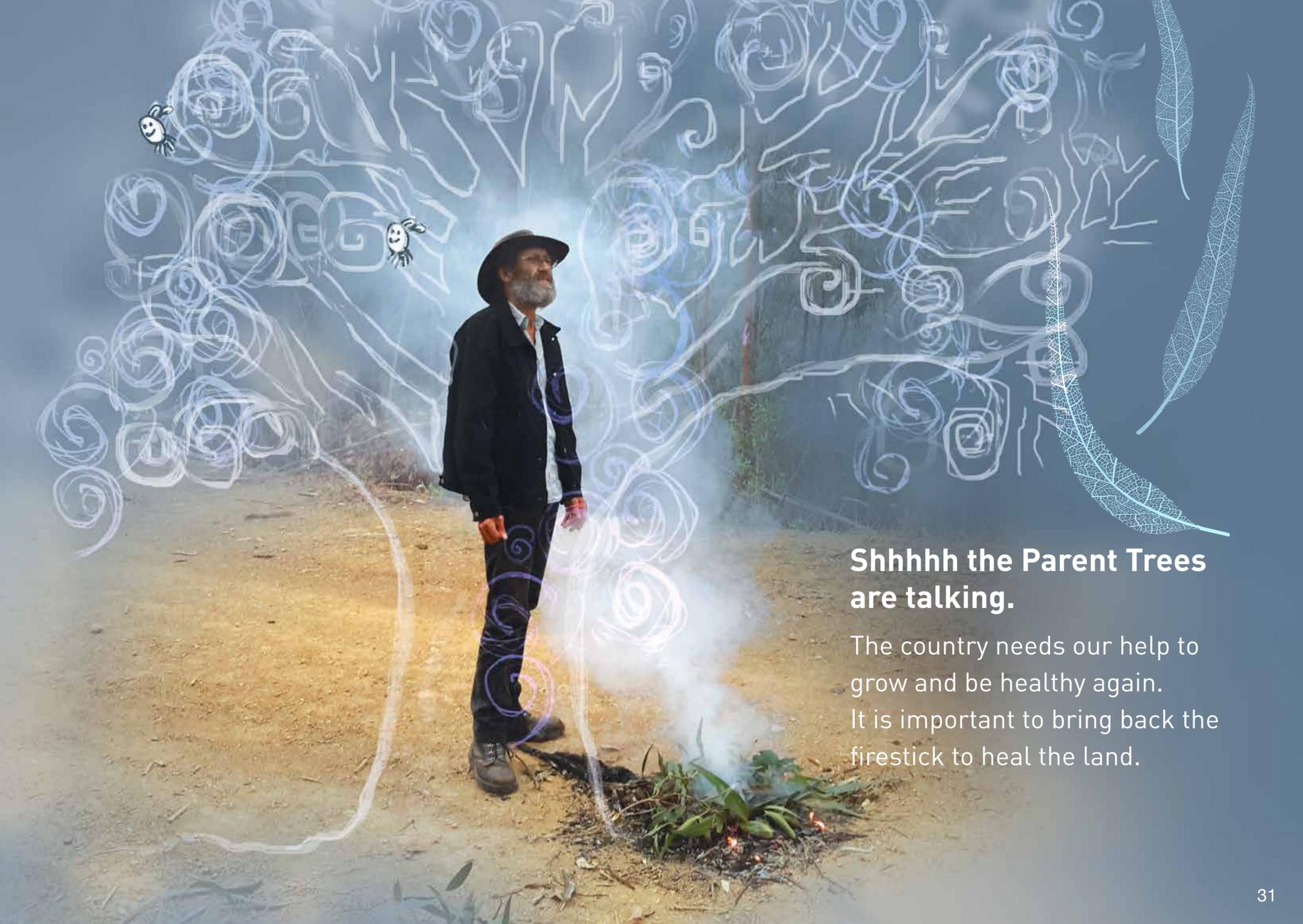
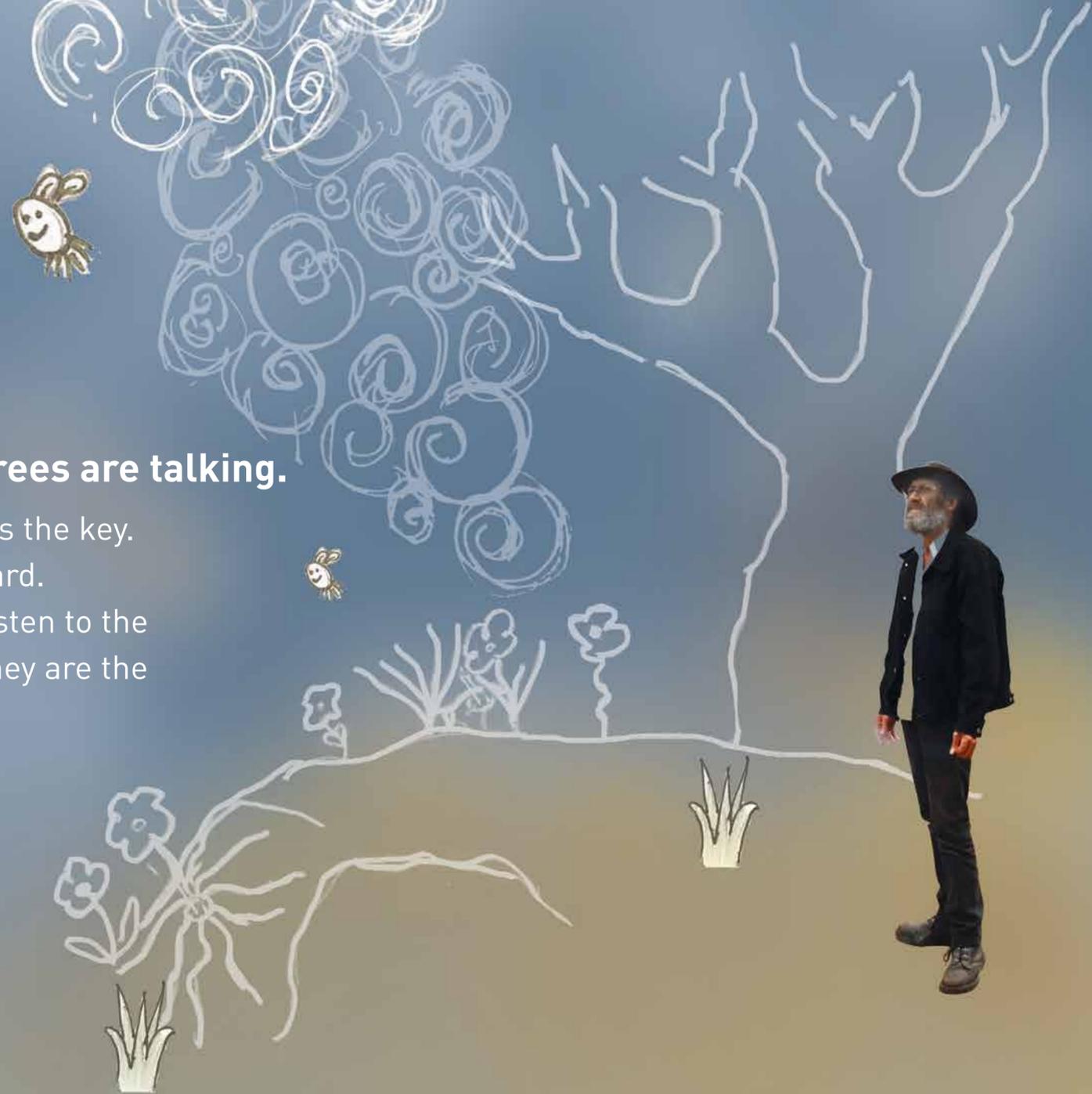
The trees should be older and bigger, they should be so big that it takes four people to hug a parent tree.

Hugging A tree



## Shhhhh the Parent Trees are talking.

Taking notice of the land is the key.  
The earth is not being heard.  
We need to respect and listen to the trees. They are sacred, they are the parent trees.



## Shhhhh the Parent Trees are talking.

The country needs our help to grow and be healthy again.  
It is important to bring back the firestick to heal the land.

