

## April – Warmth and Light – Traditional Australian First Nationals belief

Amongst Native peoples around the world there are many traditional religious beliefs each with their own special ceremonies, sacred sites and customs.

The Australian First Nationals, formerly known as Aboriginal peoples, believe that before the earth was created there was the Dreamtime. Most Dreamtime mythology says that in the beginning the earth was just a dark plain, the story of the creation of mankind, animals, plants and landscape features differ from tribal areas but a Rainbow Serpent plays an important part in many Dreamtime myths. In Dreamtime all the creatures were sleeping - animals, birds and reptiles dreamed peacefully below the ground. The Rainbow Serpent also lay sleeping beneath the earth but one day she awoke and found herself in darkness. She pushed her way through the ground into the sunlight and set off to explore. The Rainbow Serpent's strong winding body carved out the valleys and the hills as she travelled the land. She awaked all the other creatures and the Rainbow Serpent helped them find suitable homes in this new land!

Another Dreamtime story tells of how light came to the world.

Long, long ago there was no sun, everything crept about in darkness.

One day, an emu and a crane had a terrible fight. Feathers flew and they screeched at each other. In the end the crane snatched up an enormous egg from the emu's nest and hurled it up into the sky.

The crane had thrown the egg so hard that it never came back down to earth again. Somewhere high up, perhaps in another world it hit a heap of firewood, cracked open and the yellow yolk spilled over the sticks. The fire suddenly burst into flames and the great blaze lit up the whole sky! For the very first time the animals on earth could see!

A good spirit was watching and saw how the animals loved the light. The spirit decided that they should have light every single day. Along with the other spirits he gathered firewood and made a huge bonfire in the sky. They would light the bonfire every morning so that the creatures on earth could see properly. So that the animals wouldn't be frightened by the sudden burst of light the spirit first lit the sky with the morning star. But when the star appeared the animals were still all fast asleep. The spirit needed a kind of alarm call. He went to the kookaburra who had the loudest, harshest cry of all the birds and could be heard above all creatures! He asked the kookaburra to cry out with all its strength when it saw the morning star appear and wake up all the animals. So every morning when the morning star appeared the kookaburra opened its big beak and shrieked to wake up all the animals.

The animals were delighted, they enjoyed the warmth and light. At noon the bonfire was hottest and in the evening it grew dimmer and cooler. The good spirit wrapped the embers of the bonfire in clouds at night so in the darkness the animals could rest and rekindled the fire again in the morning!

Have a go at this traditional Australian song written by a Melbourne school teacher, Marion Sinclair, in 1932. The song was performed for the first time in 1934 by Girl Guides attending a Jamboree which Lord and Lady Baden-Powell were visiting!

Kookaburra sits in the old gum tree,  
Merry, merry king of the bush is he.  
Laugh, Kookaburra! Laugh, Kookaburra!  
Gay your life must be!

Kookaburra sits in the old gum tree,  
Eating all the gumdrops he can see  
Stop, Kookaburra! Stop, Kookaburra!  
Leave some there for me!

*Try singing it as a round with one Lodge of Beavers starting after the other and so on!*

