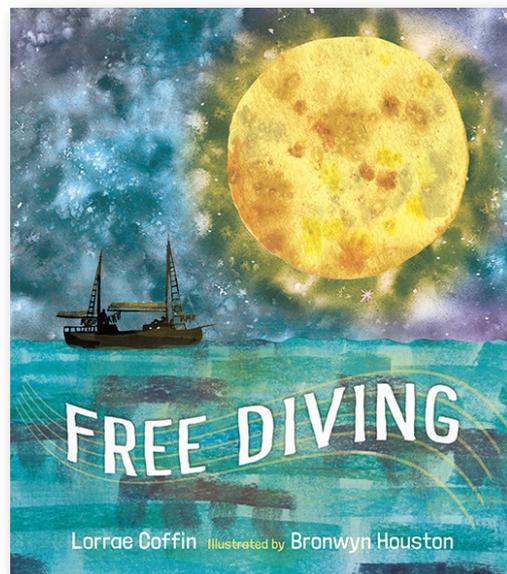


FREE DIVING

A moving testament to the experiences of the Indigenous men and women who worked as 'free divers' during the early years of WA's pearling industry

Free Diving is a poignant tribute to the Indigenous men and women who worked in Western Australia's pearling industry as 'free divers' in the late nineteenth century. In a practice known as 'blackbirding' (forced unpaid labour), European pearl lugger owners used Indigenous people to dive for pearl shell. With no protective suits, the divers faced threats such as decompression sickness known as the 'bends', shark attack or of being swept away by huge tides. At sea for weeks at a time, there was also the risk of the luggers being shipwrecked in cyclones that formed off the coast.

The lyrical narrative is based on the celebrated song 'Free Diving' by singer-songwriter Lorrae Coffin. It sensitively reflects the emotional journey of a young man who leaves family and country to work on a lugger with Japanese and Malay divers by his side. Bronwyn Houston's illustrations are a deep-sea celebration that illuminate both the glory of the ocean and the extreme dangers encountered by the free divers. The book includes reproduction of the song lyrics and sheet music.



About the author



Lorrae Coffin is a descendant of the Niyaparli and Yindijbarndi people of the Pilbara in Western Australia. She is an accomplished multi-instrumentalist, singer-songwriter and a co-founder of the internationally acclaimed Marrugeku Company, a leader in intercultural dance theatre. She is recognised throughout Australia for her knowledge of the Indigenous arts music industry. *Free Diving* is her first book.

About the illustrator



Bronwyn Houston is a descendant of the Niyaparli and Yindijbarndi people of the Pilbara in Western Australia. She grew up in Broome and finds her creative inspiration in the natural world. Bronwyn has written and illustrated several books including the highly successful *Return of the Dinosaurs* (Magabala Books 2016). *Free Diving* is the first collaboration with her Aunty Lorrae.

Available September 2017 in all good bookshops and online from Magabala Books RRP \$17.99.

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