



the publishing arm of the  
Institute for Aboriginal  
Development Inc, a  
not-for-profit Aboriginal  
community controlled  
organisation



abn 89 453 866 817  
postal PO Box 2531, Alice Springs NT 0871  
delivery cnr South Terrace and Benstead Street  
website [www.iad.edu.au/press](http://www.iad.edu.au/press)  
email [sales@iad.edu.au](mailto:sales@iad.edu.au)  
telephone (08) 8951 1334  
facsimile (08) 8952 2527

**For Immediate Release**

**December 17, 2007**

## **Alone on the soaks – the life and times of Alec Kruger (Alec Kruger & Gerard Waterford, IAD Press)**

### **WINNER of 2007 HREOC Human Rights Arts Non-Fiction Award**

Stolen Generations survivor and storyteller **Alec Kruger**, writer **Gerard Waterford**, and Indigenous Publisher **IAD Press** have been honoured by the announcement that ***Alone on the soaks – the life and times of Alec Kruger*** has been chosen as the winner of the **2007 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Arts Non-Fiction Award**, announced at a ceremony in Sydney on December 10th.

The book was one of five titles in a strong field of short-listed finalists, including works addressing depression, Australia's anti-terror legislation, the experiences of detained asylum seekers, and the environment.

In the late 1920s **Alec Kruger** was stolen from his family and country into the institutions of Kahlin, Pine Creek and the Bungalow in Alice Springs. From there he was taken again, to the cattle stations of Central Australia, where he was expected to display all the independence and ingenuity of someone much older. In isolation, Alec faced possible death, until the arrival of Old People from country saved him, taught him and culturally made him strong. Alec spent years driving and roaming throughout the Territory and Queensland, finally finding a sense of belonging and somewhere to call home through having his own family and with the emergence of groups such as the Central Australian Stolen Generations and Families Aboriginal Corporation engaged in the struggle for recognition, reconciliation and recompense. Alec was in the vanguard of claimants who first took their need for recognition to the High Court, testing the legality of the assimilation legislation that allowed authorities to forcibly remove Aboriginal children from their families throughout the 20th century.

***Alone on the soaks*** was developed with Alec's Alice-Springs-based writer and friend Gerard Waterford from years of storytelling, traveling, writing and review. Revisiting the past through stories was an aid to wellbeing; a process that gently elicited Alec's feelings for people, events and experiences. These recollections are distilled into a powerful biography that ranges over eighty plus years of living and battling. Readers have been moved by Alec's intimate stories, his resolute understanding and personal acceptance of his history, and his indomitable will to keep on. Presented in a compelling original voice, this book enhances our understanding of the diverse journeys of Australia's stolen generations.

Asked what the HREOC Human rights Award means to him, **Alec** commented

"I'm really glad I wrote that book. If that book wasn't written people wouldn't know about my story and what I went through in life. I had a hard life. I had a rough life. No mother to hold me.... Writing this book, it brings up all the things about my family life, like my mother, and my family, tribe, and all that. I'm very pleased that it's out, for people to know, know who I am. I'm very glad winning this Human Rights Award. For what I went through. My life suffered, without a mother or father's care. Most of my time I worked out on the station [Love's Creek] there. Seven and a half years I worked there and I was supposed to get paid, but no pay. Never got no money."

Co-author **Gerard Waterford** added that

"It's tremendously exciting to get this sort of recognition, for all the hard work that me and Alec have done, and it's great for all the people who have supported us and for the organisations. One of the dreams that Alec and I had when we started was to get the book into the schools, into the social history

curriculum, and to get a bigger audience over time for this miserable history that men and women like Alec had, and to make sure that it never happens again. In terms of exposure of the population to the impact of government policies on Aboriginal communities it's great to look at some of their social policy initiatives in the past and to reflect on them. Particularly that if you don't work with people, if you don't create a life that is respectful of their life-style choices, a life that creates opportunities for employment, that creates an education system that supports their kids, creates the opportunities for people to participate in a full way in both their tribal and cultural life but also in the broader community - if you don't do that, basically you risk creating the horrible lives that a lot of people experienced as a part of the Stolen Generations. Alec was a survivor. There were a lot of people who didn't survive. That's the truth."

**Jill Walsh**, Publisher at IAD Press extended her congratulations:

"The team at IAD Press is proud to have published Alec Kruger's life story in *Alone on the soaks*. Alec has struggled and fought all his life for many of the things most of us take for granted – pride, respect, a sense of belonging and worth, and a day's pay for a day's work. Towards the end of his book, Alec reflects on his joy during the celebrations for his 80th birthday in 2004. He anticipates his next, and perhaps last, big celebration when his book is published. Little did he know then that the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission had another celebration in store – one very dear to Alec's heart, to members of the Central Australian Stolen Generations and Families Aboriginal Corporation and to his co-author and friend Gerard Waterford. All at IAD Press express our gratitude to HREOC for acknowledging Alec Kruger's life and our commitment to publish his life story; for Alec's story to be shared and recognised and understood. The Commission has made that imperative so much more real in awarding *Alone on the soaks* the 2007 HREOC Award for Arts Non-Fiction."

**Jackie Baxter**, Manager Central Australian Stolen Generations and Families Aboriginal Corporation noted the importance of the award as recognition of the power of Stolen Generations' story-telling:

"I'm really, really happy that Alec has won the Human Rights Award. His dedication towards the Stolen Generation movement is well documented. He's opened the door because he's allowed his story to be told, he's brought people along with. He's brought Gerard's family in, he's brought his family in, he's educated the population in central Australia. He's brought different people in, he's researched everything. I just think it's a fantastic thing for just one little man to be recognised on a national level. He encourages other people to tell their story. In people telling their stories, that's a form of healing in itself, and I think that can only be good for people. Alec's story is a true story of humanity. Our corporation supports people in doing their stories. Alec's story is exceptional because it spans decades and a lot of documentation was there to support his story."

Representatives of the Rudd government were presented with a copy of the book at the awards event.

Sorry Day 2007 marked the 10th anniversary of the 'Bringing Them Home' report that presented the findings of the Royal Commission into the forced separation of Aboriginal children from their families. Alec Kruger was a key informant to this landmark report.

On Tuesday December 11<sup>th</sup> at an event at Customs House in Sydney, attended by the Minister for Indigenous Affairs Jenny Macklin, Alec Kruger also launched *Us taken-away kids*, a new HREOC publication which marks this 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary and draws its title from one of Alec's lines in *Alone on the soaks*.

**Media enquiries to Lisa Stefanoff, [marketing@iad.edu.au](mailto:marketing@iad.edu.au) 08 8951 1333 / 0405 419 412.**

**RRP \$29.95. 352 pages, 230x150mm, paperback. ISBN 978 1 86465 078 5. Available directly from IAD Press, or through Tower Books and JB Books. Sales enquiries to Kym Stanton [sales@iad.edu.au](mailto:sales@iad.edu.au) 08 8951 1334. [www.iad.edu.au/press](http://www.iad.edu.au/press) .**