Lawrence Omeenyo, storyteller

‘I’m an Umpila man, but I was born at old mission, church time. My father was born at Pathaku (Pat-a-koo), part of the Umpila homelands, and Miiku is a Pathaku story. There’s lots of rivers—Leo River, Nesbit River; they all got different stories—wind story and shovelnose fish story, water story and bailer shell story. We got lotta songs—eagle song, crow, emu, mosquito, all that—but we all one Umpila.

‘Each family has a responsibility for each story. My story is an Omeenyo family story: Miiku, black-headed python story. My totem is black-headed python. My father told me this story. They die and we carry on. If I die, my son carry on.’

Glossary:

mission—settlements set up by Christian missionaries to convert Aboriginal people to Christianity
Pathaku—the Umpila name for Chester River
bailer shell—a type of large, curved shell found on Australian beaches
Blade Omeenyo, storyteller
‘I learnt this story from my elder brother Lawrence. I won’t pass it on until we go back to Country. You got to talk to everyone in their Country, all the spirits there. I rather go to Pathaku and do it there.’

totem—an important object or symbol, often plant, animal or stone, which has particular significance for an individual or a group of people
This is the story of Miiku the Black-headed Python, who lived and roamed throughout the region of Pathaku, and two parrot sisters who we call Tinta. Miiku and the two parrot sisters grew up together from childhood, and their father promised Miiku that someday the parrot sisters would be his wives.
Then one day, Kuchuutu the White-breasted Sea Eagle, who was the boss of all the birds, went to the father of the twin parrot girls. Using **black magic power**, he changed the mind of their father, who then promised his daughters in marriage to Kuchuutu.