

Translation and timeline to

The Singing Telegraph

A film by Jon Rose and The Tara Community

This film is spoken in Kaytetye, an indigenous language of fewer than 100 speakers from central Australia. There are no English subtitles as the film's director wishes this ancient tongue to be heard as music.

More sonic outcomes, images, texts, and information to **The Singing Telegraph** are available at:

www.jonroseweb.com/f_projects_singing_telegraph.php

Credits:

Selma Ngalyarre Thompson, Timothy Thangale Price, Carol Thompson, Kaylene Dinny, Patricia Watyale, Nancy Thompson, Vivianne Thompson, Alex Thompson, Tommy 'Walkabout' and Phillip Jangala, principle Ruth Rawnsley, Mercy Eapen, students of Neutral Junction School, Tanisha Vincent, anthropologist Grace Koch, linguist Myfany Turpin who has worked for over 25 years with Tara Community, the technical contribution of Nick Roux (via MESS) in the building of the Morse Key/MIDI interface, the extra drone footage filmed by Chris Tangey, and thanks to all members of the Tara Community for their contribution.

Access to The Telegraph Station at Barrow Creek was provided by Parks Central Australia, documents used in this project are housed by AIATSIS.

The Singing Telegraph was supported by **Creative Australia** (The Australia Council), **The Gwaertler Stiftung**, and **Tura New Music**.

Timeline of movie and precis of spoken word.

Translation by Myfany Turpin:

00.38

Selma Ngalyarre Thompson speaks:

Hello...it's me here Ngalyarre talking to you. This is Kaytetye Country. I'm Kaytetye, it belongs to all of us Kaytetye people. We are making something with our children that people from all over can watch, we put this on video for people to watch. Our community is called Artarre (which means emu feathers and is spelt Tara in English), it's in the Northern Territory of Australia. Artarre is Kaytetye Country. Finished.

01.16

The words 'Kaytetye Country' (played as Morse Code)

01.34

'Kaytetye Country' (variations on Morse Code, played on acoustic car horns by Tara kids)

02.00

Views of Tara. The harmonised rhythm of 'Kaytetye' as Morse Code is played on a piano. Elders Selma and Carol Thompson go for a walk.

02.42

The Tara Community, at Neutral Junction School, experiments with the Morse Keys, triggering percussion sounds via a specially constructed MIDI interface (basically any sound can be played).

03.25

Youngest Tara kids dance to MIDI triggered sounds.

03.56

Alex Thompson enjoying a trip to the water hole at Bean Tree - a favourite on Kaytetye Country.

04.27

Alex digs for tasty bush onions, but lack of rain determines that the water hole is too dry.

04.52

Tara Community members play and sing with the Telegraph Musical Instrument (specifically designed and made for this project).

05.58

Against a panoramic view of Kaytetye Country, three elders reminisce about life in Tara.

06.05

Kaylene Dinny speaks:

We used to go out hunting for echidnas and sometimes camp out in the east of west. We go swimming at Bean Tree Waterhole when it is full with all the children. And we climb up the hills looking for echidnas. We also go and visit my mother's country Arnerre.

06.46

Carol Thompson speaks:

We take the kids out on excursions, for sport, or out hunting. We take the children out hunting on the weekend. In the old days we had an old black Chevy that we used to all

go out to Bean Tree Waterhole. We used to follow all the old people going out hunting, hoping to get some of the meat, kangaroo, or whatever it was. And then we would go back and swim at Bean Tree. That's how I grew up.

07.43

Patricia Watyale speaks:

I grew up at Tara, but at the old camp, near Neutral Junction Station. From there we would travel to Barrow Creek. We used to walk to Barrow Creek to watch the races.

08.01

Patricia talks further about events at the old Barrow Creek Race Course. The video shows the derelict buildings such as the race course rail, grandstand, bar, and starters platform.

People from all the stations came (list of the stations). They brought their horses to Barrow Creek. All the Aboriginal stockmen came too to look after the horses and some were jockeys. They also had motorbike races. The races used to be at the same time as the Queen's birthday in June. After the horse races, there were parachute competitions. They would jump out of the aeroplanes with a parachute. We loved the races.

09.18

The rhythms of the banging shutters predict the rhythms of the Morse Code tapping out 'Kaytetye Country'.

10.23

Tara boys sing...and the 8 significant Kaytetye skin names are delivered via Morse Code: 'Apenangke', 'Kngwarreye', 'Kapetye', 'Apengarte', 'Pwerle', 'Thangale', 'Akemarre', 'Ampetyane'. (Skin names are inherited at birth and inform part of the important kinship system that determines social relationships and dreamings). The video footage concentrates on the remaining telegraph poles and wires just south of Mparntwe (Alice Springs). There are few poles and no wire at all left at Barrow Creek.

11.58

First image of The Telegraph Station at Barrow Creek.

The community school (Neutral Junction School) visits The Barrow Creek Telegraph Station (now a museum) which, despite being a feat of colonial communications technology in 1872, was also an artefact of unceded occupation. The community points out the workshop, the water cistern, the telegraph operating rooms.

13.01

Elder Selma Ngalyarre Thompson speaks:

My name is Selma Thompson. I'm a Kaytetye person speaking to you in my language - Kaytetye. My mother and my father, both Kaytetye, raised me here. Along time ago, they told me about this Kaytetye place here. Thangkenhareng (Barrow Creek). I grew up around here on Kaytetye country. We used to climb the hills to get echidna - when I was little and then when I was bigger. And we used to dig bush onions right here. There were lots of Kaytetye people here then. I went to Neutral Junction School. We would go there from Barrow Creek in a car. Lots of kids went. Finish.

13.57

Members of the Tara Community make their presence felt in the building, walking through the Telegraph operating rooms..

14.26

Selma speaks again, covering the history of The telegraph and its effect on the Kaytetye people of the area. Her narrative is interrupted/expressed by a community chorus.

My parents told me that a long time ago white people worked at the Telegraph Station and they took young Aboriginal women. This made the husbands angry. 'Those white fellas are no good, they steal our wives' the Kaytetye men thought. After that they sent two Kaytetye men with spears into the hills to spear them. The men went because white fellas had stolen their wives. 'Go and see those white fellas and attack them' the old men said. They've stolen our wives. That's what happened a long time ago. They came down the hills with spears for them. That's what I heard people talk about. It was before me, a long time ago.

16.07

They had spears and speared the white fellas for stealing their wives. They came down this way from the top of the hills and speared them right here at this place - Barrow Creek Telegraph Station. From on top of the Barrow Creek hills they came down, that's what I heard.

16.49

Three white men were speared and so the police came after that. For months after the police went around shooting lots of Aboriginal people. They shot Kaytetye, Anmatyerr, Warlpiri - everyone. That's the story I heard from a long time ago. My parents told me about it. They told me when I was little that is what happened here at Thangkenhareng. It's a Kaytetye place. I'm Selma Thompson telling you about it. Finished.

17.45

Members of the Tara community act out a sonic 'memorial' using Morse keys and unknown messages.

18.24

The community gathers in front and inside of The Telegraph Station to celebrate and enjoy their visit.

19.27

Ancestors look on: A dreaming story.

19.40

Travelling through Katetye Country again. This time, Timothy Thangale Price tells something from his life, memories from his childhood, and finishes with a question about the future...whether the internet will compromise indigenous culture.

Timothy Thangale Price speaks:

19.42

This place Tara, belongs to the people of Twerrpe Country. I'm the manager of Twerrpe Country. All the old men from Twerrpe, my uncles, told me when you are older, you have to help look after this place. (Lists the places) All of Twerrpe.

20.36

On my country, we used to go camping at Llewerr, it's a big plain. We used to swim at my country, at Nyerreye. We used to swim there as children with our families. And we used to go hunting for kangaroo and goanna. Old women used to dig for pencil yams, yams, and witchetty grubs.

21.53

Well children, I want to ask you a question: Do you want to follow the law of not, or do you just want to follow movie phone cultures? That's what you need to think about. Kaytetye language is difficult to understand, so how are you younger generations going to speak Kaytetye?

22.25

Drone footage of some remnants of the Overland Telegraph (just south of Mparntwe Alice Springs). Aeolian sounds are heard from the long wire that is built into the Telegraph Musical Instrument (designed by Jon Rose) - thus mimicking the singing sounds witnessed by indigenous people from 1872 till 1972, and over whose land it crossed.

With the images is added an extract from Kaytetye women singing songs from the Red Band Song Cycle of Rtwerrpe Country (Carol and Selma Thompson's country) recorded by Grace Koch 3/2/1977 in Tara. The singers are Topsy Ampetyane, Nellie Kemarre, Ruby Pwerle, Eileen Ngamane, and Mary Ngalyerre. This song cycle is held by AIATSIS, KOCH_G01-005165_01 and used with the permission of Selma Thompson.

verse 1.

Kwerrelame ayenge alpetyenhe (I, a girl, will go back home)

Amerlerekwere ayenge alpetyenhe (I, an unmarried girl, will go back home)

verse 2.

Arawerrnge antyelewe-antyelewe antyelewe-antyelewe (Overcome with strong emotion)

Ahelhe irrararle ayenge alpetyenhe (Longing for my country, I will go back home)

(translation by Myfany Turpin)

24.42

The last line of verse 2 is heard in Kaytetye - transmitted as Morse Code.

25.03

Tommy 'Walkabout' Jangala (main voice) and Phillip Jangala (off microphone voice) provide a postscript to the video by sending a message to future generations of Kaytetye speakers, telling them to look after and nurture their language. (This was filmed in the park beside the Alice Springs Telegraph Station).

Tommy Jangala speaks:

*Hey you younger ones, what are we supposed to do if you are finding Kaytetye language difficult to understand? Certainly some people speak very fast, which makes it hard to understand. But you need to learn it and keep our language going. These days children don't know how to speak it. They find it hard to learn and speak it differently, some speak mixed up language and don't speak it properly. But you should learn to speak it properly. If you were born to a Kaytetye mother, then you should talk Kaytetye, you should be speaking Kaytetye. If your mother's raised you. Or your father's parents, then you should speak Kaytetye. Keep your language!
Finished.*

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