

Coniston¹

Francis Jurpururla Kelly

Preface

Francis Jurpururla Kelly is an elder of the Warlpiri people. He is the Chair of the Central Lands Council and Pintubi Anmatjere Warlpiri Media. He established the first Aboriginal TV station in 1985 and has directed many award winning films including 'Coniston', a documentary about the brutal massacre of his people by a NT police officer in 1928². He gave the three talks which follow around the time when the land known as Yurrkuru or Brookes Soak was handed back through a deed of grant under the Northern Territory Land Rights Act to the Yurrkuru Aboriginal Land Trust on 8 October 2014.

Jurpururla talks on the massacre site at Yurkurru (Brooke's Soak, Coniston)

Recorded by Olivia Nigro (referred to here as *Napururla*) at Yurkurru on 20th August 2014.

This place here, we standing, me and Napururla from Sydney, this place called Yurkurru where people from here... from every place used to come down here cos it was the only supply of water. It was drought in that time and people came here and gather up and they had one white bloke here. Named Fred Brooks. He was a dingo trapper. He just came along because he had no job at Coniston and one of the manager told him 'no, no job here, no money, you have to go out yourself'. And he came here with... two Aboriginal person, was

¹. Various statements, including one delivered at 'Women Against Rape in War: Gallipoli to Coniston' Conference, Cosmopolitan Civil Societies Research Centre, University of Technology, Sydney 29 August 2014 and published here as a non-refereed contribution.

² <http://coniston.pawmedia.com.au/the-documentary/directors-statement-francis-kelly>

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two Jakamarra, was Mitch and Pussycat, those two. They came here and they set up the tent just up where the creek bed is, just where the water is. And people all along this side of the bank, they used to camp out here.

One old man, came from [the] West called Bullfrog Japanangka, with his family. They was looking for water and tobacco. Old people used to get big mob of tobacco but they had run out of tobacco because it was drought time, everything was all gone. People was here and he was alright that old fella and he was looking after 'im people and one thing, bullfrog came in with a few family, with his two wives and children. And one of the wives, Bullfrog told 'im to go there to ask the whitefella for tobacco and that women said 'no no I don't know this white person you know. This is first time I seen 'im'. And he said 'no you just go and ask him'. And from there, he was holding 'im up and that old bloke, the sun went down, and he was getting angry. What's going on? And he went over there with his father-in-law, the old man Japaljarri was called Pukatiwarra. That was bullfrog went there with 'im. And they been kill that white fella cos they caught him red handed, no good, playing around. And from there they just kill him, they been take him to the rabbit hole, bury him there but half his leg was sticking out and one bloke from the West he was coming. He was the mail man, this old man, [then] he was young fella, he was only 20 years old. He came in from Mt Doreen. He was Alec Wilson. He came and saw him and he reported to the station owners and they all came along then and saw it. And from there, that bloke [came], he was a madman that Murray, Sergeant Murray, because he was fighting at Gallipoli in that time and he came along and he was a little bit sick in his head, you know from war, gone crazy. Shooting innocent people and children. All the way along to the Lander River and to Baxter's Well. All the way to Greenwood Station, that is north of here, near Bunny Well. From there, you know, they came back and they were still killing people. Then there was Baxter's Well, they was having celebration, ceremony time in that time, big ceremony, they got interrupt[ed] and they shot them. Poor bugger. Women and all. That's all I have to say because I don't want to keep describing it because it's sad to talk about more and more.

Jurpururla's speech: Coniston, War and Justice

This talk was delivered by Francis Jurpururla Kelly at the Conference held 28 and 29 August 2014 at University of Technology, Sydney: *Remembering Frontiers: Gallipoli to Coniston*

Thanks for those traditional owners who let us come in here [to their land] and join our spirit to each other... I want to talk about the frontier a little bit, about Aboriginal people. That is why I made a film called Coniston massacre. It is about the Aboriginal frontiers [that have] never been recognised, never been support[ed].

Strongly, I'm gonna say about frontier is, we talked about Gallipoli and others. What about our own people in the communities in Australia? There's a lot of Aboriginal people who fought in that war too, in Darwin, and one of our people went away from our community to fight in Darwin. Larrakia mob fought for their rights in Darwin. That's a war. It's never been, people never been talked about. We have to get it from the grass roots and talk about it for our people to be recognised and to be in the frontiers.

One thing I am a bit sad about is... there has never been justice for our people. Justice is most important. We never [just] lost our people, we lost our Countries too, ancestors who owned those countries been taken away. Never been recognised that again people been pushed away. I'm talking about the government. Some governments are good, some governments never been treated [us] in the first place [with] equal rights for our people, being pushed around. That turn into a place that was occupied in their country, put into government settlements, put into the school, to our people in the remote area[s]...

We like to have the right to talk about our things to. To recognise the government to understand we are all equal to each other. Doesn't matter where we all come from, we are all equals. We want human rights for our people... we all have equal rights to say these kind of things. Never push people away from what we want. We want our justice for our people to be recognised. That's all, thank you.

Jurpururla talks about the native title hand back of the Yurkurru massacre site to Traditional Owners

Discussion on 28 October, 2015, recorded by Olivia Nigro

On 8 October, everybody went across to Yurkurru and everybody was happy about that. They formed a corroboree there, on that Country, on their own land and they said to Nigel Scullion, [Northern Territory Senator] 'this is where the massacre happened in this area, in our Country, Yurkurru. And from there they said nobody talked about our land... but we are happy that we got em back to occupy [by] our people, put something for the tourists to recognise it when they come along, history about Yurkurru, talk about where the massacre happens and from there, everybody can move back to that place where they got taken away from them.

They all got justice in Yapa way, Aboriginal way, to be there and occupy their Country. That's their justice. White man's justice, it's not fair to him about it. Justice is all about Countries that want... their own self-determination [over] their own affairs in all areas.

Some of those areas have sacred names. Holding the ceremony for that Country, they already showed the dance for that Nigel Scullion. This is our Country and this is the stories and the corroboree for this Country.

This hand over belong to this mob Jupururla, Jakamarra, Nakamarra Napururla. This is their Country. The corroboree they been do 'em is the corroboree, the lady been dance the dance for Do Do. That Do Do that jump along, that bird that walk on the water lily. Aboriginal name is Do Do. Another one, men perform that Corroboree called Natijirri, that means [Budgerigar], Natijirri. Natijirri belong to that area where them birds eat nuts from them blood woods, you know. They was gonna do a frog dance called Jarlji but they reckon it's too hard because the old people can't jump around like frog anymore.

A lot of people been dance again, they formed the corroboree. I was happy and the old people been see. That same night that full moon got covered [by the eclipse] that was blessed for them, for the Earth.

Everybody happy, everybody got back really good. Even land council was there, [the] Traditional Owners. I was there, the chairperson and the people who was in the executives meeting. We finally got 'em. They had lunch and everybody went back but they wanna come back to that Country for the site, for a living area for them.

That was healing. The healing is in the memorial remembrance where those people got killed.