

TALKING LANGUAGE

with Ernie Dingo

A series of six x 22 minute documentaries
from CAAMA Productions



Series director **Ramahn Allam**
Executive producer **Nicolas Lee**
Presenter and Cultural Consultant **Ernie Dingo**

There are around 250 languages with 600 dialects spoken on this land. Today it is estimated around 30 of those languages are still strong and spoken daily, while over a hundred are critically endangered.

In this series, I'm going to take you around the country to meet people who are going to show us that revival, maintenance and creation of language is in a constant state of change.

I want to hear the Earth in the words, in the songs, in the voices of the past, the present and the future.

- Ernie Dingo



Released by
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PRINCIPAL CREDITS

Presenter Ernie Dingo
Series director Ramahn Allam
Series writer Valerie Bichard
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Cultural consultant Ernie Dingo

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Sally Moran
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Pele Safra (Ep 4)
Shane Mulcahy (Ep 4)

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Sound David Tranter

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Alice Taylor

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Australian Government
Indigenous Languages Support

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Imparja

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Talking Language with Ernie Dingo is a personal journey providing a unique understanding of how knowledge of Aboriginal languages is shaped by ancestral connections to the land, stars, water, sea and the air we breathe.

Ernie Dingo visits six people from across Australia whose stories of a spiritual connection to country highlight some of the benefits and current challenges people face to maintain, revive and create languages within their communities.

Throughout his journey Ernie explores the complex and delicate balance between language, stories and relationship to country. Importantly, he discovers how these relationships have been impacted and influenced by a different type of relationship to country: western culture, colonial history and development. This relationship excludes the knowledge of the sacred law and custom of the land that nourishes and maintains Aboriginal languages.

Ernie's quest reveals a diversity of language that has a direct connection to how Aboriginal people listen, understand and speak to country. In return the country speaks to them. This raises an important question that each person Ernie visits must answer - what is the future of Aboriginal languages in their community?

SHORT SYNOPSES

Ep 1: Ernie Dingo discovers the unique language of the tropical home of Yirrkala, North East Arnhem Land, and learns about the stories and artwork of the Yolngu people of Yirrkala.

Ep 2: Ernie Dingo experiences first-hand the legacy of colonial impact and environmental change on the Ngarrindjeri language in the Coorong region of South Australia.

Ep 3: Ernie Dingo explores the significance of Aboriginal language revival in the country of the Gunditjmara people of Victoria's Western Districts.

Ep 4: Ernie Dingo discovers the importance of teaching both Non-Indigenous and Indigenous children the Arrernte language in Alice Springs, in central Australia.

Ep 5: Ernie Dingo reveals the impact of mining on the language and lore of the Yindjibarndi people in Roebourne, Western Australia, and how they are preserving that knowledge for future generations.

Ep 6: Ernie Dingo spends time with 'proper bush gentleman', Bill Harney, who shows him ancient traditions connecting the Wardaman language in the Northern Territory with the law of the land and the night sky.

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LONG SYNOPSES

Episode 1: Bunduk Marika

Ernie visits an old friend, Bunduk Marika, in Yirrkala in North East Arnhem Land. She is one of 6 -7000 people who speak one or more of the many Yolngu languages in the region. Bunduk lived and worked outside her community for many years and is a well-known Yolngu visual artist, fluent in several languages.

Buduk guides Ernie towards an understanding of the relationship between the ancestral knowledge found in the local environment and the importance the oral language has on the creation and maintenance of local histories, her art and ultimately Yolngu identity.

Episode 2: Tom Trevorror

Ernie travels to the Coorong in South Australia to meet Ngarrindjeri Elder, Tom Trevorror. Ngarrindjeri is a revival language with more than 250 speakers. Tom traces the impact that missionary and colonial history, along with environmental changes in the Coorong's ecosystem, has had on the survival of the Ngarrindjeri language and culture.

A sudden turn in the story forces Ernie to reflect on the circle of creation that weaves new life. Finally, he understands the significance of the many generations that have fought to maintain and share the language and culture of Ngarrindjeri people and why it is important to continue the journey.

Episode 3: Vicki Couzens

European colonisation had a devastating impact on the numerous language groups in the State of Victoria. In this episode, Ernie travels to Melbourne to meet Vicki Couzens, descendant of the Gunditjmara and Kirrae Whurrong clans, located in the western districts of Victoria. Vicki is dedicated to language revival and shows Ernie the importance that museums and archival material play in reinvigorating language, culture and the relationship to country for her community.

Travelling to her country Vicki shows Ernie how bringing back the knowledge of language into the country and the community is the most important aspect of reviving language and the sacred traditions of her ancestors.

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LONG SYNOPSES (continued)

Episode 4: Margaret Kemarre (MK) Turner

Ernie travels north east of Alice Springs to Harts Range in the Northern Territory to meet MK Turner. Aunty Margaret is one of over 500 speakers of the Arrernte language, but is one of only a handful of people who speak what she calls 'the Eastern Arrernte old language.' MK's son Raymond (Shorty) Webb shares a men's dreaming story with Ernie at a local rock hole, while MK shows Ernie how to collect some bush medicine.

In Alice Springs, MK and Ernie share some important tips on desert sign language. MK also teaches Arrernte and Non-Indigenous primary school children her language. MK believes teaching young children is an important way to keep her language and culture growing for future generations. For Ernie, the opportunity to be with MK provides a rare opportunity to hear, see, feel and understand the language of her country.

Episode 5: Pansey Cheedy

Ernie travels to Roebourne community to meet Pansey Cheedy, one of over 300 Yinjibarndi speakers in the Pilbara region of Western Australia. Yinjibarndi is a living language and Pansey explains to Ernie the diversity of languages in her region and the strength and challenges that come from being the last generation of language speakers who know the depth of the old language and its tradition.

Ernie visits the local radio station and archiving project to learn how language is maintained and preserved in Roebourne. According to Pansey Cheedy, the largest impact on the survival of language and culture in her country is from mining. Ernie realises the importance of keeping the language and law of the land safe for current and future generations of Yinjibarndi speakers.

Episode 6: Bill Harney

In this final episode Ernie travels 200km west of Katherine in the Northern Territory to visit Wardaman Elder, Bill Harney. 80 to 100 people speak and understand the Wardaman language. Bill is the last fully initiated Lawman of his country and is one of only 8 speakers who know the old language.

Ernie explores the country of Bill's birth and hears the stories of first contact, traditional language boundaries and the creation stories that connect the night sky with the law and language of the land. Bill reminds Ernie of a 'proper bush gentleman' and it is through his generosity and deep cultural awareness that Ernie finds a special place of understanding and knowledge.

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SERIES DIRECTOR – BIO-FILMOGRAPHY

RAMAHN ALLAM

Ramah has broad experience as a producer and director in a range of documentary formats including news and current affairs for television.

Other than English, he speaks Yuwalaraay/Gamilaraay and Arabic.

In 2013, he completed an MA in Journalism at the University of Technology, Sydney, after completing a range of courses at the Australian Film, Television and Radio School, Sydney, on cinematography and documentary.

He has attended many conferences including the World Youth Conference on Genocide, Kampala, Uganda; the National Indigenous Conference on Education; the World Indigenous Youth Conference; and the Indigenous Education Conference.

Career Summary

January 2010 – July 2011

SBS Television

Video Journalist

Living Black / World News Australia

Reporter / Producer

World News Australia / World News Australia Sport

July 2011 – May 2012

National Indigenous Television News

Video Journalist

Generate news and current affairs stories targeted at an Indigenous audience. Single-handedly research, write, voice, edit and produce packages by sourcing and lining up talent, utilising my strong technical skills, mixing all the essential elements to create timely, audience-targeted high quality television from the field, often in remote locations, and the studio.

Winner – 2012 World Indigenous Journalism Award for in-depth reporting (the Kimberley Gas Hub Series)

Shot, wrote, edited, voiced, sound recorded and produced from remote regions of Western Australia's Kimberley region over four days while still filing for the evening news bulletin.

June 2012 – February 2014

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Indigenous Producer Internship

Successful candidate for scholarship designed to assist with developing partnerships and networks within the ABC and the wider screen/media industry, and to provide opportunities to take strategic steps in building skills, career-path and a broader participation in the wider industry - combination of on-the-job development and project work including internal placements and mentoring, internal and external training courses and relevant industry seminars.

SERIES DIRECTOR – BIO-FILMOGRAPHY (continued)

Good Game (broadcast 5/03/2013)

Segment Producer / Director

Racial Stereotyping in video games

Tractor Monkeys (Episodes 4-8 broadcast 2013)

Producer Attachment

Panel Game Show

Four Corners (2012)

Researcher / Producer

Another Bloody Business

The Battle for Syria

Australian Story (2012)

Producer / Director

Life After Puberty

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Series Director for CAAMA Productions

From February 2014:

Commissioning Editor

ABC TV Indigenous