

Inquiry into language learning in Indigenous communities

Questionnaire

Submitted by Alison Ngamperle Ross (Arnerre outstation) and Carol Ngalyerre Thompson (Tara community)

1. In Artarre community (Tara) the main language spoken is **Kaytetye**. Some community members speak Anmatyerr, Alyawarr, Warlpiri, Pitjantjarra and Aboriginal English but not Kaytetye because they have married in from other communities.
2. Tara children don't speak Kaytetye well. They only know a few words. Some 20 year olds can speak Kaytetye properly but many only speak Aboriginal English with a few Kaytetye words. Most Kaytetye people over 30, including elders speak Kaytetye fluently.
3. Kaytetye has been taught at the school on and off since 2002. People thought it was important to teach the children language and culture. The school children age between 5-11 years old. Over the years many Kaytetye people, young and old, have helped with the teaching: Tommy, Hilda, Amy, Lena, Carol, Bronwyn, Vivien, Selma and Alison.
4. a. To encourage the use of Kaytetye we do bush trips, tell stories, read books, write and sing songs, do artwork and play games in Kaytetye.
 b. Music Outback assist in song writing and singing. Myfany Turpin (QLD Uni) helps with lesson planning and delivery. Occasionally we have help from NT education dept linguist to help plan lessons.
 c. The community thinks language and culture is important and are pleased when teaching activities occur.
5. When there was funding to pay teachers, language was taught 1 hour week by two community members. Currently it is only been taught occasionally by the school teacher Alison Ross. Alison taught a unit on bush medicines and plant foods, did bush trips, made posters, used the Kaytetye picture dictionary, asked children questions in Kaytetye, and the children made posters and wrote the names for the plants and what their uses are. The lessons help children engage in school. Children enjoy these lessons.
6. No interpreting and translating services use Kaytetye. Alison Ross did an interpreting certificate with Michael Cooke in 2001 but has not been called on officially to be an interpreter. However Alison has interpreted unofficially in Land Council business and when working with Myfany Turpin (linguist).
7. The main difficulty is getting funding to pay elders and pay teachers to deliver the lessons.
8. Our most immediate goal is to get children to know how they are related to everyone in our community. Relationships—skin names and kin terms— are very important. They are the basis of identity and people can't relate properly to each other if they do not know their actual kin and skin names.