

## OBSERVATIONS ON A CASE STUDY OF SONG TRANSMISSION AND PRESERVATION IN TWO ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES: DILEMMAS OF A NEO-COLONIALIST IN THE FIELD

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### Abstract

Within a western tradition of music education research there is an expectation that a research project will have focussed aims, regardless of the research paradigm from which it emanates. This paper discusses the dilemma of a researcher when confronted with a disparity between her carefully formulated research aims and the needs of the communities within which her research project was implemented. These issues are discussed in relation to the initial stages of a research project which is investigating the music, movement and language characteristics, cross-cultural transmission and effects of the media on the musical play of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children in two small towns in central Australia.

Several major contemporary approaches to classroom music education, notably those initiated by Carl Orff and Zoltan Kodály, are based on assumptions regarding the 'universal' nature of children's playground singing games and chants. Such notions of universal human behaviour, prevalent during the inception and development of these pedagogical approaches, may be seen as facets of colonialism, in that the distinctive characteristics of localised 'indigenous' societies are marginalised and subjugated by the characteristics of the colonially dominant society which are deemed to be 'universal' (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1995). By this means, among others, indigenous culture is suppressed and indigenous peoples are persuaded to "know themselves . . . as subordinate to Europe" (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1995, p. 1). In the case of playground games, central and eastern European models were taken as exemplars of the 'universal' from which 'universal' pedagogical tenets were drawn.

In order to examine assumptions regarding the nature of children's playground singing games and chants and the underlying paradigms of musical evolutionism and universalism which continue to influence contemporary music education practices, I conducted an ethnomusicological study in a multiethnic Sydney primary school from 1990 to 1996 (Marsh, 1997). This study involved the audiovisual recording of more than 600 performances of playground singing games and concurrent interviews with their performers to establish features of the music, text and movement, their transmission and generation, and their meaning to the performers. Because of profound changes to the sonic environment in which children at the turn of the twentieth century play and learn, the influence of material acquired from the media and the classroom and the effects of immigration on singing game repertoire and performance practice were also examined.

The study found that children consistently generated new variants of games using formulaic construction methods in accordance with theories of oral transmission (Edwards & Sienkiewicz, 1990; Lord, 1960; Ong, 1982; Treitler, 1986). In their quest for innovation, children drew upon textual, musical and movement resources from their immediate environment, including materials provided by television and other audiovisual media, and by children from a variety of ethnic groups. While studies in other contexts have revealed culture-specific forms of musical play (Addo, 1995; Campbell, 1991; Harwood, 1992; Merrill-Mirsky, 1988), the Sydney study also showed that children in the focus playground were actively engaged in cross-cultural exchange of games. Perhaps most importantly, the characteristics of the games found in this playground differed

markedly from the perceived 'universal' characteristics which had been promulgated for almost a century in spite of the emergence of post-colonial rhetorics.

However, the study, though extensive, was restricted to a single context, that of a multiethnic school in a large Australian city. A larger comparative study was required in order for the findings to be established as either situation-specific or generalisable to any degree. Although aspects of cross-cultural and media-influenced transmission of games have been reported on a limited basis in other international locations (Curtis, 2000, Doekes & van Doorn-Last, 1993; Harwood, 1994) there has been little research undertaken in this area, either in Australia or internationally.

In particular, while studies of Australian Aboriginal children's play exist (for example Berndt & Berndt, 1952; Berndt & Phillips, 1973; Haagen, 1994; Johns, 1999; Woenne, 1973), there has been no recent research into the musical play of Aboriginal children. Kartomi's (1980, 1981, 1999) studies of Aboriginal children's musical play in remote non-school settings in 1969 show evidence of bicultural influences, including song material transmitted through the media but no further studies in this area have been undertaken. In her summary of Australian children's playlore, Factor (1988) outlined a crucial need for detailed studies of Aboriginal children's play practices in particular communities (both rural and urban) in order to determine the effects of intercultural contact on play but no studies of Aboriginal children's musical play have ensued.

In 2001 I commenced a study of the musical play practices of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children in several contrasting school settings in the vicinity of Tennant Creek, in a remote region of central Australia. The aims of this study were multiple. Firstly, it would enable comparison between the characteristics of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children's playground games in these settings and the characteristics of children's playground games identified in the Sydney study (Marsh, 1997) in relation to transmission, generative practices, musical, linguistic and kinesthetic features and influence of the media and other adult sources. Secondly, results would be used to inform music education practice and to challenge pedagogy which is based on limited and culture-specific assumptions regarding children's learning in music.

However, in initiating this study, I was also mindful of the message of Nyomi (2001), reflected in the recent work of many ethnomusicologists (for example, Feld, 1994), that researchers from affluent western societies have an ethical obligation to work collaboratively with members of less economically powerful communities both to provide a public voice for the culture-bearers of their traditions and to facilitate reciprocal exchange of knowledge which will assist in the preservation and dissemination of cultural traditions within these communities for their own benefit. Therefore, the study also aimed to provide information of value for members of the Aboriginal communities in the selected locations. It was intended that collected game material and information pertaining to game traditions could be used by the Aboriginal Language and Culture Centre in this locality to assist with language and cultural maintenance programs in the schools and by teachers to create culturally appropriate music and language programs. In recording children's use of languages in the games, the study could also help to document factors influencing Aboriginal language shift. Moreover, it was considered that the study might show ways in which Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children negotiate cultural difference in playground settings, such techniques having possible application within the classroom and wider community.

### **The Field Sites**

Ethnographic fieldwork commenced in June, 2001, with video and audio recording of children's play interactions in the playgrounds of selected schools and recording of other significant school events. This was supplemented by unstructured interviews concerning play practices, conducted with children in the playground and with school teachers and other adult community members.

Also recorded were discussions with Aboriginal elders regarding remembered traditional play practices, with the assistance of Aboriginal community language translators where necessary. In addition, field notes were compiled by the researcher as a non-participant observer.

The field sites included schools in two small towns, Tennant Creek and 'Auston' (a pseudonym). These schools were selected for variety in relation to the extent to which Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children are represented in the population; in the languages spoken at home and in the school; in school size and facilities and in relative ease of access of the population to media sources. Tennant Creek was also chosen because of a relationship previously established between the researcher and members of the Aboriginal community associated with the local Aboriginal language and culture centre, through ongoing work on Warumungu culture by affiliated linguists and ethnomusicologists. This association enabled appropriate permission to be obtained from the relevant Aboriginal communities and created some points of initial personal contact.

Tennant Creek, with a population of 3500 people, is the fourth largest settlement in the Northern Territory, the most remote and sparsely populated state of Australia. The town, at the edge of the Tanami Desert, is located on the Stuart Highway which links Alice Springs, the nearest city 511 kilometres to the south, with the city of Darwin, approximately 1000 kilometres to the north of Tennant Creek. Built on land traditionally owned by the Warumungu Aboriginal people, the town developed as a result of white pastoral and mining interests, although tourism is now a significant industry. There are several Aboriginal camps on the edge of the town and many Aboriginal people live within the town itself.

Tennant Creek Primary School is a school of approximately 300 students aged from five to twelve years, with equal numbers of non-Aboriginal students and Aboriginal students from Warumungu and Warlpiri language backgrounds. The non-Aboriginal population of the school is predominantly Anglo-Australian, though there are a small number of children from Thai, Filipino, Greek, Papua New Guinean and other non-Anglo backgrounds. With the exception of the Aboriginal education assistants, all members of the teaching staff are non-Aboriginal. The school is well-resourced and has large and pleasantly landscaped playground areas with modern play equipment and two large sports 'ovals' equipped for football, basketball and other ball games.

Auston, with a population of less than 500, was built to service an army depot during World War II and provides services for nearby cattle stations and travellers traversing the Barkly region of the Northern Territory. It is located on a remote section of the Stuart Highway nearly 300 kilometres north of Tennant Creek (the nearest town of any size), the other principal town of the region, Katherine, being more than 450 kilometres further north. The majority of the population is housed in two Aboriginal camps at either end of the town. Town facilities comprise two petrol stations which also sell provisions, a clinic, a police station, a small hotel and caravan park and the school. Auston school is classed as a community education centre, a school catering for children from preschool to secondary school ages, with almost all students being Aboriginal children of Jingili and Mutpurra language backgrounds. There are about 120 students enrolled in the school, though only half of this number would attend school regularly. There are two Aboriginal and three non-Aboriginal teachers in the school, and each of the classes (except the post-primary class) has an Aboriginal teaching assistant. Though much smaller than Tennant Creek Primary School, the school at Auston is well-established in terms of buildings and equipment and has a huge playground, also with new play equipment, and football, volleyball and basketball areas.

In both Tennant Creek and Auston the traditional languages spoken by Aboriginal people are in decline. School lessons are conducted in English and most of the children of school age speak Aboriginal English (a dialect of English) or, at Auston, Kriol, originally a pidgin language which was developed as a result of colonisation of Aboriginal lands further north and which has now

become a lingua franca among a growing number of Aboriginal people in northern Australia (Walsh & Yallop, 1993). Following European settlement, removal of Aboriginal people from their tribal lands, which have both economic and religious significance, has resulted in social, cultural and spiritual dispossession. While aspects of traditional Aboriginal culture remain, for example in relation to complex kinship systems and forms of related social obligation, language and belief systems are gradually being subsumed by the dominant European culture. As in many isolated rural locations in Australia high levels of unemployment, poverty, poor health, substance abuse and domestic violence present challenges for these communities. For many reasons Aboriginal families in both of these towns travel frequently (for example, to meet family, social and ceremonial obligations or to go hunting or visit outstations on tribal lands). This, in addition to previously described social problems, results in poor school attendance rates by many Aboriginal children.

### **Roles and Expectations**

As attested by Hammersley and Atkinson, a conflict between “the interests of science and the interests of those studied” (1995, p. 275) is one of many dilemmas which confront ethnographers in the field. As I became more familiar with the school situations in which I was conducting my study, it was clear that my carefully constituted research aims were not necessarily congruent with the more immediate daily preoccupations of teachers working in the schools. It is usual for teachers and other adults to place little importance on children’s traditional games because they are seen as trivial and not fulfilling a useful function (Factor, 1988). This “triviality barrier” (Sutton-Smith, 1970) may limit the extent to which adults even notice the games, a phenomenon which was apparent in my previous research site in Sydney. In Tennant Creek and Auston the staff were unfailingly helpful but puzzled by my interest in the games. Partly, this was in response to the peripheral place which they occupied in the daily educational requirements of the school. Although there was a plethora of playground singing games in evidence at Tennant Creek, their place in the life of the school seemed less central than it had been in Sydney.

I began to question the importance of my research, particularly when faced with the hierarchy of educational needs at Auston school. Few of the Aboriginal children at Auston appeared to play singing games, though the playground was a vibrant place, with children spending a large amount of time using play equipment and playing informal games of football and volleyball. Although the school possessed good quality musical equipment and recorded popular music was frequently heard emanating from classrooms, formal music education was not a major feature of the curriculum, being of less immediate concern than literacy, encouragement of regular patterns of school attendance and maintenance of nutrition. Several children shared their games with me but were not interested in doing this on an extended basis, unlike the children at Tennant Creek. It seemed that I was imposing research needs which were entirely inappropriate to this context, where other issues were of much greater import both to the children, the teaching staff and the Aboriginal community. The research agenda appeared to be analogous to a form of colonisation, an imposition of my own ‘story’ on an indigenous school community which was outside of my previous experience and pre-conceived notions of education. That I had worked with adult Aboriginal students in Sydney and had read a great deal about Aboriginal education in no way prepared me for the experience of Aboriginal education in a remote part of the Northern Territory and my research agenda seemed ill fit for this context.

It may be that I was reacting to the common feelings of marginality experienced by ethnographers in the field (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). My previous research study in Sydney had been conducted in a school with which I was very familiar through fulfilling multiple roles as teacher, parent and researcher over a period of 17 years. I was thus able to contextualise observed behaviours and information derived from interviews within a known framework of school life. In contrast, my initial fieldwork period at Tennant Creek and Auston (three weeks) was brief by any

standards, and gave me little time to really establish patterns of school and playground behaviour and complex systems of social interaction. Children in the schools responded to my interest in their games with varying degrees of enthusiasm and guardedness. At Auston, in particular, my novelty value was soon replaced by disinterest on the part of the children.

Alternatively, it might have been that I was dealing with the “crisis of representation” involving “questions concerning cultural authority, representation, power and agency” which have engaged ethnomusicologists in the closing decades of the twentieth century (Barz, 1997, p. 206). In discussing the politics of representation confronting ethnomusicologists’ documentation and dissemination of knowledge pertaining to Aboriginal performance, Marett (1991) recognises that “control of classification systems (of which the documentation systems are examples) brings with it the power to mediate meaning . . . and that the reduction of people’s realities to what can be expressed within our systems annihilates indigenous world views” (p. 45). As Barz states: “It is little wonder that the contemporary ethnomusicologist agonizes when putting pen to paper, doubts the validity of research agenda, questions all forms of authority and representation, and chases shadows in the field” (1997, p. 206). For Marett, partial solutions lie in indigenous people taking control of the technologies of documentation and in non-indigenous researchers “continuing to refine our awareness of the implications that our processes of documentation and analysis hold for the politics of representation” (1991, p. 45).

Faced with the immediacy of fieldwork and less time in which to reflect, my solution was to widen my focus and endeavour to record what was offered which was seemingly meaningful to the children and members of the wider Aboriginal community, regardless of whether it apparently fitted my previous research agenda or not. This strategy seemed to have some immediately positive effects, as illustrated by the following examples.

While I was at Auston, the school held a disco evening which I recorded almost in entirety. My video recording of the school disco was viewed with great enthusiasm by the children, staff and Aboriginal language workers when replayed on the following day and a copy was requested for school use. I was no longer regarded as something of an oddity but as someone who could usefully contribute to school needs in some way. The recording and subsequent interviews relating to it also provided me with considerable insight into the musical preferences of the children, their movement and vocal responses to various popular musical genres and to factors which influence the transmission of music among the local population. Given the data which it provided, I greatly regretted having missed the opportunity to record the school disco at Tennant Creek in a previous week. On that occasion I had tenaciously wandered the playground recording the field data which adhered to my perceived research agenda, instead of recording a more significant school event. At least I had learnt enough from my misgivings to record aspects of the school sports carnival before I left Tennant Creek for Auston. Again, my recording of the sports carnival could provide something of direct use to the school and also added to my understanding of the relationship between the school and community and the part which sport played in this.

In Tennant Creek my main informant regarding traditional Aboriginal forms of play was a Warumungu woman who was a trained linguist and poet. She facilitated and assisted with translation of interviews with Aboriginal elders but also offered to record play songs in Warumungu (from European models) which she had created for children to learn aspects of Warumungu vocabulary and sentence structure. As such songs were non-traditional songs generated from outside of children’s culture they did not fit my original research agenda. However, in recording and transcribing the songs I provided something which was of great value to their composer. Ironically, the musical transcriptions gave her a sense of being a ‘real composer’ and the possibility of their dissemination to the wider community through distribution to the school, archiving at the language centre and possible publication heightened her sense of the worth of her

achievement. The Aboriginal liaison person at the school was also visibly delighted to receive the tapes of these songs (in addition to traditional Warumungu women's songs recorded in Tennant Creek, which I had been given to distribute) for use in educational programs there. From an ethnomusicological point of view, these songs provided examples of the way in which rhythmic features of the original European models were changed when translated into Warumungu, a consideration of some importance in the investigation of intercultural transmission processes.

While strategies of this nature did not wholly solve the problem, they went some way towards assuaging my feelings of post-colonial uncertainty in the worth of my endeavour to the communities in which I worked. In such a short time, there were limits to the amount of material which could be 'collected' and my interpretation of many recordings has only just begun. It is anticipated that interpretations will be assisted by further interactions with members of the school communities in subsequent field trips. Nevertheless, in returning to my initial research agenda, it is possible to indicate some preliminary observations regarding children's song transmission and traditional play in these two locations.

### **Some Preliminary Observations of Song Transmission**

For Aboriginal children in these areas western views of life are disseminated through school, the medium of television and through music commodified in the form of tapes and CDs. Despite the remoteness of their locations, both Tennant Creek and Auston have television reception, although in Auston this is limited to two channels and there is no radio reception. Country and western music is popular with older generations, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. Younger people are more readily susceptible to changes of fashion in popular music, with the adolescents at Auston school currently favouring rap and hip hop genres, partly, it seems, because of an identification with an image of 'black' music styles. CDs and tapes of favourite artists are purchased by Auston students on trips to Tennant Creek and Katherine and then avidly shared with other members of their families and friends. Families at Auston also tune into the popular music program, *Rage*, screened once a week by the ABC, the national broadcaster.

At the Auston school disco, the proceedings were conducted by "Fat Cat", an Aboriginal man who occasionally fulfilled this disc jockey role in the community, and who provided a continuous stream of music, mostly comprising recent or current popular hits. The disco, held in the evening, was a communal event, with parents sitting observing on the edge of the dance floor and children taking turns to dance. Several things were notable during the course of the event. One was the way in which these children, with remarkable style and agility, emulated dance styles from models provided by television viewing. In accordance with the traditions of break dancing transmitted through the medium of television, each child would take a short turn on the dance floor, then return to the edge, to be replaced by another child 'performer'. Another feature was the marked change in response evoked by dance mix tracks, which seemed to energise the whole dance floor. Even more interesting was the sudden breaking out of spontaneous group singing in response to a number of ballad-style songs which had been learnt entirely through a process of mediated listening to television, tape or CD but which galvanised a form of whole group singing which I had not experienced anywhere else in the school context. It was clear that, despite the relative isolation of this community, mediated popular music was a principal source of musical learning for young people, older musical traditions having been displaced along with many other cultural traditions.

At Tennant Creek Primary School, the role of the media in disseminating popular music was also clearly evident. Teachers told me that children enjoyed listening to current popular hit songs as a treat in class and during my fieldwork period the lunchtime disco was attended by the majority of the school population. The influence of television had also permeated the playground, where playground clapping games were played both by non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal children. As in the

Sydney school in which I had conducted my previous study, a well-known game was *Down down baby*, learnt by a number of children from the American children's program *Sesame Street*, broadcast on national television by the ABC network. However, unlike the versions played in Sydney, and in other international locations which I have discussed in previous publications (Marsh, 2001), the Tennant Creek versions were derived from a more recent *Sesame Street* variant of this game, which invoked various *Sesame Street* characters performing different actions, for example: "Down down baby, Elmo shakes his body", performed with an ever-present American accent. This game was played by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children alike, generally in mixed inter-racial groups. Another clapping game, *Apple on a stick*, played by a group of ten year olds, had also been learnt from a children's television show called the *Saddle Club*. In the Tennant Creek playground virtual forms of play had taken on a real existence, transmuted from their original sources thousands of kilometres distant.

There were some other observed similarities in transmission processes between the children at Tennant Creek Primary School and those in the Sydney school. Game transmission and skill development were achieved by observation of and participation in modelled performance of the whole game, facilitated by physical proximity to, and physical contact with other performers. Song acquisition was therefore achieved by aggregative 'catching' of musical, textual and movement formulae within a musical whole. Similarly, in both contexts, improvisation of new texts, music and movements was part of game practice, demonstrating the composition in performance attributes of many orally transmitted forms (Edwards and Sienkowicz, 1990). This was true of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal performers. Cross-cultural transmission was apparent, but the Anglo-Australian culture was dominant.

However, there seemed to be some specific features pertaining to Aboriginal children's transmission of the games. Perhaps the most important factor was the role of kinship in the transmission of playground clapping games. Although there was some observed playing of clapping games between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal friends at Tennant Creek, Aboriginal children frequently cited members of their extended families (most commonly sisters, "cousins" and "aunties", encompassing a wide network of kinship relations), rather than friends, as the source from whom they had learnt games, and as the people with whom they usually played the games. This was especially true of Aboriginal children who lived in the camps at the edge of the town.

Kinship affiliations were linked with another factor, that of the travel patterns of Aboriginal families, to further affect the transmission process. Games were reported by some Aboriginal children at Tennant Creek to have been learnt from cousins during family visits to distant towns, for example Borrooloola, some 700 kilometres north of Tennant Creek. There was therefore a constant source of new game material provided by long distance travel which was a regularly occurring part of life.

At Auston school, where almost all students were Aboriginal, the effects of kinship and travel on game transmission were clearly illustrated. Although the majority of children in the school did not appear to play clapping or singing games of any kind in the playground, a small group of players was eventually discovered. This group comprised three sisters, who had recently migrated from Camooweal (another isolated outback town in the neighbouring state of Queensland), with a lengthy stay in Tennant Creek en route. They played clapping games with each other and one or two children with whom they had formed close friendships, including another girl who had also recently moved to Auston from Wyndham, a coastal town in Western Australia, and a teacher's daughter who had come from Sydney (on the east coast of New South Wales). This small group of children had all learnt the games in schools with non-Aboriginal children. It seems from this, and from traditional game practices reported in interviews with older Aboriginal people, that clapping games have not been part of traditional Aboriginal play in these areas and have been transmitted

cross-culturally. However, the sisters who formed the nucleus of the Auston play group have adopted the games to the extent that they have created entirely new genres themselves.

### **Traditional Aboriginal Play**

Although clapping games appeared not to be represented in traditional Aboriginal play practices of Aboriginal people in central Australia, there was evidence of traditional play songs and rhythmic chants. One game type reported by several older Warumungu women in Tennant Creek was a game of jumping to the full moon. In this game, learnt many years previously when they had been living in the Aboriginal community of Alekarenge, girls jumped rhythmically, while vocally taunting the “sister” or “brother” moon, also rhythmically.

A similar kind of boys’ game involving singing and dancing to the moon was recounted by an old Alyawarre man who had also lived in the vicinity of Alekarenge. This game, like the Warumungu girls’ game, was no longer played, but the song was recorded by an Aboriginal television group, Warlpiri Media, for a children’s program to help maintain the Alyawarre language (Warlpiri Media, 2001). Both the Warumungu moon chant and the Alyawarre moon song were musically different from the traditional adult songs of both of these Aboriginal language groups. Another reported game genre involved a form of ‘counting out’ where the names of totemic animals from the Dreaming (the beginning of time, which is central to the Aboriginal belief system) were chanted in succession, accompanied by a finger play culminating in tickling.

One old Warumungu man retold a children’s story which he had been told as a child. This involved two animals, an emu and a frog, both of which sang songs. Again these songs were perceived to be different from adult songs, though they were sung by adults to children and contained special song language. The story with its accompanying songs was told by adults to children for fun. Through repeated tellings it had remained in the memory of this old man for more than half a century.

### **Preserving and Disseminating Aboriginal Traditions**

Aspects of traditional Aboriginal culture are still remembered and practised in Tennant Creek and, to a lesser extent, Auston, in spite of the social forces which have irrevocably changed the lives of Warumungu, Warlpiri, Jingili and Mutpurra people. Among the older and middle generations of these people there is a strong desire to maintain the culture and the languages through which that culture is expressed. A number of institutions in the Northern Territory provide training programs for indigenous teachers and linguists. The Papulu Apparr-kari Aboriginal Language and Culture Centre at Tennant Creek has provided another mechanism through which members of local Aboriginal communities can collaborate with non-Aboriginal linguists and ethnomusicologists to record and preserve their languages and traditional songs. Some of these songs, recorded on digital equipment, are now produced commercially and are for sale in Tennant Creek and in the wider community.

As a music educator and ethnomusicologist I have been able to participate in this process of learning about culture and assisting in its dissemination. Although I am only at the faltering beginning of the process, copies of my field tapes of traditional songs, games and stories remain in the hands of the Aboriginal people with whom I collaborated and will also be held at the Papulu Apparr-kari Aboriginal Language and Culture Centre and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (AIATSIS) archives. It is anticipated that the digital tapes will be edited and made into CDs and cassette tapes for use in the school Aboriginal language and culture programs run by the Language and Culture centre at Tennant Creek.

I have also recorded and transcribed the new play songs incorporating the Warumungu language created by the Warumungu linguist and writer with the intention of using them in an educational

context. It is clear that television, CDs and cassettes form viable media for transmitting songs among Aboriginal people. The Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA) has used this to advantage in disseminating Aboriginal popular music, some of this in Aboriginal languages. It is hoped that the publication of these traditional songs and stories and specially created songs in language will assist in changing the transmission process from one dominated by the Anglo culture to one which goes both ways.

An anecdote from my field experiences gives me hope that this might occur. I was replaying my video recording of the old man's rendition of the emu and frog story in the library of Tennant Creek Primary School when a class entered the room. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children alike sat in rapt silence as the old man told his story and sang his songs on the television screen. The old man's grandson, a member of the class, also watched and listened, aware that his grandfather's stories, songs and language were being accorded the respect which they deserved from all who were present. In this case, the medium of television, so frequently maligned for the hegemonic delivery of the banalities of the dominant culture, had created a familiar frame through which the cross-cultural power of story and song could be transmitted and received.

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