

Three Capes Track

Welcome to Country Opening Speech, Denman's Cove 21 December 2015

Palawa krakani, takara, kanaplila, krakapaka milaythina nana lumi

Waranta tunapri, tunapri palawa; Pydairerme muna.

Aborigines lived, walked, performed ceremonies, and died on our land here in this place. We acknowledge and remember them, especially the Pydairerme of the Oyster Bay nation who belonged to this territory but who did not survive to tell their story directly.

The Tasman Peninsula is notorious in the history of this island not just for the recent massacre that occurred here but well before that, for the attempted extermination of our people. One of the most shameful campaigns of Tasmania's Frontier Wars was known as the 'Black Line'. That campaign was designed to drive those who remained of our old people in 1830 from all parts of the settled colony onto this Peninsula where they could be rounded up more easily and a nuisance removed to enable the development of the colony in the way that suited the colonisers.

The Frontier Wars of 1826 to 1831 saw the declaration of open warfare, or martial law, and the announcement of the Black Line in 1830. Around 800 Aborigines were killed in that campaign alone. A greater number of our people were killed before the declaration of war by deliberate massacres and by introduced diseases contracted from close contact with the colonisers. The odds were indeed heavily stacked against us. And this is the reason we can give few accounts of the old people who lived their lives in this district before the English invasion.

We do know that the Pydairerme people traded with the Nununi people of Bruny Island in the South East nation. They had a staple diet of shellfish, marine vegetables, plants, small mammals, birds and eggs, kangaroo and wallabies – with not much need to move outside their own resource-rich territory, except perhaps for major ceremonies with their neighbours.

Although the tactics of open warfare have changed, the aims of the Frontier Wars are reminiscent of some of today's public policy. The failure of successive governments to achieve land justice for the original owners and to provide adequate protection for the remaining tangible evidence of our cultural heritage is just as much a measure to achieve our annihilation as were the attempts at physical extermination of earlier days.

And therein lies the reason for the participation of the Aboriginal community in this grand exercise. Excluded as we were from the original planning and decision-making, we have since been encouraged to design the Aboriginal interpretation and installations along the makuminya, the tracks to the Capes. Not only that, but our participation has enabled a few of our community to have first-hand experience of the walks, views, and experiences this development has to offer. We hope many more of our community will also have that opportunity as we have been too long largely disconnected from this area.

The nanalini and liyata at Tiralina announce the atmosphere and beauty of this place. The hills and peaks of Eaglehawk Neck give an indication of what is to come further down the peninsula.

At this most beautiful part of our island home, lutruwita, we have every hope that our participation in this new tourism venture will bring increased opportunities for our community and heightened respect and care for our cultural heritage in this place and throughout the island. Aboriginal ownership and management must surely be around the corner in the best interests of us all.

In wishing success to this venture, we urge much greater recognition of the right of our current community to share in the rights and responsibilities this venture entails.

I will close with a few lines in palawa kani:

Kaparunina putiya lumi
Rraykana putiya lumi
Waranta palawa, lumi: muna
Luwutina mana mapali, lumi: muna
Waranta krakani lumi
Muka, minanya, putiya laykara
Nayri nina-tu

*The Tasmanian tiger is no longer here
The emu is no longer here
We Aborigines are here
Our children are here
We will stay here
Until the seas and the rivers stop flowing.*

Thank you and good luck with this venture.

Heather Sculthorpe
CEO
Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre