

Ko te matou kaiga tenei

Kelsi Tulafono

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of another degree or diploma or a university or institution of higher learning.

Signed 

9th October 2017

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First, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my grandparents; Nana T, Grandad Iuliano, Nana Walters, and Grandad Walters. Without all of you, I would not be where I am today. Thank you all for sharing your time and stories with me.

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Abstract

In 1966, my grandparents and five of their children migrated from Tokelau to New Zealand. They have resided in our family homestead in Māngere East since 1970. *Ko te matou kaiga tenei* is a moving image based project that examines the influence New Zealand culture has on my family's Tokelauan heritage. Through Talanoa, as a research methodology, I examine our family stories, land, experiences and cultural history. The stories are not only for my family and me, but also for other audiences to share an understanding of the Tokelauan culture. Considered through Linda Tuhiwai Smith's decolonization framework, my project utilises claiming, storytelling and celebrates cultural survival; the survival of my family and their Tokelauan protocols, despite being physically away from the land. It is the merging of two cultures and telling a story – an old story, with a new twist.

INTRODUCTION

Coming from a Pacific and Māori background family has always had an important impact on my life. My family are my motivating platform for my art practice. In this thesis, I explore the significance of Talanoa while focusing on my Tokelauan heritage. Through lens based mediums I create moving image artworks that respond to stories and events that happen within my family. I am reclaiming my heritage and positioning my culture within an art context.

In Chapter 1 I lay out the foundations of my video-based research project. Twenty-five indigenous projects is a chapter in renowned Māori academic Linda Tuhiwai Smith's book *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People* that outlines different research methods used in indigenous communities. I focus on three of the twenty-five projects – claiming, storytelling, and celebrating survival – and discuss the relevance they have to my art practice. I explore the methodologies from those research projects to reclaim, reformulate and reconstruct my Tokelauan heritage. Talanoa is a practice of exchange that is significant in Pacific research. I look at Pacific researcher and writer Timote M. Vaoleti text *Talanoa research methodology: a developing position on Pacific research* and examine the influence Talanoa has on New Zealand Pacific peoples lifestyle. In his essay *Celebrating Fourth Cinema*, Māori filmmaker Barry Barclay analyses and compares the influence of camera perspectives of colonisers and Indigenous people in the film industry. The First Cinema is from a white perspective, while the Fourth Cinema is from an Indigenous perspective. Through my art practice, I analyse the impacts of the Fourth Cinema on the representation of my family and Tokelauan heritage.

Atoll People (1970) is a New Zealand National film unit documentary that addresses the concern of overpopulation in Tokelau. It follows the journey of a group of Tokelauan people that migrate to New Zealand under the 1960s-70s Tokelauan Resettlement Scheme¹; my grandparents and their five children are a part of that group. I am the diaspora of one of the atoll people, my father—only seven at the

¹ Tokelau Government. "About Tokelau." <http://www.tokelau.org.nz/About+Us/Culture.html>

time—was amongst the people documented in the documentary film *Atoll People*. This film looks at the Tokelauan people as “the other”, only showing the story from the colonisers perspective. By filming my family, I am taking back control of the camera and sharing our family stories and histories from our perspective, the indigenous perspective.

My artwork is an example of Talanoa expressed through video art practice. I will discuss this in depth with examples of my artwork in Chapter 2. *Long Lost Sons* (2004) is a documentary film, directed by Lotta McVeigh, that follows the journey of the Fa’afoi family as they travel back to their homeland of Tokelau. Edith Amituanai and Leilani Kake are two Aotearoa-based Pacific artists whose art practice I draw inspiration from. In this thesis, I unpack a work from each artist and discuss the connections they have with my art practice.

Post-Military Cinema (2014) is a moving image installation by Puerto Rico based filmmaker Beatriz Santiago Muñoz. In Chapter 3 I analyse her filming techniques and examine the influence of her work and methods on my own art practice. I propose an open invitation to draw in other audiences, so they can have a new or better understanding of the traditions my family and I practice.

1 CHAPTER ONE: DECOLONIZING

1.1 TWENTY-FIVE INDIGENOUS PROJECTS, LINDA TUHIWAI SMITH

Based on struggles around the 1970s, indigenous research explored ideologies of the survival of peoples, cultures and languages; the struggle to become self-determining and the need to take back control of our destinies.² *Twenty-five Indigenous Projects* is a chapter in Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s book *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People*. This chapter outlines different projects that are explored within indigenous communities. Indigenous communities are set to reclaim, reformulate and reconstitute their cultures and languages through these ambitious research projects. The projects engage indigenous researchers and

² Linda Tuhiwai Smith. *Decolonizing methodologies: research and indigenous peoples*. London: Zed, 2012, 143.

communities to focus on notions such as cultural survival, self-determination, healing, restoration and social justice. These research projects and their methods and methodologies are not claimed in Tuhiwai Smith's book to be entirely indigenous, nor created only by indigenous researchers. Some approaches towards these projects emerge from social science methodologies, while others derive directly out of indigenous practices. It is important to understand the difference between a research methodology and a research method, as both aspects are important when the twenty-five projects are explored. A research methodology is a theoretical analysis of the research, indigenous research is often a mix of existing methodological approaches and indigenous practices.³ Following Smith, I have chosen three projects that interest me most and are relevant to my art practice; Claiming, Story Telling and Celebrating Survival. I will break down each of these methods and relate them to my art practice.

1.1.1 CLAIMING:

Due to colonisation, indigenous people have faced problems regarding the respect of their rights and fair treatment. The act of *claiming* has been transitioned into different methodologies used in relation to the 'claiming' and 'reclaiming' of cultural positions. Through research projects indigenous people collect writings of national, tribal and family histories. The reason for these written 'histories' is to establish a legitimacy of the claims being declared. Whom are these 'histories' being written for? One is the formal court or tribunal audience; another being the non-indigenous population; third being the indigenous people. For indigenous people this is a collection of their history, and a tool to share their stories; "They teach both the non-indigenous audience and the new generations of indigenous peoples an official account of their collective story."⁴ Through lens based mediums I am creating a record of my family's history, from an inside perspective.

The film *Atoll People* is shot from the perspective of the New Zealand Government's National Film Unit — the coloniser's eyes — looking into the Tokelauan people and culture. My own family story and footage of the Tokelauan culture of the 1960s are

³ Ibid., 144.

⁴ Ibid., 145.

portrayed from an outsider's perspective. I too have documented through my art practice and through my family heritage the Tokelauan culture as it exists within the New Zealand context today. I am always and already immersed in the culture, which is now positioned within the land of Aotearoa. Through my art practice, I am showing and archiving traditions that my family execute in today's society. Some are older cultural customs that we have adapted from, combining traditional Tokelauan customs with our New Zealand lifestyle.

1.1.2 STORYTELLING:

Storytelling is a significant method used in indigenous research. It is a way to collect shared memories and oral histories. For indigenous people, stories are a way of passing down beliefs and values belonging to a culture. It is a desire that the new generations will treasure these stories and continue to pass them on to future generations; "The story and the storyteller both serve to connect the past with the future, one generation with the other, the land with the people and the people with the story."⁵ Storytelling builds relationships between the story teller and the engaged audiences. There is a sense of truthfulness in sharing these memories with the audiences. Emotions, humour and creativity are shared through these stories. These oral traditions are still a reality in day-to-day indigenous lives. Many cultural stories have reoccurring characters and motifs which are be recognised; "Familiar characters can be invested with the qualities of an individual or can be used to invoke a set of shared understandings and histories."⁶ I am collecting my family stories and creating a family archive of activities and events connected with family gatherings. We are able to look back at these videos, at any time in the near or future, and remember the stories that were shared. These stories are a way for us to remember who we are and where we have come from. It is also a way to document the people in my family while they are alive and we are all together. If one person passes away, there will be a video including them that we can look back to and remember them.

⁵ Ibid., 146.

⁶ Ibid., 146.

1.1.3 CELEBRATING SURVIVAL:

Celebrating survival is a method used to celebrate and practice indigenous peoples cultural and spiritual values, in an attempt at avoiding colonialism. Non-indigenous research documents the demise of indigenous culture and processes the research to gain an understanding of indigenous cultures. These celebrations of indigenous culture can be done in various ways; in story form, music, or an event where communities come together and celebrate collectively. This is a method to keep the cultural and spiritual values alive, continuing on in the newer generations. I am celebrating my family surviving in New Zealand, far from their homeland of Tokelau. I am celebrating the cultural morals we continue to practice every day. I am celebrating the life my family continues to live in New Zealand, branching our homeland and our people. We are expanding our Tokelauan community from our small Pacific atoll, amongst multiple other cultures here in New Zealand.

1.2 TALANOA RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: A DEVELOPING POSITION ON PACIFIC RESEARCH, TIMOTE M. VAIOLETI

Talanoa is natural across the Pacific culture. The term Talanoa is derived from oral traditions – it can be introduced as “a conversation, a talk, an exchange of ideas or thinking, whether formal or informal.”⁷ In the text *Talanoa research methodology: a developing position on Pacific research* Timote M. Vaoleti explores the idea of Talanoa and the influence Pacific indigenous values have on the New Zealand Pacific peoples way of life.

Historically, research and information are gathered using institution approved questionnaires – no personal relationship is formed between the researcher and participant. Talanoa is a method that occurs face to face between the researcher and participant.

Tala: inform, tell, relate and command, as well as to ask or apply.

Noa: any kind, ordinary, nothing in particular, purely imaginary or void.⁸

⁷ Timote M. Vaoleti. "Talanoa: A Tongan Research Methodology and Method." *Waikato Journal of Education*, 2006, 23.

⁸ Ibid.

Through Talanoa a personal relationship has to be created between the researcher and participant for the participant to feel comfortable sharing information. These relationships between researcher and participant may vary based on these factors; age, gender, cultural rank or community background of the researcher. Pacific participants are able to connect more easily with those of Pacific heritage than those who are not of Pacific heritage. This is because there is common ground, a common understanding of beliefs, that are shared between Pacific people. Vaioleti shares his conversation with a school teacher named Peta Mo'ungatonga, who has been involved with Pacific research in New Zealand. Mo'ungatonga explains how Pacific people often are disinterested in surveys. She points out that some New Zealand research approaches are culturally offensive for Pacific peoples.

Outside researchers collect Pacific peoples stories, try to understand the stories and then retell them. How can non-Pacific people share stories that are not their own? This changes the narrative from a Pacific perspective to a second-hand story. The narrative could change slightly every time it is retold and shared to newer audiences. Vaioleti explains that some researchers are driven by commercial, political and personal needs. For Pacific peoples these stories are a method to share their histories, to make them relevant and not forgotten. Pacific researchers create these stories for their own people.

“Talanoa drives Pacific people in Aotearoa/New Zealand, young and old, to hold kava parties, social gatherings and official engagements seven days a week, as they do in their home countries. Talanoa validates the experiences and ways of Pacific people in Aotearoa.⁹”

My family engages with Talanoa through our family gatherings; we gather over food and conversations, generally at my Nana's house. The gathering is not always a special occasion, sometimes we get together just to spend time together. The conversations we have in my videos are free-flowing conversations. The intention of the conversations is not made clear but is dependent on how the Talanoa develops.

⁹ Ibid., 25.

I, the researcher, am already emerged within my family, the participants, and our culture. The stories I am documenting and sharing are for the benefit of my family and myself, they will become a way to trace who we are.

1.3 CELEBRATING FOURTH CINEMA, BARRY BARCLAY

Barry Barclay was a New Zealand filmmaker and writer coined the term “Fourth Cinema”, in relation to Indigenous representation. He is of Ngāti Apa decent, making him “a person of two allegiances: one to the modern nation state of New Zealand; and one to the tribal world of Aotearoa – to the Māori tribal world, the Indigenous world.¹⁰” Barclay’s position states there are two sides of thinking – those of the colonisers, and those of the Indigenous.

In the essay *Celebrating Fourth Cinema* (2003), Barclay proposes that Fourth Cinema is the Indigenous Cinema. This was a concept he created himself, for his own satisfaction when dealing with Indigenous research. The term is in relation to First-Second-Third Cinema framework, “First Cinema being American cinema; Second Cinema Art House cinema; and Third being the cinema of the so-called Third World.¹¹” Barclay uses feature films created by Indigenous people as examples to advocate the idea of Fourth Cinema – six of those exemplar films are by directors and producers abroad, and five feature films by Indigenous filmmakers were completed here in New Zealand. Although that may sound like a large body of work, it is small compared to those in the First, Second and Third cinema. The range of Indigenous cinema work is not big enough to have its own category, which is why Barclay produced the idea of the Fourth Cinema.

Barclay uses a scene from the movie *The Mutiny on the Bounty* (1962) to explore the perspective of the First Cinema and the Fourth Cinema. In this particular scene, Captain Bligh orders Fletcher Christian to go ashore and sleep with an Indigenous woman of rank. The First Cinema is the camera on board the ship, coming from the white male perspective. The Fourth Cinema is the camera ashore, coming from the Indigenous people’s perspective. First Cinema does not take into account the people

¹⁰ Barry Barclay. "Celebrating Fourth Cinema." *Illusions Magazine*, July 2003, 1

¹¹ Ibid.

being misrepresented in the movie. How would the Indigenous communities feel after watching this film? Barclay questions what would happen when the camera is shifted from the people on the boat to the indigenous people ashore. He states that if the white person goes ashore and films, he/she will see no difference. Barclay also explains that if the First Cinema camera shifted from the white male perspective to the Indigenous people it would not work as well “because allowing the camera to operate ashore under God knows whose direction would defeat the purposes of those in control of the First Cinema camera.”¹² Fourth camera is seeing the other side of the story being represented, in this context, seeing the Indigenous people ashore represented authentically.

I am taking control of the camera and documenting from the indigenous perspective. *Atoll People (1970)* was from a First Cinema approach. These colonisers came to Tokelau with their cameras and were in control. They controlled what was recorded, the editing process, and what was shown to the public. Through my art practice I am flipping the camera and taking the approach of Fourth Cinema. I will truly represent my culture and family as authentically as possible. Their stories are also my stories to share.

1.4 THE PEOPLE OF TOKELAU

Tokelau is a group of small coral atolls located in the South Pacific ocean, with an estimated population of 1300 people.¹³ The nation is located roughly 483¹⁴ kilometres north of Samoa, about halfway between New Zealand and Hawai'i.

Tokelau is geographically and culturally made up of four atolls – Atafu, Nukunonu, Fakaofu and Olohega. Due to colonisation, and the selling of the atoll, Olohega is not classed as an atoll in Tokelau anymore. This island is now administered by United States of America (USA) as part of American Samoa and is now known as Swains Island.

¹² Ibid., 8

¹³ Worldometers. "Tokelau Population (LIVE)." Tokelau Population (2017, 2018). <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/tokelau-population/>.

¹⁴ Tokelau Government. "About Tokelau." <http://www.tokelau.org.nz/About Us/About Tokelau.html>.

In 1856 an American named Eli Jennings claimed to have “bought” the atoll Olohega from a British captain named Turnbull, who said he owned the atoll. It is said that Jennings paid 15 shillings per acre and a bottle of gin. Jennings started a community in Olohega and developed the coconut plantations for his own personal benefit. In 1980 Tokelau tried to reclaim Olohega but was threatened by the USA to invoke “Guano Islands Act” (August 18, 1856). The “Guano Islands Act” is a US federal law passed by the US Congress that enables citizens of the US to take possession of unclaimed islands containing guano deposits – this could be any land in the world, as long as it is not claimed by another government and is unoccupied.¹⁵ More than one hundred islands have been claimed under this Act, but most claims have been withdrawn. What happened to those Tokelauan people that were living on Olohega? Eli Jennings helped Peruvian blackbirders¹⁶ depopulate the people of Olohega. In 1863 the blackbirding vessel Rosa Patricia left Apia, Samoa on route to Tokelau. Pitman was Rosa Patricia’s supercargo person, a representative of the ship’s owner who was in charge of the cargo and its sales. Pitman signed Jennings as a recruiter because Jennings knew the Tokelau dialect and was known to and trusted by the people.¹⁷ Pitman offered him \$10 per person or \$1000 for a large number. On February 12th 1863 the crew of the Rosa Patricia arrived at Fakaofu with guns and swords to take people as slaves. They selected sixteen of the strongest men from the small atoll to take on board, to add to the forty Niueans and five from Atiu they already had enslaved.¹⁸ Blackbirding continued across the atolls with a number of Peruvian slave ships; “The two from the west, the Rosa y Carmen and Micaela Miranda, were at Atafu on 18th-19th February and proceeded southward to Nukunonu and Fakaofu, altogether taking 136 people, seventy-six of them women and

¹⁵ National Museum of American History. “The Guano Islands Act.” February 12, 2016.
<http://americanhistory.si.edu/norie-atlas/guano-islands-act>.

¹⁶ Blackbirding: (Noun) (formerly) the act or practice of kidnapping persons, especially Kanakas, and selling them abroad as slaves. Dictionary. “Blackbirding.”
<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/blackbirding>.

¹⁷ Henry Evans Maude. *Slavers in paradise: the Peruvian labour trade in Polynesia, 1862-1864*, Suva, Fiji: University of the South Pacific, 1986, 65.

¹⁸ Ibid.

children.”¹⁹ By 1872 the population of Tokelau was down to eighty people, majority of them old men, women and children.

In 1948, Tokelau was placed under New Zealand’s territorial boundaries, thereby making the Tokelauan people New Zealand citizens. Within this timeframe, it became apparent that Tokelau was suffering from overpopulation. The three atolls could no longer sustain and support their people. The Tokelauan people had the opportunity now to live in New Zealand because they were New Zealand citizens, consequently they needed to decide if they continued to live in their homeland, or migrate to New Zealand. At this point in time, New Zealand was unfamiliar to them as was its strange culture and strange geography. New Zealand was far away from their tropical homeland; these people were migrating to somewhere and something completely unknown.

¹⁹ Antony Hooper & Judith Huntsman. *Tokelau: A Historical Ethnography*. Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawai'i Press 1996.



Figure 1: Screenshot images of *Atoll People* (1970), New Zealand National Film Unit, Directed by Derek Wright²⁰

²⁰ Derek Wright. "Atoll People." New Zealand: New Zealand National Film Unit, 1970. April 1, 2012. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fk1oGFIR_3Q.

1.5 ATOLL PEOPLE (1970)

Atoll People (1970)²¹, [see figure 1], is a New Zealand National Film Unit documentary that addresses the concern of overpopulation in the Pacific nation of Tokelau. This film follows the journey of the Tokelauan people as they decide whether to continue living in their homeland, or to choose to migrate to New Zealand with the assistance of the New Zealand Government.

The documentary film (*Atoll People*), which I will refer to in future as ‘the film’, begins by exploring the day to day lifestyle of the Tokelauan people; people carving canoes out of trees; fishing to provide food for their families; cutting down vegetation to provide shelter for their homes. At this time in Tokelauan history, Tokelauan people consciously adapted their way of life to accommodate their limited resources on the atolls. This Pacific nation may have had less access to Western commodities such as tobacco, gasoline, milk and flour, compared to New Zealand at the time, however, they were living within the means of their environment. This customary lifestyle sustained the people of Tokelau for many generations. The Tokelauan people made use of the local resources from the sea and the land. The sea was central to their lives; providing food and transportation from atoll to atoll, however, it also kept them isolated from other island nations in the Pacific Ocean. A common perspective of the Pacific nations is based on the Pacific people and their relationship to the land. Other cultures whose lives are distanced from the Pacific see it as isolated. The people of the Pacific do not view it that way; “... our ancestors, who had lived in the Pacific for over 2000 years, viewed their world as a ‘sea of islands’, rather than ‘islands in the sea.’²²

Although Tokelau has a small land mass, its culture is rich through the traditional Inati system. This system, which continues today, is a communal fishing and

²¹ Ibid.

²² Epeli, Hau’ofa, Eric Waddell, and Vijay Naidu. *A new Oceania: rediscovering our sea of islands*. Suva, Fiji: School of Social and Economic Development, The University of the South Pacific in association with Beake House, 1993, 7

distribution practice.²³ The Inati system is a way of living for the Tokelau nation. Through this system, resources are shared equally between everyone in the village. This is to avoid waste and enhances food security. Although gender roles are strictly followed in the Tokelauan culture, within the Inati system no one is privileged over another; a family with no males receives an equal amount as those with males. People of all ages, young or old, sick or well, and even visitors are included in this communal sharing. Any catch that has been collected using village equipment must be taken to the village and shared amongst the inati groups.²⁴ The system is based on the principles of:

Concern and Compassion / Alofa
Respect / Fakaaloalo
Equity / Fakahoa lelei
Inclusion / Aofia, Māopoopo
Relationships / Vā Fealoaki²⁵

From 1963 the New Zealand Government assisted the migration of multiple groups of Tokelauan people – the first group being ten young women. These women came to New Zealand to work in hospitals and hostels in January 1963, under the New Zealand Government migrant workers scheme.²⁶ From 1963 to 1982 the government also offered scholarships that helped 186 students to study in New Zealand.²⁷ There was no set scheme in place for migrants at that time, but unmarried people were offered assistance on a trial basis. From the mid-1960s overpopulation became an apparent problem in Tokelau, which caused the New Zealand government to expand the assistance of migration. This expansion was predominantly directed towards

²³ "SPC Women in Fisheries Information Bulletin #14 – September 2004." Pacific Community. <http://www.spc.int/coastfish/en/publications/bulletins/women-in-fisheries.html>.

²⁴ Antony Hooper & Judith Huntsman. Tokelau: A Historical Ethnography. Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawai'i Press 1996, 77

²⁵ Simeti Iulio. Sourced from Pasifika Passports: "Know your backyard" , New Zealand Ministry of Education.

²⁶ Heritage Te Manatu Taonga. "1. – Tokelauans – Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand." Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand – Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand. January 29, 2016. <https://teara.govt.nz/en/tokelauans/page-1>.

²⁷ Ibid.

family groups. During this time the population of Tokelau was approximately 1,900²⁸ people, which does not seem like a lot of people, however, given that Tokelau has such a small land mass the population was alarmingly high. Because of the overpopulation, Tokelauan people were open to consider alternative measures that were unknown to them. This was evidenced by the narrator in the film; “There’s no lack of people wanting to go to New Zealand, but few have any conception of what they’re going to, nor realise the great changes and adjustments they’ll have to make in their own world.”²⁹ Some of these Tokelauan people had no idea what was beyond the reef but were choosing to head into the unknown for a better living situation.

The film *Atoll People* (1970) also follows the journey of a group of Tokelauan people migrating to New Zealand. Seventy migrants were assisted to New Zealand under the New Zealand Government’s Resettlement Scheme, which was formalised in 1966. By 1976 the scheme was suspended as the population numbers became less of a concern. The migrants had to work in hospitals and the forest industry to pay back the long-term basis loan, which was the resettlement grant.³⁰ In the late 1960s, Taupō and Rotorua became the new home for migrant Tokelauan families. This was a significant cultural shift for the Tokelauan people, many of the everyday things needed to be explained. For most of the people, it was their first time seeing running tap water, televisions, telephones and supermarkets. This was a new experience for the Tokelauan people as they adapted their usual way of living in a new environment.

My grandparents and their five children, my father being one of the children, were one of the five families assisted by the New Zealand government scheme, and as a result appear in the film *Atoll People*. Although this film is shot from an outsider perspective, I still feel privileged to have the footage as a visual archive, a family taonga, of my family’s journey to New Zealand.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Transcript from *Atoll People* (1970): Derek Wright. “Atoll People.” New Zealand: New Zealand National Film Unit, 1970. April 1, 2012. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fk1oGFIR_3Q.

³⁰ Heritage Te Manatu Taonga. “A New Home, Central North Island.” Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand – Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand. September 15, 2017. <https://teara.govt.nz/en/photograph/2258/a-new-home-central-north-island>.

1.6 THE SHARING OF OUR STORY

Leading up to 2016 my family were organising how we would celebrate the 50th anniversary of our family migrating to New Zealand. This was a remarkable milestone and I wanted to explore and document the lead-up to this celebration. I always knew where our family came from, but not how or why they came to New Zealand.

I first watched the film *Atoll People* in early 2016. I knew it existed, as I saw it posted on an online social media site Facebook and my father had spoken about it before, but I had never given it any attention. I finally decided to watch it, knowing that this anniversary was coming up. I was very surprised and happy that there was this footage of my family – not many people have aspects of their family's history documented in this way by professional film-makers. This film is something my family and I can return to at any time. This film was more meaningful to me because it was about my family; my grandparents, my father and his siblings. I never met my grandfather, as he passed away before I was born, but I can see him by revisiting this film. My father was only seven years old when they migrated. I can only imagine what it must have been like to be familiar with the place you're growing up in, and then move to somewhere unknown.

My family had to face a change in living habits – from being surrounded by water, to having water coming straight out of a tap. They came from a place where resources were gathered and shared equally amongst everyone, but in New Zealand they needed to understand and get used to a monetary system. When my family first arrived in New Zealand they were moved to a small inland village Rotoehu, located northeast of Rotorua. My grandfather worked in the forestry industry for four years before he moved our family to Māngere East in 1970. To this day, my grandmother still lives in this house, now our family home. All of us children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren grew up around this house and will continue to do so as our family grows.

I feel it is important, especially in relation to my art practice, to record who we are as a family and the things we do together. I get asked “what do you take photos and videos of?” and the answer is simple – my family. Coming from such a large family I have always been surrounded by all of my siblings, cousins, aunties and uncles since

I can remember. I am thankful that our family still have our family homestead, my grandmother's house. Some of my earliest memories were at that house; sleepovers in the lounge with all the mattresses on the floor like a marae, running around the backyard and hiding in the treehouse. I point the camera at the simple things we do as a family, things we may take for granted. Not everyone will experience what we do as a family; such as eeling in the backyard, or just hanging out with all the family. I am able to recognise these small, but important, exchanges and document them.

I have started a collection of family stories and activities that can be visited at any time – for example, family home videos. Some videos are filled with people and heavy conversations, while others are mundane and simple. There is a recurrence of family members and different interior shots running through my art practice – making people who are familiar with my practice feel like they are a part of my family. I am interested in the sharing of personal narrative and heritage within a public domain; how will these works be viewed by non-family members? Through my art practice, I am trying to build connections between my family and heritage, and different audiences of the public. I am attempting to create my own personal ethnographic film, from within the Tokelauan culture. My art practice is not like the *Atoll People* film, where the camera was looking into the Tokelauan people, from an external perspective.

“Indigenous filmmakers and actors revisit, contribute to, borrow from, critique, and reconfigure ethnography film conventions, while at the same time operating within and stretching the boundaries created by these conventions.³¹”

I look at *Atoll People* film as inspiration to create my own ethnography like film, one where the indigenous people are in control of what we show. This is an act of reclaiming, and creating our own representation as Tokelauan people. I am already immersed within the Tokelauan culture and now choosing to flip the camera to see

³¹ Michelle H Raheja. *Reservation reelism: redfacing, visual sovereignty, and representations of Native Americans in film*. Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 2011. 193.

what is surrounding me. I am able to recognise important transactions from a Tokelauan perspective, which may not seem important to other audiences.

I applied for ethics approval for this research project to the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC). This application was approved on the 15th May 2017 and has been approved for three years until 15 May 2020. This application was for the safety of myself and the participants in my research project, which are all family members. Information sheets outlining the research project were given out to family members to invite them to participate in this research project. Consent and release forms needed to be signed before any filming happened.

2 CHAPTER TWO: TALANOA

2.1 LONG LOST SONS (2004)

*Long Lost Sons (2004)*³² is a New Zealand Television Archive documentary film that follows the journey of the Fa'afoi family back to their homeland of Tokelau. Brothers, Jason and Kris, had never visited Tokelau before. They are classed as Tokelauan through their heritage but still felt a disconnection from the culture as they do not speak the language and have never been 'home'.

Their parents, Amosa and Metita Fa'afoi, were born and raised in Tokelau before they migrated to New Zealand. Amosa was one of the top students to be given a scholarship to study in New Zealand, being one of the first people to leave the island. He was only twelve years old when he left. He was afraid to leave his family and homeland, everything that was familiar to him. The furthest Amosa had been from the island, prior to moving to New Zealand, was about ten minutes' travel by canoe. Metita was one of the young girls shown in *Atoll People (1970)* and migrated to New Zealand through the Resettlement Scheme. She had no idea she was moving until her name was called out from the resettlement list. Metita did not want to leave Tokelau, but her father persuaded her to go and look toward her future. She was only

³² Lotta McVeigh. "Long Lost Sons." NZ On Screen. May 3, 2004. <https://www.nzonscreen.com/title/long-lost-sons-2004/overview>.

sixteen at the time. Metita moved to Wellington, where she later met Amosa. Until this film, neither of them had been back to their Pacific homeland,.

Amosa and Metita were located in Christchurch with their family. They contemplated packing up and moving to Wellington, closer to one of the largest Tokelauan communities in New Zealand. This would have been an opportunity for their children to experience the Tokelauan culture and language. In the film Kris questions, *“Why would you, a Tokelauan who has not been living at home for at least two decades, not want to live amongst the community where all those people are?”*³³ Amosa explains that as parents they wanted to provide an environment where their children could express being New Zealand Tokelauns, but also a place for them to connect their Tokelauan heritage to their people. Jason and Kris explain their disconnection from the culture by saying *“We are just ordinary Kiwi boys. We are not white ... but we are not Tokelauan so it’s really weird aye.”*³⁴

In this film Jason, Kris and their younger sister Maria take their parents back to Tokelau. This was not only a journey for Amosa and Metita as they return to their homeland but also for their children as they saw where they had come from. Jason, Kris and Maria experienced island life, away from what they are used to in New Zealand. They were going into the unknown space, exactly how their parents must have felt when they migrated to New Zealand. The family visited Amosa’s family home, that was now empty and unoccupied. They visited Metita’s family home, where her mother still lived. This was an emotional journey for everyone, as old and new connections to Tokelau were being formed.

2.2 EDITH AMITUANAI AND LEILANI KAKE

Edith Amituanai is a New Zealand based Samoan artist. Through a documentary style approach, she explores her interest with people and their stories. *The End of My Driveway (2011-2012)*³⁵ is a series of photographs she took as school children

³³ Transcript from Long Lost Sons (2004) – Lotta McVeigh. “Long Lost Sons.” NZ On Screen. May 3, 2004. <https://www.nzonscreen.com/title/long-lost-sons-2004/overview>.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Edith Amituanai. The End of My Driveway 2011 - 2012. <http://www.edithamituanai.com/The-End-Of-My-Driveway-2011-2012>.

walked to or from school, passing by her West Auckland home. She is interested in how people spent this time period, that 'me' time where they only have to focus on getting from point A to point B – similar to catching the train from home to university. This is a shared experience but can be spent differently. Some of the children walked passed talking with friends, while others were walking alone. Some of the children noticed the camera, while others were completely oblivious. Over the last year, Amituanai has turned the lens to the Ranui community and started to document the different people and events unfolding there. She shares some of these photographs on her Instagram page, and some images were showcased in the Urbanesia 2016 festival. There are multiple photographs showing young people with sirens attached to their bikes, and school children hanging out after school at the local park. Amituanai is interested in sharing the voices of people who are not being shared. In some instances, she gives the people her camera for them to document what they are interested in. This is relatable to my art practice as I am collecting my family stories to share. I am giving each of my family members a voice, enabling them to share the stories they feel are not being heard. I am sharing the experiences of our family, showing how important and significant they are.

Leilani Kake is an artist of Ngāpuhi, Tainui and Manihiki decent. Through video installation practice, she explores her ancestry and identity. In 2004 Kake was documenting protesters taking part in the landmark foreshore and seabed hikoī.³⁶ One of those protesters was her father, Richard Kake, who was a strong advocate for his iwi (Ngāpuhi). Kake adjusted her camera perspective and started to document her father's socio-political journey. This journey was a way for Kake to learn more about her father and understand why his advocacy role was important to him. *Tino Rangatiranga* followed the journey of Richard Kake, the work started with him receiving his Tā Moko and ends with him at his family marae where he was laid to rest. This work was about Kake celebrating the life of her father, viewers were invited into a sacred space of love, loss and celebration. She explains in an interview how this work was to educate non-Māori people about Māori life and culture.³⁷ She

³⁶ Hīkoi: Māori translation for step, stride, march, walk.

³⁷ Leilani Kake. Tino Rangatira Tanga. Radio New Zealand. April 03, 2010.

<http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/artsonSunday/audio/2257867/leilani-kake-tino-rangatira-tanga>.

thought this work would only engage Māori audiences, but saw that non-Māori audiences appreciated and began to understand the culture differently. I am collecting these stories to preserve the people in them and the history they carry. Likewise, my work opens an invitation for non-Tokelauan audiences to understand some of our cultural habits and rituals as they unfold within my videos. Coming from a minority group in the Pacific, not many people are aware of Tokelauan culture and its geographical whereabouts. I am hoping through the sharing of this cultural knowledge that my audience will understand more about the Tokelauan people.

2.3 “DO YOU REMEMBER ANYTHING FROM WHEN YOU FIRST CAME FROM TOKE?” (2017)



Figure 2: Kelsi Tulafono, *“Do you remember anything from when you first came from Toke?”* (2017), Single channel video. 6 min 36 sec

Talanoa is an exchange between people; it could be that of objects, or verbal conversations. *“Do you remember anything from when you first came from Toke?”*,

[see figure 2], is a moving image work documenting my father and myself engaging in Talanoa. As we sit on the backdoor step of our house, I draw upon Dad's recollection of what it was like for him to migrate from Tokelau to New Zealand. He turns 58 later this year in December and was only 7 years old when he migrated to New Zealand. I was not sure what he would be able to remember, if he would be able to remember anything, as he was still young. He shared things like living next door to the Catholic church, the meeting house and gathering water every morning from the well to wash before going to school.

In 2014 my dad returned back to Tokelau for the first time since 1987. In this moving image work, we talked about landmarks and buildings in Tokelau shown in the Atoll People film. He tried to remember back to his trip in 2014 and what buildings still remained in Tokelau. My dad was relying on these newer memories to create connections to older memories. He is retracing his journey, using his memories as a guide – much like how our ancestors used the stars in the sky to guide their journey.

This is not a conversation I have had with my father before. We have never sat down to talk about his experiences of living in Tokelau and migrating to New Zealand. I am happy knowing there is footage that will continue on after my father passes away. If I ever need to remember what his life was like before he migrated, I have some of the information right at my fingertips. I am collecting and making the current stories easily accessible for me and my family. Much like Leilani Kake, these works I make with my father will always be there for me to look back on. I will remember what his voice sounds like. I will remember the stories he shared with me. I will remember the experiences we shared together.

2.4 OPEN INVITATION

My art practice is an open invitation for the audience to observe the rituals and family life of a Tokelauan family now living in New Zealand. Although we are not physically present in our homeland, we still connect with Tokelauan traditions through food, attachment to and care of the land, cultural practices and a wide range of family members. Things such as traditions and language can change with influence from other cultures – so my family has somewhat adapted to the New Zealand way of life while still keeping their Tokelauan morals strong. These types of values are passed

on between generations – from when my grandparents first migrated, to my father and his siblings and on to me, my siblings and all of my cousins today.

“Here is where consciousness transforms from an inside longing for meaning, into an outward expression of relevance.”³⁸

I believe being from a small nation, where few people know what or where it is, makes my work even more significant. It shows communities that the Tokelauan culture is similar to other Pacific cultures, but still different in small but significant ways. I am privileged to be the one who documents what our family does together, the stories and jokes being shared between us. I am also proud to show non-Tokelauan people what it's like within my family and culture. These traditions and values of the Tokelauan culture must continue to be lived, experienced and appreciated. They must not only be confined to the white walls of a gallery. This continuation can be done through family gatherings and practices. Acknowledging practices as time goes on, continues to give them life.

Something I have faced in my art practice is how my work is received by people external to my family or friendship groups. It has sometimes been misunderstood or not valued within its appropriate context. My artwork is about personal experiences contextualised within cultural practices, habits and protocols embedded in the traditions of my family, both here in New Zealand and across to my ancestors in Tokelau.

“Intervening is thus directed at changing institutions that deal with indigenous peoples, and not at changing indigenous peoples to fit the structures.”³⁹

In the past, I have had people question how my moving image artworks that share family stories fit within an art context. Although this is not the conversation I wanted around my work, it made me realise that not everybody will interact with my work how

³⁸ Taiarahia Black. Hineihaea Murphy, Carol Buchanan, Whitney Nuku, and Ben Ngaia. Enhancing mātauranga Māori and global indigenous knowledge. Wellington, New Zealand: NZQA, 2014, 153

³⁹ Linda Tuhiwai Smith. *Decolonizing methodologies: research and indigenous peoples*. London: Zed, 2012. PG 148

it is intended to be viewed. However, people can walk away from my work knowing that such things exist. Audiences are given an opportunity to view aspects of what it is like within a Tokelauan family living in New Zealand. I am creating a platform for our stories to be heard and shared on a larger scale, from my grandmother's living room to public spaces. I want my work to be contextualised outside of a white cube space, in a community where they can experience the work.

Regarding the politics of difference Linda Tuhiwai Smith says, "the constant need to justify difference is experienced by many other communities whose initiatives are about changing things on a holistic basis rather than endorsing the individualized programme emphasis of government models".⁴⁰ Some audiences lack of awareness in relation to the Tokelauan culture does not make it any less important.

Does it matter how people outside of my family or friendship group react to my work? I do not make the work for them. I make the work for myself, my family, my ancestors – they may have passed away, but they are still spiritually present and looking over me. I am representing everybody in my family. I am turning our verbal stories regarding our family activities into visual stories, archiving them for future generations to look back on and think "oh I remember this!"

⁴⁰ Ibid., 155

2.5 “WHY DID YOU GUYS FEEL LIKE EELING ANYWAYS?” (2017)

Figure 3: Kelsi Tulafono, “*Why did you guys feel like eeling anyways?*” (2017), Single channel video. 17 min 03 sec

Through a lens-based medium, I focus on shared activities unfolding within my family. This is a method used to archive the significant practices we share. It is also an opportunity to share this knowledge and practice with other audiences, outside of my family.

“Why did you guys feel like eeling anyways?” (2017), [see figure 3], is a moving-image work capturing my two cousins Conrad and Jonti, and myself catching eels (tuna) down by the creek. The creek is part of Tamaki Estuary and runs through the backyard of our house in Māngere East. My family have been eeling together for as long as I can remember. Some of my earliest childhood memories are of our family catching eels in this creek, or using the creek as a shortcut to get to the local dairy through the property behind our house.



Figure 4: Kelsi Tulafono, *"Why did you guys feel like eeling anyways?"* (2017), Single channel installation. 17 min 03 sec

The creek operates as a transitional space, a threshold, between home and the outside world, while also drawing upon the memory of island life and fishing. Most things I do in my art practice are in memory of the things I did in my childhood. Sometimes my work refers directly to an activity as in the eeling video, and sometimes I involve memories of childhood through installation, [see figure 4]. For example, I am presenting my videos on a low mounted television screen, with a marae style cushion on the floor for the viewers to sit on while they watch my work. This draws upon the memories of my cousins and I crowded in my grandmother's lounge, watching cartoons early on a Saturday morning. This is a shared time and activity between us – much like us going eeling together in my backyard.

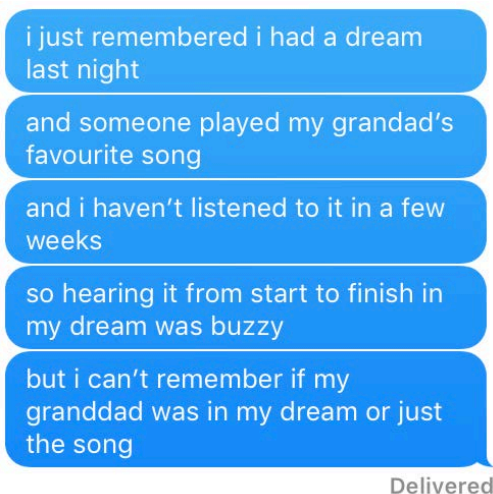


Figure 5: Kelsi Tulafono, *"Why did you guys feel like eeling anyways?"* (2017), Text print, 105x148mm

Alongside the moving image I had a written text work, [see figure 5]. The text was printed on an A4 piece of paper, in a single column on the left-hand side of the paper. Last December my grandad, my mum's father, passed away. Through this text work, I express the feeling of grief I felt after losing someone close and important to me. The text had a screenshot of text messages, where I talk about hearing my grandad's favourite song in my dream. I never knew the song prior to the funeral, but now all I want to do is listen to it. I point out that everyone deals with grief differently, and that my family is my coping mechanism. We do not have to be doing anything significant, just being there for each other and spending time together fills the void. I am using the text to talk about mourning in a sense, where I am not addressing the issues but talking about family being together. This text complimented the moving image as it shows one of the shared experiences between my family and I. Fishing for eels is a time to forget things that are keeping us down or holding us back. It is a time to enjoy being together. It is these experiences that we share together that become the most important.

This year I was nominated for the 2017 Glaister Ennor Graduate Art Awards and presented the work *"Why did you guys feel like eeling anyways?"* (Without the text work). Art institutions nominated four graduates who had completed either their Honours or Masters degrees in 2016. These applicants were a part of the awards exhibition that was held at Sanderson Art Gallery from 13th June – 18th June. Although I walked away with no prize, I am thankful to have been given the opportunity for me to view how my work operates within a dealer gallery context, which offered a new space for the work. The Sanderson Art Gallery is located in

Newmarket, which is on the other side of town from my South Auckland home. I brought a snippet of my family and South Auckland into this gallery space and created new conversations with new audiences. It was interesting working within this “new space”, where a primarily Pacific culture (my family and my work) meets a “different” culture (the Newmarket art community).

“Why did you guys feel like eeling anyways?” (2017) was presented exactly how I initially installed it, with the television screen mounted low and a large square cushion in front for viewers to sit on. During the opening night of the awards, I did not see one person attempt to sit down on the cushion to view the work. This made me question how different this work would be interacted with if shown at Fresh Gallery in Otara. It is as if there is a silent acknowledgment or certain tropes that open up an interaction of the work with the audience within a Pacific environment. In these instances there is more of a bodily engaged culture experiencing the works and making use of familiar viewing or sitting accommodations.

2.6 “HAVE YOU HAD KINAS BEFORE?” (2017)



Figure 6: Kelsi Tulafono, *“Have you had kinas before?”* (2017), Single channel video, 10 min 47 sec

"Have you had kinas before?" (2017) is a moving image work, [see figure 6], showing talanoa between my cousin Leon, my nephew Hayden and myself while we eat kina.⁴¹ We talk amongst ourselves, and also to people outside of the frame. Music is playing in the background, setting a domestic like scene. There is a mix of the English and the Tokelauan languages being spoken in small sections of this video. The background is filled with trees and different plantations. If viewers had seen *"Why did you guys feel like eeling anyways?"* prior to this work they will be able to make the connection that both videos were from the same place – my backyard. We walk in and out of the frame as we choose – not restricting ourselves to stay in the frame all of the time. Other people walk passed the camera, showing that there is other activities taking place outside of the frame – what viewers are able to see is just a portion of what is happening.

The composition of the camera insinuates that the eating of the kina is a performance; as the table we are situated at is directly in front of the camera. The moving image starts with the tray of kina on top of the table, and then I walk into the space. This gesture acts as an activation, a starting point for the performance. Although this was not my intention when creating this work, I was interested in how this performance trope could be further explored.

⁴¹ Kina: sea urchin endemic to New Zealand

3 CHAPTER THREE: WAY OF MAKING (REFRAMING)

3.1 BEATRIZ SANTIAGO MUÑOZ: THEIR MOVEMENTS RETAIN THE LIGHT OF THE SUN



Figure 7: Beatriz Santiago Muñoz, *Post-Military Cinema* (2014), HD projection installation, 10 min 52 sec. Photo: Emily Cloete and Tom Hackshaw. Date Accessed: May 2017.

The work of Beatriz Santiago Muñoz draws upon interaction with people she is familiar with and memories of different events happening within certain spaces. I have found her approach inspiring.

Post-Military Cinema (2014)⁴², [see figure 7], is a moving-image by filmmaker Beatriz Santiago Muñoz. Her art practice uses observation and documentary conventions to explore notions of labour, political transformation, and ideas of recognition – the recognition of daily work, collectively and individually, and different ways of knowing and imagining places. Santiago Muñoz creates work with people she knows, in spaces that have some sort of personal connection to the people or the artist herself.

⁴² Beatriz Santiago Muñoz. Post-military cinema. 2014. <http://fabricainutil.com/index.php/project/post-military-cinema/>.

Post-Military Cinema (2014) is a wall projection installation that was shown at ST PAUL Street Gallery, AUT, as a part of the exhibition Beatriz Santiago Muñoz: Their Movements Retain the Light of the Sun. This moving image work explores a cinema in Ceiba, Puerto Rico, which was formerly part of the Roosevelt Roads US Naval Base, and the forest that surrounds the cinema. The base was established in 1944 during the Second World War and provided housing and employment to hundreds of military personnel and their families. In 2004 the base was decommissioned and relocated to Florida, and now the cinema is left unoccupied and is slowly being submerged by the regrowing forest. In this work of Muñoz', we can hear the rustling of the trees and leaves in the forest, as well as the buzzing of bees. Viewers witness a beekeeper using a bee smoker to calm honey bees in a nearby space.

One afternoon while sitting in ST PAUL St Gallery One, I analysed the different types of camera angles and duration of frames of *Post-Military Cinema* (2014). What sounds can I hear? I can hear the rustling of the tree's and leaves in the forest. I can hear the chirping of birds. I can hear the buzzing of bees. What are the close up's focusing on? I can see a blue chair. I can see the door to the cinema. I can see the plants along the wall of the cinema. What is the sunlight letting us see? The sunlight is using the cinema to create a pinhole camera, which is reactivating the cinema as a viewing space. I can see the door of the cinema. I can see a shadow of a person walking past the door.

I became interested in the different documentary conventions used throughout this moving image work – wide angle shots, close up shots and hand-held camera sequences. The constant shift between different camera methods invites viewers to analyse what exactly they are looking at, and then they are thrown off their bearings as the scene changes. These different frames allow snippets of the space, while still leaving a space of negotiation regarding what else could be present in the space/time of the situation. I aimed to focus on the form of this moving image work and apply these methods to my own personal art practice.

3.2 DOWN BY THE CREEK (2017)

Down by the creek (2017) is a series of moving image works that I created in response to Beatriz Santiago Muñoz work *Post-Military Cinema* (2014). In my art practice, my method of filming is a standard front on, locked off shot. I revisited the creek in my backyard and created moving images that encounter the space without anyone present or any activity unfolding within the space. This series was a personal exploration of re-familiarising myself with my creek and bringing the site to the forefront. In these works, I use the lens to investigate what I can see and what I can hear – re-familiarising myself with the space.



Figure 8: Kelsi Tulafono, *Up the creek* (2017), Single channel video, 6 min 23 sec

1. *Up the creek*

You can hear multiple birds chirping; a car alarm sounding off; an aeroplane flying overhead; the sound of cars passing; someone scrapping a dish – a range of different background noises. You can see the bright green plants surrounding the creek; a couple of garages poking out from behind the plants; the flow of the water upstream; the flax gently swaying and the clouds passing by the sun. There is no visual evidence of where this place is, or of people around except for the sound. This moving image, titled *Up the creek*, [see figure 8], is an exploration of work that takes a break from my artworks involving family members and activity. It is acting as a breather, or an interval, from my usual mode of work.



Figure 9: Kelsi Tulafono, *Down by the creek – The movement of eels* (2017), Single channel video, 7 min 51 sec

2. *The movement of eels*

This moving image is a close up of the creek focusing on the movement of the eels, [see figure 9]. Much like the *Up the creek* moving image there is no people involved – all that is heard is the sounds of nature; birds chirping, leaves rustling and the sound of the Tuna moving in the water. There is a soothing feeling of the work as a number of Tuna gracefully swim up the stream, which is across the screen. The surrounding foliage boxes the eels in and creates a frame (around the creek) within the frame (of the camera lens). I re-filmed this moving image, in better weather conditions, and presented it alongside Natalie Robertson's solo exhibition *HEI WAI MOU! HE WAI MAU!* This exhibition was held at the Māngere Arts Centre from July 8th to September 2nd 2017, [see figure 10]. Natalie Robertson is a photography and video-based artist of Ngāti Porou and Clann Dhònnchaidh decent. Through this exhibition, Robertson emphasises the significance of the mauri⁴³ of Aotearoa streams and rivers. She focuses on the Waiapu River in East Cape and the Tararata Creek in Māngere.

⁴³ Mauri: life principal, life source, vital essence, special nature. [www.vo2.co.nz.](http://www.vo2.co.nz/) "MāoriDictionary." Mauri - Māori Dictionary.

<http://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoanWords=&keywords=mauri>.

Down by the creek created a conversation alongside one of Robertson's works that documented Kanae Raukura (grey mullet) swimming.



Figure 10: Kelsi Tulafono, *Down by the creek – the movement of eels* (2017), Single channel installation, 11 min 10 sec

Down by the creek was contextualised through this artist statement;

Down by the creek is a part of an ongoing project called Ko to matou whanau tenei // Ko te matou kaiga tenei that explores narratives of food, land and culture. This work examines Tuna, (the Māori translation for eel), in the creek that runs through the backyard of my home in Māngere East. The movement of the Tuna through the stream serves as a trope as I retrace and reclaims her Tokelauan and Māori heritage through lens-based mediums.

- Artist Statement for Māngere Arts Centre

3.3 DOWN 113 (2017)

Talk Week is a Visual Arts event at AUT where guest artists, writers, critics and curators are invited to participate in critiques groups. The groups are mixed with

students from third year of the Bachelor of Visual Arts, Honours, Masters and PhD levels. This is an opportunity for students to receive feedback on their practice from a collection of people within the broader art community, as well as making connections with lecturers and students within the Art and Design community at AUT.

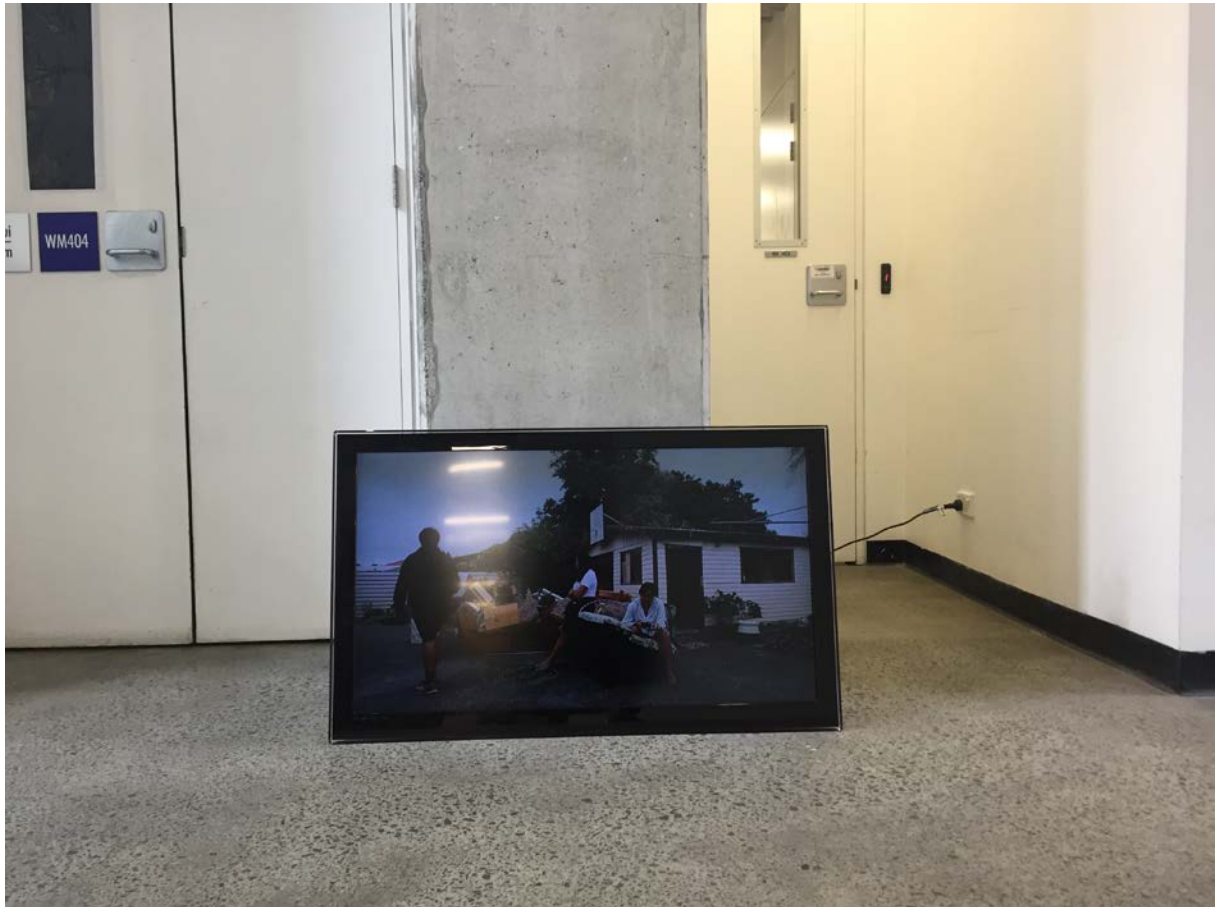


Figure 11: Kelsi Tulafono, *Down 113 (2017)*, Single channel installation, 8 min 5 sec

My talk week installation, titled *Down 113 (2017)*, consisted of two elements – one moving image presented on a 42-inch LED screen in the level four foyer and a floor to ceiling scale projection of another moving image inside room 404.⁴⁴ Both moving image works were recorded at my Nana's house. Within the space, I created a small, intimate interaction between the audience and my work. Spread across the floor inside the exhibiting room were a number of different sized cushions, bean bags and seats for the audience. With this installation, I was experimenting with interior and exterior zones, and how it impacts the viewing of the work. The biggest influence on my art practice is my family, and I wanted to show the more real/raw side of my family – the more humorous side. I am showing this different side of the family to give

⁴⁴ 404: A darkened exhibiting space, situated directly off of the level four foyer in WM block at AUT.

a further insight into who we are – a different facet of a familiar conversation. The audience for my talk week critique included some people who are familiar with my art practice and some of them recognised the recurring spaces and people across my different moving image works. This feedback was important to my art practice as I am trying to share my culture and my family with different audiences. It showed that my work has had an impact on these viewers, that aspects of my work reside in their memories.

For *Down 113*, I placed the 42-inch screen outside of the room creating a gesture – an invitation, [see figure 11]. This not only posed as an invitation into the installation but also an invitation into the family. I wanted viewers to feel welcome into the space. In this moving image work, viewers see my cousins and me standing around in my Nana's backyard, talking amongst ourselves. To the right of the screen is a garage, and a whole lot of furniture is sitting in front of it. It looks as if my cousins and I are spending the afternoon moving and cleaning out the garage. This is emphasised throughout the video as different people bring objects out and add them to the pile. Also, people pick objects up from the pile and play around with them; for example, the broken hula-hoop is picked up and used as a makeshift taiaha.⁴⁵ There is a slight performative motion to the moving image when my cousin Mele carries a glass frame out of the garage, across the screen, and back into the centre where she puts it against the couch. This also occurs when my cousin Dee acknowledges the camera multiple times by staring into the lens and speaking. This shows they are aware of the camera being there and sometimes acknowledging it. As the moving image proceeds we begin to ignore the presence of the camera, and carry on as if it is not there. There is no audio track with this video, which makes the focus on gestures and body language crucial.

⁴⁵ Taiaha: (noun) long wooden weapon - of hard wood with one end carved and often decorated with dogs' hair.
<https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoanWords=&keywords=Taiaha>



Figure 12: Kelsi Tulafono, *Down 113* (2017), Single projection installation, 3 min 4 sec

The floor to ceiling projection also created an invitation itself; because of the large scale, in such a small space, viewers become immersed in the space of the moving image work. The projection, [see figure 12], was a montage of videos; first video being a video blog, as Dee and I walk through my Nana's house and show the different rooms; second video showing everyone crowded in the kitchen and all the food placed out on the table; and third video of my family gathered in the lounge, singing happy birthday to my Nana. Unlike previous works that were made using a tripod, the camera was handheld and shaky. This was a new filming approach in my art practice that I wanted to explore. The shakiness of the camera reminded viewers of old family movies. In a way, I am creating new and contemporary family movies. The scale of the projection was to make viewers feel present in the room with my family. This method was crossing the boundary between the *viewer* to the *participant* in the video.

The audience members from my talk week critique were interested in the different filming approach I used for this work. Many were able to relate the actions unfolding

in these videos to similar events in their own family. That is what I want my artworks to do – to create a relationship between the audience and what they are recognising as well as what they are seeing for the first time. Some audience members were interested in seeing the different angles of a familiar place – my Nana’s house. My Nana’s house is significant to my family, and it is also a recurring location in my art practice. Those who are familiar with my art practice were able to see different elements of the house, such as the family photographs hanging in the lounge and the kitchen filled with Pacific food. Previous works were located in my Nana’s backyard, or in one half the lounge area. With the montage of videos, we were able to view the house from a different perspective. Every room in the house was shown, including the kitchen and bathroom. Some of the audience were re-familiarising themselves with a space that is already known to them.

CONCLUSION

Through a video-based art practice, I celebrate the history and stories of my family and our Tokelauan heritage. I celebrate the survival of our Tokelauan culture in a New Zealand context. I celebrate the Talanoa and experiences we share together as a family.

I explored three out of the twenty-five indigenous research projects set by Linda Tuhiwai Smith. I practice the methods of Claiming, Storytelling, and Celebrating Survival across the number of moving image works I create. This ongoing research project is a collection of our stories that will be preserved and passed on to newer generations. Through my moving image artworks, I am inviting non-Tokelauan audiences to engage with the content and get a better, or new, understanding of culture and protocols that my family practice together. Unlike the films *Atoll People* and *Long Lost Sons*, I am sharing our stories and histories from the minority or “inside” perspective, the indigenous point of view. Putting the indigenous perspective in the forefront gives our people the power to show how they are represented in the public eye. I am staking a claim on the Fourth Cinema term that Barry Barclay examines in *Celebrating Fourth Cinema*. I am guided in my art practice by people within the indigenous art community, such as Edith Amituanai, Leilani Kake and Beatriz Santiago Muñoz. My art practice uses Talanoa to retrace the voyage of my

heritage from Tokelau to New Zealand. I am building a family treasure, rich with narratives and experiences shared within my family.

My thesis expresses the importance of my Tokelauan heritage in my life and art practice. This is portrayed through moving image works I create about personal narrative and experiences. Thinking towards my final installation for AUT Art and Design exhibition 2017, I am interested in sharing these stories. I am presenting the imagery larger in scale than previous works, thus inviting the audience into the depicted space, that being my Nana's home. This is a gesture of invitation, waiting to be accepted and embodied in a moment of sharing between my family, and the audience.

DOCUMENTATION:



Figure 13: Kelsi Tulafono, Documentation, Digital image. (2017)



Figure 14: Kelsi Tulafono, Documentation, Digital image. (2017)



Figure 15: Kelsi Tulafono, *Untitled* (2017), Three channel video, 5 min

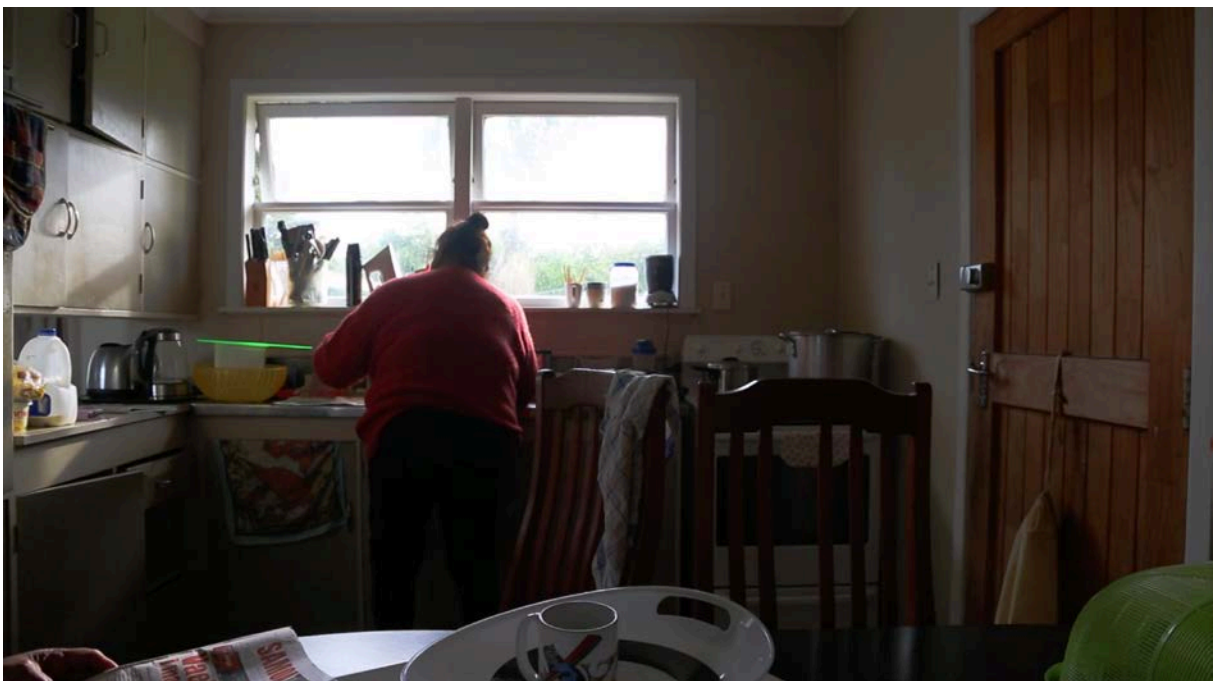


Figure 16: Kelsi Tulafono, *Dishes* (2017), Single channel video, 12 min 14 sec



Figure 17: Kelsi Tulafono, Documentation, Digital image. (2017)



Figure 18: Kelsi Tulafono, Documentation, Digital image. (2017)



Figure 19: Kelsi Tulafono, Documentation, Digital image. (2017)



Figure 20: Kelsi Tulafono, Documentation, Digital image. (2017)



Figure 21: Kelsi Tulafono, Documentation, Digital image. (2017)



Figure 22: Kelsi Tulafono, Documentation, Digital image. (2017)



Figure 23: Kelsi Tulafono, Documentation, Digital image. (2017)



Figure 24: Kelsi Tulafono, Documentation, Digital image. (2017)



Figure 25: Kelsi Tulafono, Documentation, Digital image. (2017)



Figure 26: Kelsi Tulafono, Documentation, Digital image. (2017)

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APPENDICES:



Figure 27: Kelsi Tulafono, *Ko te matou kaiga tenei* (2017), video installation, 3 min 45 sec

AD17 is AUT's annual graduating exhibition for Art and Design students. This is an opportunity for students to share their art practice with family, friends and the wider art community.

Ko te matou kaiga tenei is a video installation documenting my family's activities. These activities range from hanging out, to celebrating birthdays over a family feast. *Ko te matou kaiga tenei* is Tokelauan and translates to *This is my family* in English. Through my art practice, I am archiving traditions my family share together, both cultural and our everyday traditions. We are a Tokelauan family living in South Auckland, and this installation gives the public insight into a family that may be different from their own.

In the ST PAUL St Gallery foyer two 40-inch TV screens, [see figure 27], are mounted on a lilac painted wall. The lilac colour prompted my personal childhood memories, as it is the same colour as my grandmother's bedroom wallpaper. I steered away from the confronting white gallery walls and created a warm, more

welcoming space. The coloured wall also draws people in as the lilac can be seen from outside the building.



Figure 28: Kelsi Tulafono, *Ko te matou kaiga tenei* (2017), video installation, 3 min 45 sec

The left-hand screen is a moving image of my cousins and I hanging out together in my Nana's backyard. Children are seen walking in and out of the frame, people are sitting down having a smoke and other's are standing around talking to each other. The right-hand screen is a moving image of my family gathered in my Nana's living room. Everyone in the video is facing towards a television, but outside viewers are not able to see what they are shown on the TV. Both these moving images have no sound. This is to enable viewers to focus on facial expressions and body language rather than what people are talking about. We see people laughing together, hiding away from embarrassment, children running around and many other things. These gestures emphasise the close relationship between the different people throughout both moving images. Displaying my family in my art practice can sometimes be vulnerable, but through the moving images viewers see a family surrounded by loved ones in a comfortable environment. These two screens being in the gallery foyer serve as an invitation – an invitation into my family and also into my art practice.



Figure 29: Kelsi Tulafono, *Ko te matou kaiga tenei* (2017), video installation, 21 min 42 sec

Inside ST PAUL St Gallery One are two adjacent walls, painted the same lilac colour as the wall in the foyer. Two khaki green beanbags sit in front of the lilac wall, facing a video projection. Painting the lilac wall inside of the gallery ties the two elements of the installation together, showing viewers the work is about the same family. From this point of view viewers are able to see the projection work, and the two screens in the foyer.

This video is 21 minutes and 42 seconds long and is on a continuous loop. There is no way to tell when the start or finish is. The beanbags serve as an invitation for viewers to take some time and sit with the work. The space is open for interaction – people are able to walk in and out as they please.

Different storylines are unfolding within this installation such as the tour of my Nana's house, me and my cousins dancing in front of the mirror, and us eeling down by the creek. This is a collection of vignettes showing who my family are and the things we do together. There are multiple occurring people and spaces across my art practice. Some viewers become familiar with different family members and the roles they play

within my family. There are references to our Tokelauan heritage through the food dishes from my Nana's birthday celebration, her speaking Tokelauan to aunty Mua and traditional items hanging inside her house.



Figure 30: Kelsi Tulafono, *Ko te matou kaiga tenei* (2017), video installation, 21 min 42 sec

There is no set script or actions for the videos, people are free to say and do what they want. I am not trying to create a scene of what it is like within my family, rather I am choosing to point a camera and document the action as it unfolds – essentially creating home styled family videos. The shaking/handheld camera filming technique is to have viewers as immersed as possible in the activities unfolding. This is to avoid them feeling like an outsider looking in as they may do when filmmakers use a tripod and a locked off camera angle. I want my viewers to feel welcomed into not only my art practice but into my family as well.