

# CARRY THE FLAG

*This is a rich and powerful story of a man whose design created meaning for a people once invisible to mainland Australia, the people of the Torres Strait.*



Link to Trailer  
<https://vimeo.com/215101133/>  
password CTF

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## Synopsis

Short - This is a rich and powerful story of a man whose design created meaning for a people once invisible to mainland Australia, the people of the Torres Strait.

Long - In 2017 it is the 25th anniversary of the Torres Strait Flag. For Bernard Namok Jnr, 'Bala B' the flag is a poignant reminder of home, family and the father he hardly knew. Bernard Namok Senior won the flag design competition in 1992 but a year later, at just 31 years, he died leaving behind his wife with four young children. Journey across the Torres Straits with Bala B to honour his father's legacy. A rich and powerful story of a man whose design created meaning for a people once invisible to mainland Australia, the people of the Torres Strait.



## Story

Bernard Namok Jnr, is a Senior Broadcaster and presenter of 'Mornings with Bala B' at The Top End Aboriginal Bush Broadcasting Association – TEABBA. Everyday he speaks to thousands of Indigenous Australians across the Northern Territory but he feels disconnected from his own culture and family. When he sees the Torres Strait Islands flag flying, it is for him, not only the symbol of identity of his people, but a poignant reminder of his home and the father he hardly knew.

Bernard Namok Senior won the Torres Strait Islander flag design competition in 1992 but a year after his flag was formally recognised, at 31 years of age, he died leaving behind a wife and four young children. Bala B was just ten at the time but as the oldest in the family, the role of carrying the flag came early to him. He only has a few cherished childhood memories of his Dad, sitting up late night after night doing sketches of the flag that he and his sister were not to touch.

Bala B journeys back home to the Torres Strait to seek out those in his family and community who can shed light on his father and the meaning stitched into the design of his father's flag. Bala B talks to members of Torres Strait Island Flag Anniversary Committee to discover why it was so important for Torres Strait to have their own flag. One of the judges Romina Fujii describes how their purpose was to capture for her people the same passion and hugely successful outcome achieved by the black, red and yellow flag for uniting and empowering Aboriginal Australians.

We learn of the important influencers on Bernard's flag design including that of celebrated leader and Torres Strait referendum activist, Ettie Pau. Bala B's mother, Bakoi Namok recalls conversations with her father Ettie and her husband about Torres Strait identity. Both men vehemently believed there was no point fighting for a better lot for their people until they had a flag, which would give Torres Strait Islanders a shared identity.

The Torres Strait Islander flag was officially recognised and presented to the Torres Strait Island people on the 29th May 1992 at the 6th annual Torres Strait Cultural Festival on Thursday Island. Just in time for one of the most significant events of recent Torres Strait Islander and Australian history, the Mabo decision (June 3 1992). The flag was the perfect symbol to celebrate this historic event.

This is an intimate, observational film that reveals much about a period of dynamic change in the lives of Torres Strait Islander people. At its heart is the journey of a son in search of the father he hardly knew, but a man who left a legacy that is the most powerful symbol of identity and aspiration to all Torres Strait Islanders.

## Filmmakers' Statement

*“What may seem like a simple flag to some people has given all Torres Strait Islanders an identity and a sense of pride as Indigenous Australians. Even though my father Bernard Namok Senior was known for a short time as an amazing Dad and a loving husband, he has left a great legacy behind.*

*It came to me at the Hermannsburg National Remote Indigenous Media Festival in the centre of the country. I wanted to do a documentary to tell the story of my father who had remained a ‘silent star’ behind the design that quickly became adopted during the political achievements of the early 90s.*

*My father had a strong cultural upbringing and a passion for the arts and culture. He designed the flag after many long talks with my grandfather Ettie Pau who was very politically active and was involved in the 1967 referendum movement. In the evenings, the dining table would be transformed into a workstation and the flag was launched at the Sixth Torres Strait Cultural Festival. This year is the 25th anniversary of the flag’s creation.*

*From his humble beginnings with the Torres Strait Flag competition, to his motivation and inspiration, I share with you my memories behind the colours and symbols that give our people pride, identity and unity. A newfound respect and understanding came about as my journeys home to film and interview revealed more of the contribution my father made and helped me to reconnect with family.*

*The contributions of my Mother Bakoi who has carried this legacy also deserve highlighting. Educating wider Australia about the true history of the Torres Strait Flag is a responsibility I am proud to carry.*

*The flag has travelled to many places around the world and now flies on top of government buildings around Australia. It has opened doors for our people and has made a difference in our society as well as allowed us to be strong and stand tall.”*

-Bernard Namok Jnr and Danielle MacLean



*Ladies, Gentlemen, boys & girls,*

*On behalf of myself and my family, I would like to thank all the people responsible for choosing my flag as our identity. What my design stands for is quite simple: The two green bands are the two mainland of Australia & Papua New Guinea. The blue is the waters of the Torres Strait and the symbol that identifies every Torres Strait Islanders anywhere the Dhori (Headdress). The five points of the star are our group the Eastern, Central, Western, Port Kennedy group and the many that made the mainland their home. I would like to thank those of you who have accepted my design and in time, those of you who will.*

*In conclusion, I would like to thank Mr Pau, the inspiration behind my design being entered in the completion. He have shared many times with me about the real needs of the Torres Strait Islander one of which I know he must be very proud to be able to witness today. To be part of this historic event, the launching of our very own, no matter where you are, identity THE TORRES STRAIT FLAG.*

The words of Bernard Namok Snr on accepting the award for the flag's design.  
Flag Launch Torres Strait Cultural Festival May 1992



# Key Characters

## **Bernard Namok Snr (1961-1993)**

Born and raised on Thursday Island, he attended Thursday Island High School in 1974 – 1976, before gaining a Certificate of Commercial and Fundamentals Torres Strait TAFE in 1992. He worked at the Islanders Board of Industries 1984 – 1992 and was on the Torres Strait Co-operative Society Board of Directives and Torres Strait Corporation of Arts and Literature Production Member in 1992. Delegate of Torres Eels and Suburbs in 1990s. He won the competition for design of the Torres Strait Flag in 1992. Faithful saint of the Crossroad Fellowship, United Pentecostal Church (UPC) till he passed away in 1993.



## **Bakoi Namok**

Born on Thursday Island to Ettie and Betty Pau, went to school on Thursday Island in 1970s before her studies at Cairns Business College in the 1980s. Her first job was at SeeKee Brothers as a shop assistant and this is where she first met Bernard Snr in the mid 1980's. They had their first son, Bernard Jnr in 1984, Betty in 1985. and married on Thursday Island on 2nd January 1988. Daughter Kernisha was born in 1991 and son, Simeon in 1993. She graduated with a Certificate III in Community Development and Certificate IV in Mental Health Suicidal Prevention and hopes to further her education with a Diploma in Mental Health Suicidal Prevention. She lives on Thursday Island with her 3 grandkids; Sandra, Napau and John. Her vision is to see a Foundation set up in honour of her late husband, to help young artist fulfil their artistic pursuits.



# Key Characters



## Michael Namok

Michael Peter Namok was born in 1964, three years after his brother Bernard Namok. He attended Thursday Island state primary school, 1970-1977. Thursday Island High School, 1978-1980. Police years 1992 Innisfail (was training as a police officer) Occupation- Labourer Truck-Driver, Torres Shire Council.

## Ettie Pau (1920-1997)

Born on Esiam Village, Erub (Darnley Island) Ettie Pau (OAM) was a tough seafarer of Rotumah, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent. Co-owner of trochus vessel M.V 'Rebecca'. A significant leader and true ambassador of the Torres Strait he was self-educated and served as community police sergeant and carpenter at Erub. Served in the Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion. As an indigenous activist, he became involved in politics and the 1967 Referendum, and served as Councillor of the Tamwoy Suburb. One of the founders of groundbreaking indigenous corporations including Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI). He was the source of inspiration and knowledge for Bernard Namok Snr in designing the flag.





# Key Characters

## Robert Sagigi

Mr Robert Sagigi, also known as Uncle Bongo is a traditional owner Badu Island Torres Strait and grandson of Chief Sagigi of the Wakaid Tribe. He was Recipient of the Community Spirit Award at the Torres Strait NAIDOC Awards 2016.



## Grandma

Mrs Dora Uiduldam (Namok) born on St Pauls, Moa Island in 1947. Sister to Peter Namok (Bernard Snr, Dad). Still living in St Pauls community, she enjoys going to church and the quiet lifestyle.



## Mrs Romina Fujii

Mrs Fujii is from the western group of islands and her totems are the Snake (Saibai Island ) and Tupmul (Badu Island) and she speaks the Kalalagaw ya. In 1992, as custodians of the Torres Strait Islands, the leaders through the Island Coordinating Council chaired by Mr Getano Lui (Jr) discussed and agreed that Torres Strait needed a symbol to represent and to unite all peoples of the Torres Strait. Mrs Fujii was in the Island Coordinating Council during that term and was the chair of the working party for the flag competition along with other Board members. She went on to become a member of the first Torres Strait Regional Authority which officially recorded and registered the flag, Mrs Fujii's background is in health, education, employment and training and small business. She is currently involved in NGOs as a volunteer Chair for JCU Advisory Council for the Torres Strait , Chair of the TSACA, President Thursday Island Rotary Club , Deputy Chair for TSIMA, financial member of PKA Inc , Mura Kosker, and LPWS.



# Island Co-Ordinating Council



HEAD-DRESS dari or deri

Summer Street, Thursday Island, Dld. 4875  
P.O. Box 264, Thursday Island, Dld. 4875  
Telephone: (070) 69 1446  
Fax: (070) 69 1868

In Reply Please Quote: 15A/8

1 April 1992

Mr Bernard Namok  
Connie's Place,  
John Street,  
THURSDAY ISLAND, Q 4875

Dear Bernard,

On behalf of the Cultural Workshop Committee, I am pleased to officially inform you that your design for a Torres Strait flag has been accepted by the full Council of the ICC as the new official design for our flag.

The Committee felt that your design captured all the main concepts and themes that other people were expressing and did so in as simple a form as possible.

Congratulations to you on your historic design. It is intended to have an official launch during the week of the Cultural Festival in May.

Yours sincerely,

*Romina Fujii*

Romina Fujii  
Chairperson of Committee

# Creative Team

## **Bernard Namok Jnr**

*Presenter, CoWriter and CoProducer*

Bernard spent 2008-2009 as a RIBS Operator in Maningrida, West Arnhem; before joining the TEABBA team in Darwin in 2009. He served on the Board for the Indigenous Remote Communications Association from 2014 – 2016. Now a Senior Broadcaster and a Radio Broadcaster Trainer; he broadcasts daily on the TEABBA Radio networks to 29 remote communities across the Top End. He enjoys getting out to the communities hosting LIVE outside broadcasts in the dry season. In 2010, Bernard won the NAIDOC Youth of the Year Award for the Top End. He is also a previous recipient of the Koori Mail Scholarship and the Diploma in Broadcasting from the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. In 2015 he has won the Australian Film Television and Radio School AV Myers Indigenous Award for exceptional talent. In 2016 he won the Steven McGregor Award for Best Emerging Talent in Film/Television at the National Remote Indigenous Media Festival in Yirrkala, NT.



## **Danielle MacLean**

*Director, CoWriter and CoProducer*

Danielle worked at CAAMA Productions for over six years, writing and directing numerous documentaries including the series Nganampa Anwernekenhe, produced in Aboriginal language and broadcast on Imparja. She wrote and directed part of the Everyday Brave Series *For Who I am – Bonita Mabo*. Her film *My Colour Your Kind* was nominated for AFI and Film Critics Awards and screened at numerous festivals. Danielle wrote and directed the drama *Queen of Hearts*, winning the AFI Award for best non-feature screenplay. In 2007, she won an AWGIE for her script in the Channel 9/Disney series *Double Trouble*. Danielle cowrote and coproduced 2012 SFF Foxtel Finalist *Croker Island Exodus*. She wrote the premiere episode *Family of Redfern Now* and three episodes of the ABC Indigenous comedy series 8MMM Aboriginal Radio. Her 2014 ABC documentary to coincide with the 40th anniversary of Cyclone Tracy, *Blown Away*, was nominated for an Australian Directors Guild Award. In 2015 Danielle wrote two episodes of animated series *Little J & Big Cuz* for NITV. She is adapting the much-loved book *Grace Beside Me* as a live-action drama series for NITV.



## **Anna Grieve**

*Producer*

Anna has many years experience as an independent producer/director/scriptwriter and was Executive Producer at Film Australia. Her production covers all genres of documentary with a particular fascination with powerful emotional history stories. Extensive production credits includes large scale dramatised documentaries with Writer/Director Peter Butt - *I, Spry*, *The Prime Minister is Missing*, *Silent Storm* and the Logie award winner *Who Killed Dr Bogle & Mrs Chandler?* Credits as Executive Producer include Sundance finalist, *Dhakiyarr vs the King* shot in Arnhem Land and *MobiDocs* an anthology series with the NFB in Canada. In 2012 she produced with Danielle MacLean, the Indigenous feature documentary *Croker Island Exodus*. In 2016 she produced the feature documentary, *The Family*.



## **Will Kepa**

*Composer*

Will is a Torres Strait Islander multi-instrumentalist, audio engineer and producer based in Cairns, Far North Queensland and has been on the professional music scene for the past decade. After learning to play the guitar in 1998, he enrolled in the Indigenous Music Program at the local TAFE College in 2000. Graduating a few years later with a Diploma in Music, Will has become one of the most sought after musicians in the area, as well as interstate. Will has performed with the likes of Johno's Blues Band, Phil Emmanuel, One Drop Reggae, the Briscoe Sisters, Wilma Reading, David Hudson, Kamerunga, Tribe Of Jubal, and Seaman Dan on a regular basis. His skills have taken him to many of the major festivals around the country and abroad.

## **Dylan River**

*Cinematographer*

A filmmaker and cinematographer from Alice Springs, Dylan grew up in a creative family filled with numerous filmmakers and from an early age thought filmmaking was boring and not for him! He couldn't have been more wrong. In 2013 his debut documentary titled: *Buckskin*, won the Foxtel Documentary Prize at the 60th annual Sydney Film Festival, followed by its air date on ABC. In 2015 Dylan's first short film, *Nulla Nulla* was selected as part of the Berlin International Film Festival. Dylan currently has been working on numerous solo projects and TV series. His work as a cinematographer fills most of his time, and is still motivated to staying behind the camera. Telling stories close to home, combining life and work as one.

## **Sam Frederick**

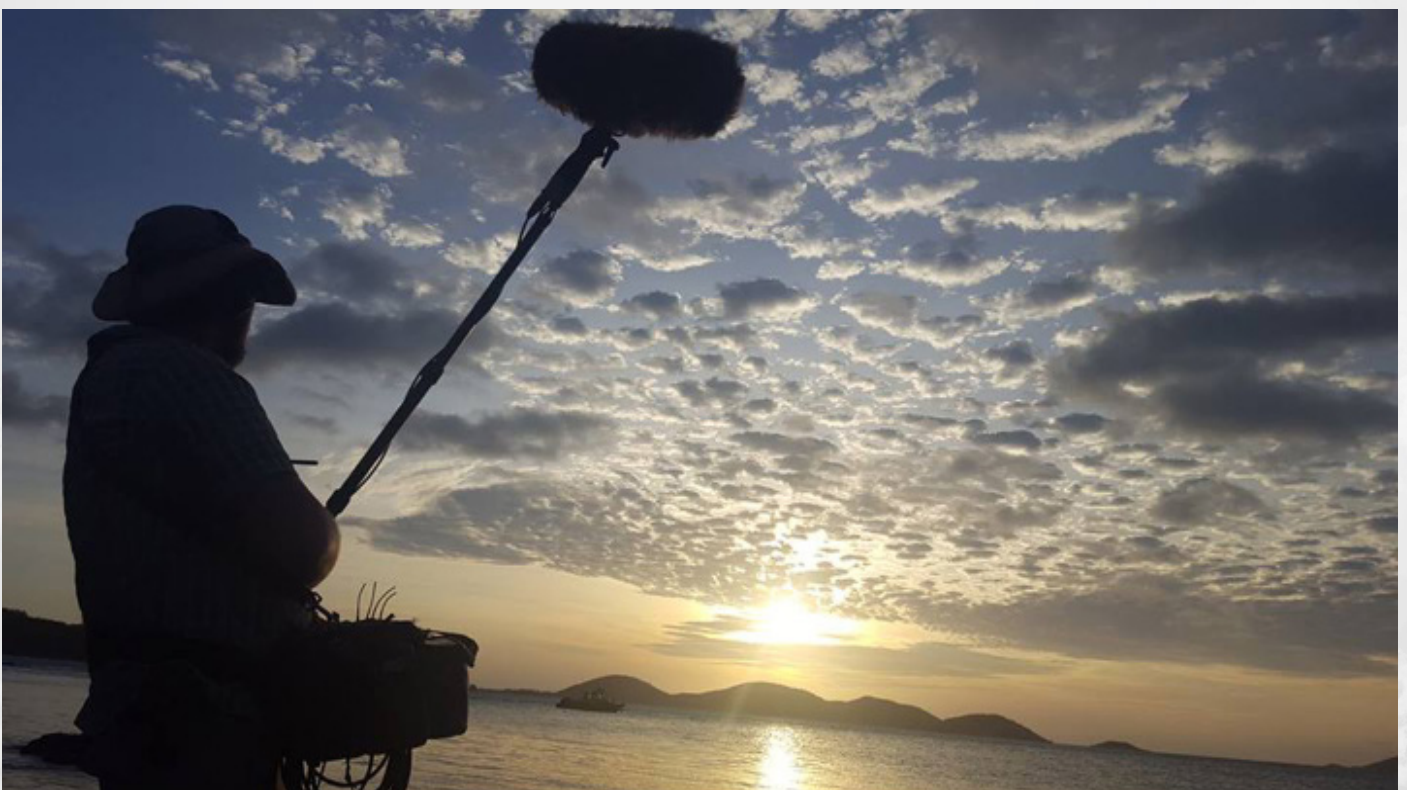
*Editor*

Sam is a filmmaker, editor and cinematographer currently based in the Northern Territory. He works on Top End stories and creative projects, including the recent *Nambi - Songlines on Screen* and this documentary *Carry the Flag* for NITV, Sam draws on over 10 years of experience in the industry and has worked freelance, shooting and editing documentaries for Al Jazeera International, Vice, The Guardian, ABC and SBS/NITV. Working in-house at Renegade Films in Melbourne for 8 years, Sam contributed to award-winning documentary, comedy and music television productions as well as many TVCs.

## **Chris Gillette**

*Sound Design*

Chris is a multi-skilled location sound recordist, sound designer and stills photographer based in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia. Specialising in Documentary, Film, Television, Radio, Theatre, Community Media, and the Arts. Chris has developed a broad knowledge and understanding of the various processes of film-making. As well as sound-engineering Chris also has a background in film lighting and has developed an understanding of the technical aspects of audio post-production. Along with location recording and sound design, Chris took all the stills on *Carry The Flag*.



## Map of the Torres Strait



Situated between mainland Australia and Papua New Guinea, the Torres Strait Islands are the only part of Australia sharing a border with another country. The Torres Strait Islands are part of the State of Queensland.

The islands were annexed comparatively late: those within 60 nautical miles (97 kilometres) of the coast in 1872, the remainder in 1879.

Torres Strait Islanders are not mainland Aboriginal people who inhabit the islands of Torres Strait. They are a separate people in origin, history and way of life. From the waters of the Strait, where the Coral and Arafura Seas meet in one of the most fragile and intricate waterways in the world, rise hundreds of islands, islets, cays, reefs and sandbanks. All these are traditionally named, owned and used. No two islands are identical, each being shaped by its unique landscape, stories and history. In the past many more islands were inhabited. Islanders live today in 18 permanent communities on 17 islands although they continue to visit their traditionally owned islands for fishing, gardening, and food collecting, camping and picnicking.

In 1994, in response to local demands for greater autonomy, the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) was established to allow Torres Strait islanders to manage their own affairs according to their own ailan kastom (island custom) and to develop a stronger economic base for the region. The TSRA is made up of 20 representatives elected by Torres Strait Islanders living in the islands.

The Torres Strait Islands Treaty signed by Australia and Papua New Guinea allows for free movement (without passports or visas) between Australia and Papua New Guinea for traditional activities in a limited zone of the Torres Strait.

## Story Background

When Bernard Namok Snr was born in 1961, Torres Strait Islanders were not Australian citizens, did not receive unemployment benefits nor related social security payments, could not vote in State or Federal elections, were underpaid, denied education, could only leave their home island with written permission and suffered under an oppressive, colonial regime administered by the Queensland Department of Native Affairs. Torres Strait Islanders were not even included in the national census. Island communities existed to provide a labour force for the marine industries, chiefly pearling. In the Outer Torres Strait Islands there were no telephones, electricity, airstrips, television, radio, outboard motors nor motor vehicles. Islanders saw few white people. The communities were largely self-sufficient and, for the most part, spoke traditional languages.

Thirty years later Torres Strait Islanders had thrown off colonial rule and enjoyed full citizenship rights. They lived and travelled freely throughout Australia and overseas. Their children graduated from high school and university. Pearling was gone but Islanders had established an enviable reputation in a range of employments; the defence force, railways, nursing, sport. Torres Strait art was experiencing a renaissance with young artists returning to traditional motifs and designs. The lifestyle/living standards in Outer Island communities reflected that of mainstream communities. Traditional languages were in decline replaced by YumplaTok [Torres Strait Creole] a lingua franca which brought Islanders together.

As a people they had demanded independence from Australia in 1987/8. They asserted that they had the will and means to achieve sovereignty and Bernard provided the flag. The Australian Government conceded moves towards autonomy and recognised Torres Strait Islanders' unique position and identity within the Australian community. The great Torres Strait Cultural Festival of 1993 was a triumph of Torres Strait kastom and unity of purpose. And everywhere you looked, on shirts and hats and flying above from multiple flagpoles, was the flag which Bernard had created.



📷 Banyule Mayor Craig Langdon with Torres Strait Islander flag. Picture: Richard Serong

North

# Torres Strait Islander flag repeatedly stolen from park in Heidelberg West

Laura Armitage, Heidelberg Leader  
February 24, 2016 12:00am

**THIEVES** have repeatedly removed the Torres Strait Islander flag from a Heidelberg West park amid community rumours it is “Arabic”.

The flag, which flies alongside the Australian National and Aboriginal flags in Malahang Reserve, has been nicked three times — twice last month, and once towards the end of last year.

And Banyule Mayor Craig Langdon believes thieves think the flag is Arabic.

Cr Langdon told *Heidelberg Leader* he received an anonymous phone call from a woman a few months ago who told him she thought the flag was Arabic.



# CREDITS

Writer/Director/Co-Producer DANIELLE MACLEAN  
Writer/Co-Producer BERNARD NAMOK JNR  
Producer ANNA GRIEVE

Editor SAM FREDERICK  
Director of Photography DYLAN RIVER  
Composer WILL KEPA  
Sound Design CHRIS GILLETTE

Sound Recordist CHRIS GILLETTE  
Production Managers ANNA GRIEVE & AIDA INNOCENTE  
Production Accountant AIDA INNOCENTE  
Edit Assistant HELEN BROWNING

Archival Researchers JOHN SINGE  
BERNARD NAMOK JNR

Graphics THE KINGDOM OF LUDD  
Sound Mixer JUSTIN HARRISON  
Post Production Facility CHOP SHOP POST

Original music  
Composed, arranged & performed by WILL KEPA  
Produced by NIGEL PEGRUM  
Published by PEGASUS STUDIOS

Opening Song  
'NGUZU GELAN'  
From the album 'BUB IBA KODO MIR'  
Composed & performed by DENNIS NEWIE  
Produced by NIGEL PEGRUM, WILL KEPA & KARL NEUFELDT  
Funded by TSRA

Flag Day Procession Song KIZIPAINGAPA  
Composed by FATHER ERRIS ESELI  
Performed by PASTOR WILSON DAVID & SAMUEL BANA  
Flag Day TI ERUB DANCERS AND SINGERS

Welcome Song Western Island  
Torres Strait Hymn 'AUGADAN WOYADHIN MOSEN'

Kubin Dancers Song 'GUB A KA SENA KOI GUB A KA E'  
Composed by LATE FATHER INAGIE MANAS

Mabo Day Dancers & Singers EPI KAREM BEIZAM DANCE TEAM  
Mabo Day Procession Song 'BEIZAM PE'  
TSI Flag Montage KERIBA SEGUR TRADITIONAL SONG

## Special Thanks to

BAKOI NAMOK NAMOK FAMILY  
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DON BAYLIS LOUISE MANAS  
THECLA BROGAN STEVEN MCGREGOR  
SCOTT BURROWS LAURIE NONA  
TOBY JOHN SYLVIA TABUA  
DARREN LEE ALICK TIPOTI  
CR JOHN LEVI DORA UIDULDAM  
CATHY LEVI GEORGINA UIDULDAM

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MUALGAL PEOPLE, MOA ISLAND  
MURA BADULGAL, BADU ISLAND

Archive courtesy of  
BAKOI NAMOK

AIATSIS Torres Strait 'After 200 Years' Collection  
Items B278\_01 & B279\_18  
ROMINA FUJII  
BAKOI NAMOK  
ISUA FAMILY  
PEGGY KASABAD JAMES  
PAU FAMILY  
LILY-JANE SHIBISHAKI

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present

# CARRY THE FLAG

Editor SAM FREDERICK Director of Photography DYLAN RIVER Composer WILL KEPA  
Sound Design CHRIS GILLETTE Producer ANNA GRIEVE  
Writer/Co-Producer BERNARD NAMOK JNR Writer/Director/Co-Producer DANIELLE MACLEAN



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