

2 About when I worked? I used to work at school a long time ago. We were teaching the littlies, the little kids. When I worked at school and we used to teach those kids. The little kids at Pre School I mean. Then I moved over to the big school, with big kids, the teenagers we were teaching. I used to teach them about both...I mean, about balanda and bininj things. We used to tell them stories, from the olden days, what the old people used to do back then. There were no buildings here, when balanda came with their law/religion. We went and taught those young boys and they grew up. They grew up and some of them I see them today working, some just staying at home and some involved in ceremonies, Mardayin, Lorrkkon, Wubarr, Kunabibi, Yaburlurrwa. The old people taught us those in those days.

3 Nowadays that bininj business only happens to a limited extent. And some of what we do now is balanda stuff - jobs, money. Whereas before we had no money, or only a little bit. The old people used to get a little bit of food for free, what they call “rations”, that’s what we used to eat. So I went to school, to learn religion/law, and sometimes we went in the afternoons down to the billabong, fishing. We used to watch the old people using fishing nets. Sometimes they used to take us and we would go hunting for animals.

4 [[Tape paused briefly to re-organize microphones etc..]]

5 Yes, I’ve talked about that, now I’ll talk about school in a different way. The old people used to teach us, and they would also give them food - it was good food too. Food like cheeky yams, long yams, blackberries - something like grapes, sometimes plums, green plums and black plums. That’s what the old people used to give them. Sometimes they used to go and get animals; for example goanna, bandicoot. Or they would go to the river for fish, like barramundi, catfish, nailfish, all kinds. They used to trap them.

6 When that new way of life arrived, what also came with it was bread and whatever things we are eating now, sugar, although before we used to make drinks sweet with bush honey. Those are all the things the old people gave us, in the past. And they used to take the children with them and show them, for instance, how to dig yams, including cheeky yams, that kind of thing those old people used to give them, those

people in the old days. So when we were growing up it was like we used to go to school. That school had the real law. They used to teach us how to go fishing, to make fishing spear, shovel nosed spears for hunting and spearing kangaroo, and the “djalakirradj” spear was for fishing. Nowadays we have fishing lines, and rifles now for shooting.

**7 SE: *When the old people were teaching the children, were they very strict or...***

8 Yes, sometimes they were very strict. You weren't allowed to touch your cousin, for example, male or female, or your full brother-in-law. It was a very strict law. It was hard.

**9 SE: *What about now?***

10 But now, well, it's changed. Some people, male or female, interact closely with their cousins, and that is the main thing, that relationship between male and female cousins.

**11 SE: [Answers door, visitor interrupts briefly.] *Okay, come in.* [Paused] *Please go ahead.***

12 Yes. Yeah, it was very strict, but now people do go closer to each other. If you go to the shop, when we go there, we shove each other around even when your cousin is right there, but in the old days, that wouldn't happen. They are not staying at that distance.

**13 SE: *Did you go to Kormilda?***

14 I didn't go to Kormilda, but a long time ago I did go to Batchelor.

**15 SE: *Would you like to talk about Batchelor?***

16 Yes. I went there for a one year course. I went there with my two children and my wife and this brother. We went together with that Nabulanj and stayed there at

Batchelor. We stayed until I finished at that school, and when we came back I taught in Post Primary (although now it is called Secondary School). [Yes, they're the same.] Of course, yes they're the same thing. I taught there, then left that and went back to working at the Council office. They gave me a job as agent for Social Security, where we used to give out the money. I went on working there at that job for quite a while then moved back to the school. I went back last year, working with Nabangardi at the Pre School. And I went back to Batchelor recently, I went on an Early Childhood course. I went there but I didn't think it was any good, so I left it and came back here. But the school is good. You (pl) might have some criticisms, but its okay.

17 Those kids, our kids, learn from us, our culture, and white people's business. They will grow up and have the next generation of kids, sons and daughters, and they will tell them the same things. Like I did.

***18 SE: When you were working at school, did you work in the bilingual programme?***

19 Yes, I worked in the bilingual. I mean we had the kids sometimes, the very little kids, and I used to speak Kunwinjku with them. Because sometimes they didn't... Nabangardi would speak to them in English and he would leave it to me to take them and speak to them in Kunwinjku, our (inc) language. And the kids used to listen when they noticed that I was speaking their own language. I used to teach them for a while, then when I finished I would hand them over to Nabangardi to take. That's how it worked.

***20 SE: Did you send your kids to school?***

21 Yes. My kids I used to send to school. They used to go to school, those two girls and two boys. Now they are all married.

***22 SE: And did you teach the children yourself at home or out in the bush?***

23 Who, my kids? Yes, we would teach the kids - we would take them fishing, and we would teach them sometimes as we went along, or their mother would take them collecting things like maybe waterlily stems, that kind of thing. I used to do that, teaching them so they would know our way of doing things. I would show them things and tell them stories about it. That's how I was brought up, with them telling me stories about grown-up things.

**24 SE: *What about ceremonies?***

25 Yes. About ceremonies. I showed them one, sorry, two. They know two ceremonies. Kunabibi - they've been trained in that one, and the Yaburlurrwa ceremony. That's all. The other ones they haven't seen.

**26 SE: *You remember when you went to ceremonies [Yes] and the old people used to teach you. What did they do?***

27 They used to teach us, for example, "That's taboo, don't eat that", "Don't touch that thing, its taboo." Or, "When you go into the ceremony, to see things, that's 'business', as they say in English." "Don't play around with women. Just control yourself." "Also, when you encounter the old men,, don't take them lightly, never, because they are your supervisors, they teach you about the business, they initiate you."

28 But now, I don't know, new things are coming, and our culture is changing for the worse. Because we haven't got those old people - they've died and there are not many left. Only, for example, Nabangardi, our father. That's all, just him. He's got the knowledge of that business.

**29 SE: *Can I just ask you...[Okay] Now, I'm thinking about how children learn things. As a child grows up to be an adult, how does he develop his ideas, how's he taught?***

30 Well, it comes from the old man, you know, his father, he'll give him ideas, so he'll have learnt that way. But some kids don't have any of those ideas. Because their parents are too young.

**31 SE: You know, when balanda children are learning, sometimes they just watch what the adults are doing. Is it the same with bininj children?**

32 I haven't watched white kids grow up, but white kids, as they grow up, they'll go and leave their mother and father and go off on their own. They leave the adults, the father and mother and go off. But we stay with the older generation.

**33 SE: The whole family stays as a group?**

34 The family stays as a group, we stay that way. But in your (pl) case, white people, the sons and daughters grow up and leave.

**35 SE: How is that some children learn quickly, and others don't - they learn only very slowly?**

36 Yes. Because... That's true. Some learn fast and some don't. They go very, very slow.

**38 SE: So, why is this?**

39 It's like, nowadays, with everything being new, don't you think Kokok? So they want new learning, but they just have to learn slowly. Some of them are learning bininj stuff as well as balanda stuff. These are the Primary School age kids. **[But that's what they're learn, is it?]** Yes.

**40SE: Both Aboriginal and white people are teachers.** [[Tape unclear. I was asking about why some teachers may be more effective than others, among both balanda and bininj staff.]]

41 Yes, that is the situation. Some adults teach us well, but sometimes it's difficult, for example with balanda stuff. Balanda stuff is very difficult to understand. Whereas with Aboriginal stuff, some of it is hard but some is easy.

**42 SE: A good teacher, what sort of things does he do?**

43 A good teacher, well, he likes the kids who come to him. He teaches them thoroughly.

**44 SE: Are the teachers at school very strict with the kids?**

45 It's good when they put them together, white ladies with black ladies, white men with black men. They produce good results. [*What, teaming them together?*] They join in together and its very good.

**46 SE: Who learns faster, balanda or bininj?**

47 He will learn fast if he works with someone. The balanda (teacher) watches the bininj teaching the kids, so then he understands. He's the teacher, but they should both work together. So then they can both learn from each other.

[[ Inaudible brief question and answer.]]

48 [[Brief interruption to session by visitors to interview.]]

**50 SE: Now, you've joined the school council haven't you?**

51 Yes, I've joined the School Council and become President for the school. [Ah, is that right?] Yes. I'll watch how the school is running. Tomorrow we have a, whatsaname, ASSPA council meeting. We need to appoint a President, like me being president of the Council, and a woman Vice President. We need to put someone in charge of the money, which comes for both balanda and bininj to work with.

**52 SE: Some adults, as you know, don't send their children.**

53 That's what's happening. I wonder why they don't send their kids to school. I don't know, and they don't know what they're... What are they thinking? They just think about coming down here to the shop to get food and going back again.

**54 SE: *They don't talk about their reasons?***

55 No, they don't have any good reason. I don't why they stop them going, or they just...

56 Maybe its just that the kids say, "I don't want to go" - the kids. But some parents I've heard say, "There's no food." So that's one reason that stops the kids. From a bininj viewpoint. But I don't know what balanda do in this situation. I know a little a bit about balanda, but I wouldn't want to comment.

**58 SE: *Is there any other thing you yourself want to talk about?***

59 Yes there is. I'll talk about one thing. They've moved me back to work in the (Council) office where Nabulanj, our brother, works. He's on long service leave., so they've given me that job to do. I don't know when he'll come back.

**60 SE: *After a while, later maybe. Possibly later this year or next year. Is it okay if I ask you another question? [Okay] I'll be listening (to the tape), writing it and if I think of anything...***

61 Okay. Yes, if you want to turn the language around, or something like that, well, it's up to you. Yes. Go ahead. Yes.

**62 SE: *When I translate this into English...***

63 Yes, translate it into English.

**64 SE: *I'll write it in English. [Yes] Our brother will help me. [Okay] So I'll translate it into English.***

65 If you (2) want to translate it, well do it.

**66 SE: What about - how's this? If we (inc) have a meeting here with the others I've taped [Oh, yeah. Good.] later on some time [Later. Yes do it] When I've made a book I'll give you all a copy to look at [Yes, that's good] so then if you want to go crook at me about anything you can.**

67 No way. What I mean is we would all meet together and listen to whatever she said or he said about himself, or what I said.

**68 SE: So when I've finished I'll give other people copies?**

69 Good. So then teachers can understand how we run things our way and in the balanda way. Because for us (exc), when I was doing a course I was very... listening to one person lecture, talking English - they haven't got any bininj lecturers who could explain to you. That's a bit hard too. A bit too hard.

**70 SE: Is it difficult to...**

71 It's hard, like English, when some words turn up. English is okay, but some words are too long and difficult - same like Kunwinjku.

**72 SE: Yes. In my case, I haven't learnt (Kunwinjku) properly, and so I get a bit tongue-tied.**

73 Yes. Yeah, so you make mistakes trying to say things, like me in English, when I can't pronounce a particular word properly. Pronunciation is hard. Sometimes I can't read Kunwinjku. It doesn't matter that I can speak it, but I can't read it. Or only a little bit. *[Because of the long words?]* Yes.

**74 SE: Now about balanda teachers: Is it okay if balanda teachers work at the school? Or maybe you would like to send them away so bininj would be doing all the teaching of children.?**

75 Yes, that's an idea. But it's good that balanda are here too. What do you mean, just get them out of the classrooms? That? Yeah. But I was thinking the kids mightn't listen to them (the Aboriginal teachers).

**77 SE: Are there a lot of teachers working there at present?**

78 Yes, I notice there are a lot of bininj teachers there now. [*Yes*] It's good. And I notice there is good attendance in the classrooms - lots of kids.

**79 SE: It that everything?**

80 That's it.

**81 SE: About the Bilingual programme, what do you think, would you like it to start up again? Or...**

82 That's the main thing they should look at. It would be good if they do start. Because every time I go to the classroom I see flashcards in English but no Kunwinjku words – nothing. For example Aboriginal people could be drawing pictures for example of kangaroo or fish [*The English words are there for them?*] Yes. Buffalo or something like that, it should be there. There's no Kunwinjku words on display. Now, I went to Yirrkala, we went to a course, or meeting, a course really, if you go and look on the walls in the classroom, there are flashcards with Aboriginal language words. They have the Aboriginal language with English underneath. [*Both*] - both. But here, I don't see that. If we start the bilingual programme, it would be good.

83 [[Private discussion about a meeting both of us were involved in recently.]]

**84 SE: Just one other thing to ask you about. [Okay] Both bininj and balanda teachers are working together at the school, teaching... [[Interruption: visitor to office. Brief discussion with visitor off tape.]] Yes, when bininj and balanda are working together does anything different happen?**

85 Yes, in fact when they whatsaname together, when they work together, it's a really good arrangement.

**86 SE: *And when children, both balanda and bininj, are all in together, do they all learn the same?***

87 Yes, it is the same, because I've watched the kids, they know the language and speak it, those balanda kids. I've heard them, one time on the bus. For instance your son, my mamam, he's learnt from the kids. They are speaking proper Kunwinjku. That's what the children do, so it's okay if they learn together at school. *[They speak each other's language.]* They speak each other's language.

88 SE: [[Tape unclear –laughter.]]

89 Maybe some balanda kid who goes to school here would be able to say to other people who come to visit, "I've been to school here, and I can speak Kunwinjku" - like your kids, who grew up here and learnt. They learnt the ideas too, here as they grew up.

**90 SE: *When the school started long ago, when white people first came, what did the adults think?***

91 Well, what did they think?. When that, what is it, missionary school, started, the missionaries taught the people at school. It was very strict. That school back then, the old school. So you didn't go and steal things, but the missionaries just gave people food, they brought it out and gave them. There wasn't any stealing. No.

**92 SE: *When a teacher is explaining to you, is it a good thing for him to ask you a lot of questions, and also to make you find out things for yourself?***

93 Yes, he'll explain the idea to you, "Listen now! Listen to this idea so you can understand it and do it." That's what happened to me - those old people used to tell me, and so I know it, and I still have that knowledge from my teachers.

**94 SE:** *Two children...Listen to this. If two children were born at the same time on the same day, one a balanda and one a bininj, we steal them and the white one we put with bininj to raise him, the other one, the black one we put with balanda to raise him. What do think will happen to each of them as they grow up?*

95 When they grow up, they will both have learnt the law. The balanda child will learn about bininj stuff, and the bininj child will learn balanda things. But still, they are the same. They are different, but in their thinking ability, they are the same. An Aboriginal child who grows up with balanda will learn balanda. And bininj who grows up with balanda will become that way.

**96 SE:** *[[ ]] What about internally, in the thinking, the emotions, the feelings, not in language but deeper? [Deep in their wills.] Are the bininj and balanda different or the same?*

97 It's...they are the same. In their emotions – yes. *[Even though the languages are different?]* Yes, the languages are different.

**98 SE:** *Are we finished?*

99 Yes, let's quit.

**100 SE:** *You haven't got anything else, or is that it?*

101 No. I can't think of anything else. I'm out of brains!

**102 SE:** *I've only got one question here. Are bininj as clever as balanda?*

103 *[[Laughs]]* They are the same. Still the same.

**104 SE:** *That's it. I've run out of questions.*

106 Yeah, I've had enough too. I'll just finish this drink. Where's the rubbish bin?  
Well, thank you for interviewing me. Its good to see your office anyway.

[[Personal discussion – not transcribed.]]

TAPE OFF