

2 Oh, well, I don't really know a lot about what happened way back in the past, what they did. But I know how they used to teach the law. The old people used to tell me how they would take them (and teach them in the old days. Sometimes they used to go hunting, and when they would take them hunting, that was when they used to teach them, for example, how children could find the air bubbles from turtles. The children would follow the adults - who didn't take only their own kids, but they would take other along too, for example those they called Mawah, or Morlah. Those they would often take as well in those days.

3 In the old days they always used to help each other, back then -the old people, They would get together to take the kids, helping each other, so that those children would grow up in such a way that the old people would be able to say, "Ah, I taught that child." And that child could turn around and say, "She's the one who used to teach me before, when I was little."

4 This was so that no matter if people were quite distant, maybe Mawah or Morlah, they could always still help each other, so people would say, "It's good we helped them." That's what family was about. Is it okay that I'm using some English mixed in here, when I say "families". [*Fine. It's only a bit.*]

5 That's what it was like. And sometimes they would take them to the ceremonies, and they used to teach them Wubarr - what it was about, and they would show them what to do there. Of course we don't know about it, we women. That is a sacred place, just for them where they used to take them. I know they used to take them there teach them about our language, that's what we think. They used to teach them that, for example, that Duwa stuff which was like teaching them the Ten Commandments - it's the same as that kind of law. They used to teach the young men so they came out of it they wouldn't just muck around any more or not take things seriously.

6 And there's another interesting thing. When a child was very small or just a baby growing up, the old people used to get them and take them to where they had a fire, and they would put them there and "smoke" them, and then the old people would warm the children's hands in the fire and say to them, "We're warming your hands

and smoking your hands like this so you won't go looking for things to steal from other people, your mother, your father, your mother's mother, father's mother, father's father, mother's father, your "Makka". And then they would warm the child's mouth in preparation, and they used to say, "Don't swear at other people anywhere - when there is a group of people there, don't swear at them. And don't gossip about people, for example if they are having an affair. You don't spread stories about a man and woman having an affair."

7 And sometimes they would then warm their ears. They would smoke their ears, saying to them, "You should listen carefully but not hear any bad stories. Just listen to good things. And listen to us and respond when we call out to you." And they would warm the children's chests so they wouldn't cry for their mother and father when they went off a long way hunting - they would just wait for them. So they used to "warm" them like that so the child would be good as he grew up. He wouldn't be crying for his mother and father when they went off on their own, hunting.

8 That's how it was. But nowadays they don't go doing that -it's like they have forgotten. Nowadays things have changed completely. We've got houses, and all sorts of things have come along. All this, this "technology" and so they've forgotten - or maybe not forgotten, but it's like they've just let it go. It's like we're moving on, keeping going as technology is developing.

9 For example with young women... In the old days the old people used to teach the young women. They would teach them that women's' business, all the older women. They used the fire. Nowadays, no. They don't have our women's business for the young women. It's not that long ago they use to have it. Those young women used to have it not so long ago, but not now. It's finished. A young women now grows up without the ceremony. "Raw" they say. No one has "cooked" her with that fire business. She has to become a woman all on her own. Nowadays, it doesn't happen. They don't know anything about it. They just know about school - where the kids go. The young women go to school, and they reckon they're mature women, fully grown, running around chasing men and having babies. And the young men too, they reckon they are real men, big men, fully grown and running after whatever they like.

They are just hanging around with each other, but they don't really know what's what.

10 And our kids! What kids learn now, well, they don't really learn much. Some of them, specifically the children who live at the outstations, they are taught our law - they're the ones living on their country. Now the kids who live here with us - no one has enough time for them - their mothers, grandmothers, no one. Some of the kids just go out and wander around doing whatever they want to do. Some of them are growing up sniffing petrol, breaking into houses. They must realize they have to stop this. I see them not respecting their mothers or fathers – really provoking them. They'll say to them, "We don't want to. Why are you telling us what to do? That's just what you want, so you do it." And so in their turn the mothers and fathers just do as the kids say. They don't try to force the kids. No use. The kids growing up now have become very hardened and they just don't listen to what we tell them. We all just go our own separate ways - them and the adults. Now it's like we are all growing up. And the younger generation have a lot of different ideas. They know a lot of different ideas, which they follow. It doesn't match up with what used to happen before.

11 So we don't try hard enough to follow that law the old people spoke of in earlier times. And then, when we go and ask them, some of them say, "That's finished. Back off. I don't want to be asked." They will say that. And so they don't say, "Yes, that's it. Just wait. You take the kids, so maybe we can all teach them together." Some of them reckon they are too tired. I don't know about this present time.

12 That's why we want to keep that school - where I work. And we want to involve the adults. We want the adults to come and teach the kids about our culture, and not only will we make a time slot, but we'll put it into the, whatsaname, curriculum, so we could specifically teach our culture, in the same way as Social Education. There's something there, but this would mean it is a part of what we teach here - our way. If we started early when the children are small, before their thinking branches out into wider areas, like if they learn things about living in Darwin, or in the rest of Australia, or they could go out further and further into the world. That's why we

need to teach the children so they can see things here first, starting off where they are, and then it will expand for them.

13 So we're also worried about English - about teaching them language. We need to stick with English so they will know things. And we also give them, that, ah, the law. We give them our own culture, so they will know that. Then they can learn to write. So those kids will go on and explore whatever they want to. So they could, for instance, do their own research as they grow up. We need to teach them literature now, and we also need to teach them so they can acquire languages, different languages.

14 [[Tape off briefly for short break.]]

15 SE: You went to Kormilda College and Batchelor College?

16 Yes, I went there till...I went to Kormilda. I went there as a boarder and I used to go to Darwin High School. I went there until year 11, when I finished. I finished there but I didn't come back. I stayed in Darwin and did that, oh, what was it called, we worked there at small jobs and we also studied. I finished that and then I came back here and we went and asked the Council. They said, "Yes, there are three jobs available." No, hang on, two? No, they wanted three people to work at the clinic. So the three of us who had come back went there and worked there.

17 Then the Adult Educator we had then came to the hospital and asked the three of us who were there - June, myself and that Ngalkodjok Ngaldengebarli. He asked if anyone wanted to go and work at the school, because they wanted one Aboriginal man or woman to go and work there and help them. So I said, all right, I'd go. I didn't really know what it was about but I went and became an Assistant Teacher. I ended up working there for a year. At that time, hang on, the Bilingual Programme was still running here - the school still had it. That was in 1982 when I started. I didn't know about Batchelor College until Ngalingarridj came and asked me if I wanted to go to Batchelor. I asked what for? And she said to go into teacher training course. She asked did I want to and I said okay. So I applied for 1993, ah, 1983 I mean, I wrote that paper and it went to Batchelor.

18 That was my first time at Batchelor, the first time we went and stayed there. So when we went in that first year we all went together. And at that stage Ngalngarridj didn't come, so I went with Ngalwakadj B____ and Ngalngarridj B____. We went in '83, and B____ was doing her third year, Ngalngarridj was in second year and I was in first year. I went right through first year - I finished it and went straight into second year. But I mucked that up and failed so I went back and did second year again, and I finished repeating it. When I had done first year Ngalngarridj and Ngalwakadj had come here for practice teaching. They did it for four weeks, but they stayed here and didn't go back so it was just me - I stayed on by myself the whole of that next year following. Just on my own, I went on until I finished fourth year oops, I mean third year - well I did that and at the end of that third year I thought, "I didn't achieve anything much - I don't know how to programme for children." Then I heard about that idea about a fourth year. They were running it from Deakin (University) and whatsaname, Batchelor College, instead of me going to Deakin and staying there, they offered me something closer, which was an "enclave system" under Batchelor (College). So I studied there doing fourth year. Then at the end of that year I could see that, yes I could, whatsaname, do a programme. So then I finished, I came back so I was here in 1988 doing my first year of teaching.

19 At that stage it was a little bit different, because we didn't have support. We didn't have support from the principal or senior teachers. Nothing at all. So we just went ourselves and planned, and the next year following, one balanda lady came and helped me. We produced a programme together and because I had it the first time I went and worked at school, there was just no one (teaching) the early childhood, the pre-school to year one (group). There was no one there, only me alone, and I reckoned there were too many kids. I told that principal, "There too many children to take, from pre-school to year one. I can't do anything because the number of kids has got too big - about eighty kids." I thought, "I'll tell the parents." But we were all of us overwhelmed. So then. So I went and asked the union reps and they said, "Okay, we'll help you. If he/she can't get someone to come and help you we'll walk out," they said. I told them okay. So they went and told the principal, and the principal wrote a letter to Darwin and they said "Okay, we'll send one lady teacher." So she came, that lady teacher, and she was taking the pre-school while I took transition and

year one - I was taking them, but still there was a big crowd of children. So they put an ET2 there, no, it was an ET1 initially. They put him there so we worked together and it was okay. That following year, we worked together that way and I worked until, what year? 1996 when I went back again to Batchelor.

20 They offered this course again, the Education Administration course designed at Flinders Uni. It came from there and Batchelor took it on board. The reason that I went back and did Educational Administration was because I wanted to move, I thought, from teaching to other areas, so I thought to myself this would be good, so this year, ah, last year I finished that certificate, whatsaname, Graduate Certificate in Education Administration Certificate. I finished that certificate. This year I finished the Diploma in Education Administration. So that's it. I finished it.

21 Then last year I applied - damn, last year whatsaname, we (2) put in before the end of 1996 to ask Darwin and we phoned about that mentor programme they had for senior teachers. And they said yes. So in '96, sorry, '97, for one year we had it, not really for the whole year, but I more or less had a mentor for six months. She wasn't really a mentor either because we worked with other mentors, but in that case we appointed one woman to mentor us. But she, that white lady didn't really know what mentoring was about, so we more or less had to help her - myself and Joe. So then for six months I just worked there on my own. This year I worked six months on my own and I applied and got permanency. So I hold that position, so then if I want to, I can take a year's leave. It's okay because that position is mine. Well, that's enough from me. [*That's good.*] So what else?

22 SE: [[Talking about tape.]] *It's still running, don't worry. I'll go on to the next question.* [Okay.] *Now, the parents, with you as teacher, what do those parents have to say? What do they want you to do for them, those parents?*

23 They haven't come and told me what they want, those parents, but some of them do say, "We (exc) want to teach our own (stuff), Aboriginal, Aboriginal stuff, belonging to us, so that their thinking will grow up our own way. And in turn, the white people's way too, so that they will see what it all means and so they'll know what it's about, that other business. Instead of the two things missing each other each

other at school. We've been teaching lots and lots about the balanda way, and virtually nothing about our Aboriginal way." So they want both to be taught together so that maybe the meaning of things will become clear and they will therefore have good understanding as adults.

24 SE: *There are parents who send their children to school, and some who don't.*

25 Yes, some of them send them, some don't, but I don't know why. Sometimes we go and ask them about it afterwards, "Why not send these kids to school?" Some of them will just sit there and look at us. Some will respond, "They don't want to go to school. They get teased there." So we tell those parents, "Well, you should teach them so they'll learn that teasing is not something we should worry about. It's just one of those things that always happen."

26 A few of us know that in the past we didn't do teasing between children. Now it's the kids have changed, they've changed on us. So now we teach them so they'll know how to handle, whatever, that teasing. I say this because there is sometimes a child we can't stop teasing. He will say, "I don't want this teasing," and then he will tease others, and some kids will then go home and tell on him. The kids will tell me, but some of them will tell mother, or fathers, or grandfathers - they will tell them, the adults. Some will act on what that child says, but some children tell lies. And so now we tell (the parents), "These children who come and tell you things, sometimes they themselves are being silly in the classroom too. We see them. We hear them themselves, starting the trouble, and 'talking' to other kids. Then that child will go and tell someone, but he's doing the same thing himself."

27 SE: *The balanda people who are in charge of the Education Department, the schools, do they hold you responsible for things? Do they help you? Or...*

29 No. What I mean is, what they do is, they make policy from out there and then the document arrives here. Consequently here a lots of documents, for example one we have is, whatsaname, Behaviour Management Policy it's called, that one we now have. We end up with a lot of these. But this area of policy is not the same as doing things our way – not at all. In fact, we say to them, "It's different from the way we

look at things. Leave this with us and we'll produce something." And they say, "No. We're giving you this document, so this is what you do, you follow what's written in it." Then we say, "No. It doesn't fit." But they are stubborn, and they just send it out.

30 SE: *The Aboriginal people here at Kunbarllanjja, do they follow your lead in what you say and think?*

31 No. They don't really know, some of them, about the Education system, some of them don't understand, they just don't know much. That's why we want to teach them so they will understand when they make decisions, for example about ASSPA, for example about that money that comes. They have to make a decision themselves. They need to give them some ideas, and they need to see what that boss (woman) or hear what that boss is saying. So they can say, "Yes, that's settled, we understand what she's saying and she's right, or he's right, or..." So actually they will discern if that woman is right or if that man is okay, if she/he understands for example. But they can't understand this from a long way off, not what it really means. Because previously, here, it's as if they've had their thinking confused, and they've run out of ideas so what did they themselves actually want to see happen? But more and more of the balanda way was always coming in, so that they just gave up. It's as if they don't want to help their children. It's not happening. [*It's a big thing isn't it?*] It's true, we certainly have big problems.

32 SE: *Mm. Do you ever...as they say in English, do you feel like "the meat in the sandwich"?*

33 Yes. That's what it is, and it's all the time in fact. Because they are telling us to try, we blacks, to be the ones who speak to our Aboriginal teachers, but when they (departmental people) come and they'll ask you about things, it's "Always give them the departmental views. Remember you always represent the department." But we find that hard to do, because we've grown up in the black system and that's all we know. We're not separate from our own people, that would be terrible.

34 SE: *I'll ask this question in English. [Okay.] But you can answer in Kunwinjku if you like. Who do you think you represent? Do you feel like you represent the*

Department or do you feel like you represent the parents? Or the kids? Or yourself? Or...

35 Not myself, not my own views. It's the community, the people of the community and the children. The Department, that's the thing I work for and we've talked to each other about this. I told them, I said, "I find it really hard to represent the Department. I grew up here, I grew up in my way, and we don't just talk about ourselves. In fact, we talk on behalf of the community. [**Yes.**] You can't just disregard what comes from our whole upbringing. You white people are different from us in this. Because of how you grew up you go and work, you each think just for yourself and speak for yourself. You always say, 'I'll just do this', or 'I'll do that, just whatever I want.' With us, we don't do that. We always say 'We are all of us in this together, and we will I do this all together,' or 'We will do that together later', or 'We will do that together.' Or, 'We did that together.' " We won't depart from that "we" and "us", all that togetherness. It's as if it has made us bleed inside, where we feel it hurting us all the time. We find it a little bit hard because balanda people are used to that system of "I do this, I do that" because they are born into that system. Whereas we are born into a different one.

36 SE: Is it okay if I ask you something quite different? [Go ahead.] Can you talk about what in English we would call "teaching method"?. You know, for example, how you actually teach children maths or spelling or English or music or...Is it balanda or bininj way that you teach?

37 I want to do both. I want to teach them that no matter what that curriculum document might have in writing there about balanda ideas. In fact I teach them my way and I'll teach in both ways. Sometimes I'll use some English so that they can learn the balanda meaning, but I'll speak my own language when I teach in our way. I won't keep the two separate because those children I teach are really lost otherwise, so I'll teach them and they can grow up with both.

38 But, yes, really, for example, I teach some maths my way - I teach the maths differently. For example teaching about grouping - I used skin groups to teach that. And I used First Start so the kids could understand it from the different perspective

of our own way; kinship puts them in different groups, children or adults - they go to that system and we turn up as, some of us kundung (totem), some of us kunwardde etc.. We use leaves (from trees) to count because they're there, and because they don't have all the things in their houses, especially blocks or whatever. Our kids don't have that stuff, so we use things from out-of-doors that are around here.

42 SE: What about curriculum?

43 Curriculum, well that's... they should try to more or less make it more Aboriginal, as long as Aboriginal people have their say up front. But I reckon it's still written by balanda, and what's written is still basically balanda. We don't want them to oversimplify the Curriculum, to make it into simple English. We want it to stay in (ordinary) English because the audience we are giving it to are teachers who are trained teachers who can follow English. Some of it is all right. Not all of it is okay, and we can't go along with some of it, so when we look at that, we do it our way, using our method, applying it. And we put our own ideas into it so long as we are still following the curriculum.

44 SE: I'm wondering if the parents might possible want, for example, Kundebi, Kunbalak, a Bilingual programme where the kids write Kunwinjku? Is it possible to combine these things in the curriculum?

45 Yes, that's the situation. It's possible, but (with the parents) they told me when I asked them some time ago, "We want to do this." And I told them, "With this business, about our people's stuff: you want our language to come in and for you to teach about our own culture. Well then, you'll have to be prepared yourselves to come and work here. We'll all work together to make this happen, what you want to happen. This is not just for us teachers, but for all of us. If you want to do this, you all come and we'll help each other make it happen."

46 And I told them, "I've asked the education department and they say, they want to see evidence first, for one year. We need to create some sort of time slot, so they can see evidence of how we're teaching them, what language we teach them. Then if they come and see it, they'll say, 'Ah, so you're teaching them that language.'" Well

that will happen slowly, slowly. But it's up to us, this business. If they want to get into this process, well they can come and push it along. If it's only we teachers who push, it won't work.

47 SE: *What's the best thing about your job? Is there anything you really like? I mean, you've been talking about yourself, about all those problems you have!*

48 I do have a lot of problems [[Laughs]], lots of problems but always I look on the brighter side. I'm thinking I've already got authority, so now, if I want to make changes it's up to me. Because in this area I have the power to change things and I can start getting into new things, not only new things, but for example, with those people want to get into this language thing, well that might be one area we can set up to teach language or our culture. But again if all the balanda who work with us in education, together with us, if we all support that idea, everyone including the principal, well then maybe can all say "yes". But if one party is upset, well it won't work.

49 SE: *Um, hang on, just something briefly, if I could ask you, just before I turn over this tape. When bininj and balanda are learning, which one is likely to do better? Do you know what I mean? Will the bininj learn better or balanda? Which is more clever?* [Do you mean when they are working at something or when they are learning?] ***Generally.***

50 Yes. We, the black people, can learn quickly, they can quickly follow the meaning because you see, we're used to listening to balanda, so we can learn quickly. Whereas they (balanda) get confused. They haven't already encountered our way of thinking, the structure of the meaning is what they don't understand. Or our language especially Kundebe, which has a lot to it. With that they would have to be here for a long time if they wanted to learn our way because there's a lot of it.

51 SE: *I hear people say, some of the old people, "Oh, those white people are clever".*

52 They're clever within their own system, but within our system, no. Because they are quite distinct, the two structures, their structure and ours. Adults understand deeply what they've grown up with. [*MmMm.*] When an adult thinks, those are the ideas he's going to come out with. In our own way here, sometimes we understand each other, but we don't all have the same ideas, maybe we're all a bit different, but the underlying ideas are maybe the same, I think, because when someone speaks or thinks they reflect that same thinking. In some ways. Now, for example, the people who work as anthropologists have studied a little bit of our ways and some of them have concluded, "Yes, they're very intelligent." [*Yes*] That's how it is. [*True*].

53 SE: *Why is that some children learn quickly, and others only slowly? This is true among all people.*

54 It could be this: if they don't go to school much, if the adults don't send them, some of them just hang around at home, some of them just move around from outstation to outstation, and from community to community, and then they come back and they've forgotten what they learnt before. So they have to start to learn all over again, get that knowledge again. In that situation, we say to the parents about those kids, "Hey, you parents don't keep those kids (at home). You should always send them to school, so they keep going, so they can develop in their thinking. They should keep going all the time, so they just keep sticking with all those many ideas we teach them. There's not just a little bit to learn, there's a lot of things to know that we teach them, and they need to learn it well."

55 But it's also true that when we reach the end of post primary, well those kids are losing interest. At that age it's really important to have something else there. Perhaps an apprenticeship or that kind of thing. But there's nothing. Then they would be able to finish school and look forward to something. If we want to make progress, we have to work for it. We need to work every day if we're going to reach that goal. But at the moment, in that direction, there is nothing, and the community is not helping. Not the council. They could say, "All right, let's put in some kind of apprenticeship course for kids leaving school. We'll put the money up for them, so they'll tell the teachers that's all right. And you teachers, we want you to work harder on these kids." And teachers are willing to prepare and help kids, and to provide that kind of

education. They have to want some sort of apprenticeship course, so at the end of the, whatsaname, schooling, when the child finishes that they can go straight ahead and do maybe a little more study after that before they then go to the, whatsaname, jobs they want. Because every year kids will come to the end, and as soon as they are 17 or 18 they leave school. And there's nothing, there is nothing here for them. And this community is just getting more and more balanda, not more and more Aboriginal people. For them it's more and more CDEP. They just stay on Unemployment Benefit's. [*And balanda are growing in numbers*] And the balanda are just becoming more and more plentiful and they keep on taking the jobs - and that's very sad.

56 [[TAPED TURNED OVER. SIDE TWO STARTS AT 000]]

57 SE: Okay. Let's go again. Do you want me to ask questions? [Yes.] Okay. Now about language. "Culture Week": do you want to talk about Culture Week?

59 Culture week. It's rather good that. But they only give us that one time slot for it. It's good. But there's a lot they want to teach them, [[Talking about tape recorder:]] Hey, is that turned on? [*It's okay.*] This thing, Culture Week should become part of the curriculum, and we should teach from that. Like I said earlier, (we could teach it) through that Social Education Curriculum - that strand. It could be part of that, and then it would say, "Okay, go ahead and teach culture but use (a number of) different activities." Where it says what we call Social Education, it can involve lots and lots of different aspects. We should just select and mix them in with our own things. If we did that, well it would sort of make it meaningful and purposeful for (the children).

60 Then if they want to write in English, then we teach them, "This is how it is written. It goes like this." We would teach them as I said before, the different aspects of English like the different genres, what, with Procedure, Narrative, Retelling, all of that sort of thing. English has a lot. All those different kinds of genre are easy enough to teach if they want to learn that white...English, so they can speak it well. So long as we are aiming at that, then it can be done. So long as the children feel comfortable in what they're doing. So when they start off, they'll start off writing

from their own language. We won't be teaching something too different. So they won't be overwhelmed. Even though, yes, you might think they are learning, but still they wouldn't have really grasped it, understood what it really means. Now for example, it's good that they teach them fairy stories, or when they tell them stories, or poems or whatever, like Little Red Riding Hood. They might tell them that story, but what's behind it? What's the moral of that story? That's the aspect that confuses them, that they don't understand. And the kids will say, "Okay, she's teaching us this, so we'll just show her that we are trying." But they don't grasp the underlying meaning.

61 So that is why we want to come in and tell them some dreamtime stories. Those dream time stories have real meaning for us; they gave them to us so we could know how to behave because we go to sacred places. We would come and do that, so we can take them to the appropriate place and teach them about that dreaming: Why did it put itself here? What's the meaning of this? That kind of thing. So then they might learn in the same way that as in balanda culture they would learn their own moral stories, like from Little Red Riding Hood. So we want to get hold of those children for that purpose, before they start thinking, "Oh, I know what it means."

62 As an example, when I was a child, they told me this story, "The King with One Red Sock". I didn't know what it meant, but I still took part in that play, and spoke in English, but I didn't know what it really meant. What was behind the story? Nobody really explained to me that this was the moral behind the story. We all try, well anyway, I try to teach our own way first. It doesn't have to be like a Bilingual Programme, that's not what I mean. You could teach them your (Aboriginal) own way, and the kids could still write in English, though with the aim of us teaching them our culture. But yes, about Culture Week. The one week is not enough, it should be incorporated into the curriculum.

63 SE: I want to ask you some questions about how children learn. For example, when balanda children learn, sometimes they just watch what the adults are doing and copy them. Is that the same for Aboriginal children?

64 Yes, it's the same. They copy the adults around them doing whatever they do, and later some of them come and we teach them. Sometimes they'll say, "All right Come on. Let's fight. She and I. Him and me. Come on, let's you and I fight." So I say to them, "Hey, stop that! Have a drink and come back and play. You've been watching some bad stuff." I say to them, "If you want to play properly, then play this way: Maybe you can play going to the shop and asking for things. What I mean is when you go don't just say 'Banana'. When you want a banana speak English. Say 'Can I have a banana?' or something like that." You teach them that way. Well, we try to teach them. Yes, kids imitate. They watch what the adults do and they listen to what they say, and they more or less bring all that into the classroom. But I'll tell them, "No. That's not good." But then sometimes they'll hear things for example from the old people there telling a good story, and I'll say, "All right, let's talk about that story."

65 SE: Now with adults and children, [Yes.] do children learn the same way as adults?

66 Yes. If we teach a child in the right way, that child will learn just as well as an adult. But if the child doesn't listen to us, he just won't know. As is the case with those teenage boys who get themselves into trouble, go to court, then gaol, and then they come back, and then they'll come back because they never learnt anything. Their parents were slack and never tried to teach them properly. They would always take the child's side joining in his fights, and they spoiled him. They spoiled those kids. I always tell them, "Don't just join in your kid's fights, but turn around and give him advice. If you join in, he'll always come back and try to get you involved over and over again until you're completely sick and tired of it."

67 SE: Now specifically, can anyone learn something properly without being taught - bininj or balanda, young or old? Is it possible for a man or woman to learn on their own, with no teacher?

68 Well, now this one, I don't know. But with a child, he'll always aim towards doing something, even though his mothers parents might not even be there, he'll see what other kids are doing, and he'll go back and try it himself, that child. If he's

really very shy, he won't tell anyone, but he'll just go and learn himself. Sometimes it's like that. So long as he keeps on seeing the example from someone else, or other children.

69 SE: *I've seen a child just going along...*

70 In the case of a child who is just stuck there, doesn't know anything, doesn't see anyone, he just stays where he is, he just doesn't know things. But some of the children we teach in our class, some of them are very quiet. But they know a lot. They're little "quiet achievers".

71 SE: *Yes, I know about that.*

72 Yes. It's internal, it's deep inside them, so they know. So we tell them, "Your understanding is there underneath, and you have to bring it out." We encourage them, "You kids know this but why are you keeping it a secret? Let it come out so it can be written down and we can see what you've done. The teachers can see and parents can see how much you know." But some of them just keep it secret, hide it away.

73 SE: *What do adults or children get out of it when they look at a book. I mean, when I read, I learn. You know? Maybe a library book or...*

74 Mmm. Children learn that way. If they come every day, they'll learn, they'll learn. If they only come every now and then, then they won't learn. They'll tear out the page, or they'll just look at one page, maybe they'll just draw on it. We say to them, "This is not the way. You should come every day, so then you'll know what to do. This is how you turn over the pages." So, some of the kids learn. And we show them little caption words, little flash cards. Doing that, the ones who come every day will learn.

75 SE: *Now if an Aboriginal child listens to you, but maybe they just don't get it, what do you do with that child who isn't able to do something properly?*

76 I'd just sit with that child, and if I had a teaching assistant, she would help the others. That child who wasn't managing, I'd sit alongside him, for instance with maths. I'd sit with him and for example, have the MAB blocks, I'd use to teach him. And I'd tell him, "You come every day because I want you to learn this stuff." And I'd tell that child, "When you're at home, don't just run around, but get some coins and play with them. Count them, make them into a circle and practice writing the numbers". And I point out to the children, "With these numbers, write the name of that number. I want you to get into that sort of thing."

80 SE: Do you ever get strict with them? "Strict" I mean? [Yes.] Do you? What do you think about this?: Some teachers, whether bininj or balanda, may be very soft, they don't ever get tough on the children. [You mean balanda teachers?]

Teachers...

81 Teachers. When they get tough on children if they are being silly? [Yes.] They get strict with them then. [[Laughs]]. But kids, they can be funny things. The teacher will get strict with them, but once they know that teacher has a weakness, well the child might be saying, "Say that again." or "That, say that again." "Do that again." Well, that will be that. Everyone will get silly from then on. Well, not everybody, but some. And it will just go on and on until she gives up, that teacher. But we say to the teachers, "Don't give up. If you do, the child will just be leading you and ruining things for you. So you need to get tough with them."

82 Sometimes teachers find it hard, and they don't go and ask the parents about things, sit down with the parents, and talk with them about the kids. "This is what your child is doing. This is what he's up to. He's giving me a hard time." If a teacher does that, the child learns about (this contact with) his parents, and he'll think, "This teacher, my teacher, goes and talks to my parents, or grandparents or anyway, he tells someone all about it, so I better not be silly, because if I am he'll go and tell someone and they'll growl at me." But this doesn't happen, not at the moment. You won't see teachers going to talk to or see the parents and tell them. And they're always expecting we Aboriginal teachers to go out there and talk to them about the kids. Now we've already talked about this and both the parents and the kids know what we're talking about.

83 SE They push you, you mean?

84 Yes, they put pressure on us, yes they do push us, those other teachers, the whites. “Go on, you go, because you know the parents of the kids, so it will good if you go and see them.” Instead of saying to us, something like, “Okay, why don’t you and I go together and you can introduce me to the parents of this child so I can get to know them and they me. So that child won’t muck around because I’ll go straight to those parents.” [Yes.] Instead of using me as a sort of third party all the time, because using me that way means the parents will have the wrong perception. When the time comes for reporting, the parents will be expecting the teacher to just say, “Here!”, and give them a good report or bad report or whatever. That’s what I think. That kind of communication doesn’t really happen. It’s not on. [*You’re talking about white (teachers)?*] So, yes, the whites.

85 SE: So should the white teachers stay here or not? Or should we send them off. And if they do stay, should they learn Kunwinjku? Or...

86 Mm. At least they should learn our way, I mean a bit of it. Or, hang on, I’ll tell you about something a bit off the track from your question, but he just told me this: this person, his name is Graeme, the new teacher, well he told three boys, the three he was taking, “All right, on Monday I’m teaching you, ah, giving you a test on English.” And those three boys turned around and said, “Okay, you test us in English. And then it’s our turn, and we’ll give you a test in Kunwinjku.” [[Laughs]]. [*That’s excellent.*] And he said to me, “Oh, it’s easy to be a teacher, but it’s hard to be a student.”. That’s what he said. “Yes,” I said “Well it’s good there’s something different come up and you can work it out.” And I said, “Yes, I’d better give you some of those (Kunwinjku) names, and you can practice over the weekend.”

87 SE: It’s like they put each other on a contract.

88 Yes, but I don’t know if it’s good for the kids for him to know Kunwinjku. Could be, but I don’t know. It might be. I’ll check on whether they know where it is they’re learning Kunwinjku from.

89 SE: Probably from adults

90 And I think it's interesting. As a matter of fact I look at their spelling, and they've got some spelling books from the Bilingual programme. But, getting back to your question about the balanda business? [*Mm. I'll ask it again. Maybe later you will put the balanda out?*] Yes, we'll put them out because they have a problem with the kids, and if it's not working for the kids in the school, then they have to bring the school out to the community. Because I've said from the beginning you should take the school outside if you want kids to come into the school. That way you promote education with everyone because it's everyone's responsibility, education. If want it enough for the kids, then we will get on and show ourselves to the parents, amongst the community elders so they can trust us too. What is it that we're teaching? But if we what happens is we just remain isolated, then that's what we get, we just all stay separate.

92 SE: Okay, I'll ask you what is more or less a theoretical question [MmMm.] Hang on while I find this. Now in the past, a fair while back, when those ancestors used to paint on bark, did they teach children? Maybe they had the bark painting there in their hand and used them to tell stories, for the kids?

93 Yes, they used to teach them back then.

94 SE: And now, do they do that now?

95 Some of them still tell the stories, especially the ones living in the bush, yes, they tell them stories. But the ones here, they don't. They just make them (bark paintings) for themselves, to take and sell.

96 SE: That Nakodjok, that old man...

97 The old people, yes. They'll tell them stories about what they're painting, whatever picture they're painting they'll tell the kids stories, and the kids watch how

they do the painting and they want to hear the old stories, and that's quite true. They want that because they don't really know our history. No.

98 SE: Yes. Like, when I first came to Kunbarllanjnja I learnt a bit of Kunwinjku pretty quickly. [Yes.] You remember we used to live close by that Ngalkodjok, G___'s mother. [Yes.] She's passed away now. And I watched while they cut up kangaroo [Yes.] and that Ngalkodjok was teaching the young men and young women. She was saying, "Here. Cut here. And there, cut that. That part, you give that to him. You give him that tail part." [Yes. Yes. Yes] She was teaching. And also I heard that old lady and her husband. [Yes.] Of course they've both passed away now. But I used to listen to them telling stories. [MmMm.] And I thought, "Ah, there are two things they're doing. Specifically, one, like was explaining things and the other was telling stories."

99 Mm. Yes. That's what happens with us, like for example if we kill something, or someone's got something, whatever way this happens, we would then give some away. We used to give some to other people. We give it to them. But if not, the other person wouldn't fuss. He wouldn't complain or do what we see happening now when someone comes: "Knock Knock!" he says, "Give me some food! Give me some meat!" In the old days, no one did that. People would just wait patiently until someone came and gave them something: "Here!" It might have been the base of the tail or a foreleg, each part was significant. For example that's what happens with fish. Fish have lots of parts, so which part do you take if you caught it, or what bit does he get if he caught it? Whatever, you then give some to them. They used to give it to them. **[Yes!]** That the thing we are telling them, we're telling the children.

100 Some of our relatives, our families, just for example, because we keep everything in the fridge, whatever food is there, they'll just come in to the fridge, just open the door and have a look: "I'll grab this and this." But I tell them, "Hey, don't just arrive and come in and just grab food out of the fridge. If you want something, ask us for it. We're not strangers. We're bininj too!" At that, some of them say, "You're acting like balanda!" "That's not balanda culture. That is our own way of thinking," we tell them, "It's just the same; you don't go and just grab another

person's food. That's not on. We're family: your mother or her older sister we might call them, but you still ask."

101 SE: When you tell them about that, what do they say? About that?

102 Well, they say, "Oh! We didn't know that." They'll say. "Yes, you should learn then." "Don't ever think it's balanda or about the balanda way. It's ours. And we all have that same idea. So don't go always asking. We tell you about what they used to in the old days. If someone is always asking us they are just full of demands. You just stay quiet if a man brings food or is carrying an animal on his shoulder. Don't rush things and ask him. Just stay quiet. He'll go about and maybe he'll think of you and give you something, but if not, then it doesn't matter. But don't go and cause trouble or look for trouble by saying, 'Hey, you didn't give me any!' and then having a fight. That's not the right way. In the old days, the old people would see them bringing in some animals. They wouldn't ask. They would just wait. If someone went and gave them something, great. But if not, not. They didn't then go and make trouble. They just left it. 'Maybe next time', they would be thinking, 'he'll get something and give us some.' So then when it was their turn, and they would come back from hunting or collecting something, it would be, 'Here. You gave some to us, so here.' So people used to just give."

103 SE: And this would be news to them? "Oh!" they would say?

104 MmMm. But now if anyone asks and if we then say no, it's "Oh, you're acting like balanda." This is not balanda. This is our law, our own.

105 SE: Yes. You know E___? She begs from me at the shop. She begs from adults generally. she's only a little girl, and who is looking after her?

106 Yes. It's a bit different nowadays because in those times as kids grew up, the kids were being taught "Don't go begging from other kids, and don't keep asking adults. That is shameful." [*They would tell them that?*] "Oh, isn't anyone looking after you?" is what adults would say. They used to do that back then so kids didn't- [*They were there with them*]. It's also different in the way they used to go straight

home from school, and just go straight back home to the parents. The mothers were there and they had something to eat. [Yes] Now kids just go everywhere and just stay at anyone's place, whereas we went all together and stayed there. It was different. They would explain the law to them. But kids – some will sit and listen to us, but other, no, they'll just play, so all we can do is rouse at them. I don't know how many times we have to tell them before they'll stop that.

107 SE: I saw this the other day, maybe it school time, it was half past ten or so, on a school day, I saw adults taking children with them going down fishing.

[MmMm] **On a school day. T___, J___ all that mob, those (kids) [] they were off down there fishing. I was surprised. I thought to myself, "Hey, today's a school day? Why are they going off there today?"**

108 That's why we tell them, "School days, don't take (the kids) hunting. You take them hunting maybe on the weekend, not during school days." And I remind them now, I tell the kids, "Children! You know about weekend days." I teach them, "There are seven days there, with five days for school, so you come for that. The weekend, well that you can use to go hunting or fishing." (The parents say,) "Oh, hang on, we remind them, we tell them." But what they are being reminded of at school is different from what is being said at home.

109 SE: I've got a couple (of questions) here. I want to ask you about race and ethnicity [Mm.] And identity. Listen to this. Two kids - now this is hypothetical [Mm.] born in two separate places but on the same day. [Mm.] One balanda. One bininj. Suppose we steal them both and the white one we put with bininj people to grow up, and the black one we put with balanda people. So he grows up with the balanda. [Mm.] What do you reckon will happen to each of them as they grow up? .We're talking about that little bininj baby who then grows up in Sydney, with balanda looking after him. What will happen? And also here, that little balanda growing up?

110 Yes. It'll be the same, but slightly different. A child will grow up no matter how. If he grows up in the balanda way, that's what he'll know, but somewhere along the way, there will be something in his spirit or some sort of spirit reminding him, saying

to him, “You’re different somehow. You’re different.” Then he’ll go on after that, that child, thinking “I’m different.” And then other kids will tease him with, “They’re not your real parents.” So he’ll be thinking, “Yes, that’s true, but where are my real parents?” So he’ll go and look for them. And he’ll get into real trouble from that and all his problems will start, social problems. And he’ll start facing those problems. Whereas the balanda child would learn our way assuming good Aboriginal parents. They would tell that child the truth.

111 SE: So if he looks at himself and asks, “Hey, I’m white. What’s going on?”

112 “I’m white and you’re black!” Then they would sit down and not hide it from him: “Right, come here and we’ll tell you so you will recognize yourself. Come here and we’ll tell you the story.” And from that point they will know longer “have” that child. But they’ll learn to accept who he is and he’ll grow up one day and leave. He’ll leave and explore his own world, that white one. Already, his Aboriginal parents will have the idea about him, “He will leave us one day and just go. It’s inevitable.” Whereas the balanda parents will be thinking, as the child grows up, “Yes, you leave us.” But then he’ll become very emotional and upset, and again he’ll go through lots of pain, trauma.

113 SE: So they’re not really the same?

114 No. That’s right.

115 SE: That’s a hypothetical question. This next one is not hypothetical. Deep down inside, in our thinking and emotions, and our will, are bininj and balanda different or are we the same?

116 This is how I react to that personally: no matter what way we look at meaning of things, we are the same. No matter what system you grow up with, no matter what race you are, somewhere along the way it all mixes together, shares and looks into itself. I don’t know about all this, but older people will say, “Oh yes, he’s talking good sense.” Yes, it’s the same as in our thinking.

117 SE: I do have another question...

118 Because, you know, oh, is it okay if I go on talking about this? [**Good, yes, keep going**]. What I mean is, because I really believe this is the truth, no matter what we...no matter what race, different colour we are, but I believe that our Father God, I say he came and put Adam and Eve there. So every time you ask the older people, "All right then, who was there and made the earth?" "The first people. We don't really know." And I say, "So where did the first people come from?" "No idea. We hadn't developed then. It was just them." Meaning the first people, as we call them. Then that makes me think about Adam and Eve, that business, that kind of Christian story where Adam and Eve were the first people. Well to me, in some ways, God reveals himself in different ways to different cultures. That's what I strongly believe.

119 SE: Yes, that's why I love that question. I really like to talk about that sort of thing all the time. Um, This is just about your own thoughts: in maybe five or ten years time, what do you think will happen to you and to the school?

120 In five or ten years? Well, I'm hoping that one day I might go in as principal and maybe change a lot of things to suit what the people here want. So long as I can get help and support from these people here later on, and they keep coming, because if so, that's the place to start. And I will make sure everyone will know how what to support me on. What do they want to support me on? And I'll tell them, "I want your support for this. If you really do want to, then come and we'll work together to make it happen, not only for you, but for the sake of the children. Let's work together, and grow them up well." If they do that, we would then give the children a choice as they grow up and make decisions.

121 SE: Do you think it will happen? Are you "optimistic" as we (inc) say in English?

122 Yes, it will happen.

123 SE: Well, maybe you're getting tired, so there's only a few more things to ask you then we're through. And is there is anything else you want to talk about or you want to ask me about?

124 [[Laughs]]. Hang on, I've forgotten. Maybe my brain has gone as we say.
[[Laughs]].

125 SE: Yes. It's hard, and you've talked about a lot of things.

126 Well, hang on, I'll have a think about things, and there is a lot, then I'll come and tell you.

127 SE: Ngalwakadj J_____ took a copy of some questions and she's going to write answers. That was her idea, but I said yes, that's okay.

128 And she told me just now, as I was about to start, she said to me, "It's all right for you, you're intelligent." "No," I said, "I'm not intelligent," I said, "I've just come from that context, and so he asked me and I'm just helping." I told her that.

129 SE: Well, I think she thinks she might get a wrong answer, she doesn't realize this is an interview and you can't get wrong answers. [That's true.] Anything you say is okay. You might like to tell her that if you see her. [Yes, I will tell her.] I don't want to pressure her because I know she's busy looking after a lot of kids and working.

130 No, I'll say to her, "It would be better if you just go (to the interview) instead of writing it all out. Go to the interview and get it out of the way quickly." I'll tell her.

131 SE: It's not like a test. I just want to hear what she has to say.

132 Yes, that's what I told her, "It's your own ideas you should tell him. It's your thing. Come and talk about it. When he asks you anything, just tell him what you think yourself. It's not a test, it's just about ideas. He wants to help us by putting this together in a book. We could use this to run a RATE course. Write whatever you

like. Why? Don't worry about spelling mistakes. We don't like making spelling mistakes, but just write them anyway. We're not worried, we just want to see the ideas. Put it all there! We're interested."

133 SE: We can fix spelling mistakes.

134 Yes -later. It's just your ideas. Yes, that's true.

135 SE: Now, just two or three questions and we're finished. [Okay] *What do you think about this.* [What?] *What if I tape some young women and young men?* [Great] *Because, for example,* [I think it's good.] *Maybe I could ask them, "Do you like school?"* [Yes.] *Okay to try that?*

136 Okay. That's good. (You could ask them) "Do you want to come to school?" You could ask them, "What do want to learn about?" Or "What do you want to learn there?" [Yes] "Do you want to learn both?" Ask them this - "both, or just one?" Great.

137 SE: Because some kids, even littlies, they think about things a lot. They're smart. For instance they come here and turn up wanting colouring in, you know? They colour away, and they talk. I listen to them sometimes, I listen to them and they talk about all kinds of things! [Yes.] *They discuss all kinds of things, and I'm thinking, my kids are smart.*

138 Yes it's true. That's why sometimes when we are talking, we adults, we say to the kids, "Go away! You're too young to listen to this talk. This is just for us to talk about. It's not good you coming and listening to this. Get going." But some of them just go a bit further off [Yes.] and listen - they do this. [*They do that.*] Then they make a noise, and we turn around and look at each other, "Hey, that kid is listening to us."

139 SE: Yes. Some of those kids who were here [[List of children's names discussed.]] *They talk like mature women.* [Yes.] *Another thing. Is it okay if I interview you again later on, some time? Briefly* [Yes.] *Also, I've got an idea, I've*

got this idea, so that you could all meet together all of you I've interviewed so that you can discuss it.

140 That's a good idea. Yes. So we can hear what each other is saying. So for example, you know, maybe we could form some sort of interest group. [*Really?*] Mm. [*That book, if I do the book-*] All these ideas, I'd like to make it happen. And we'd be able to say to them, "No turning back. No giving up. We'll just go forward." [*And it may get hard sometimes, maybe.*]. I reckon. It'll be hard but we will try. We won't be going back. [*Yes*] If they want this thing to happen, and that's that.

141 SE: Some balanda here at Kunbarllanjja, what they're thinking is, they want to hold on tight to the steering wheel.

142 Mm Mm. That too. I want to point that out to everyone, but I haven't got time to teach all this. I've been learning myself how, and what this, that and the other thing are all about.

143 SE: Yes. None of us has enough time. I still want to really learn Kunbalak, Kundebe. I'm trying every day but there's just too much. So only some.

144 Me too. I'd like to learn that better. Kundebe I know a fair bit, but Kunbalak, that's different. My ngalkurrng, if he asks me something, I just don't say anything, I muck it up! So I don't answer.

145 SE: That in particular - I practice everyday, bit by bit, but there's just too much.[Yes, there's a lot.] *Is that it? Have we finished.* [*Yep.*] *Okay, I'll turn this tape off.*

[[Discussion about tape copies. Not transcribed.]]

TAPE OFF

