

2 Yes. In the old days when the old people used to do things, we would watch what they did including whenever they went hunting or gathering food, and they used to teach us. For example when they were cooking. We would go together gathering food, and sometimes they would show us the vines. We would collect food and carry it along, and we used to ask them, “Can we eat this sort raw?” “No,” they would say, or sometimes they would say, “Don’t eat that sort, don’t eat that one.” We would go along and they find a place to camp, make a fire and they would cook. They would show us long necked turtles, goanna, all kinds of things. Whatever it was, maybe djanay. Whatever they decided to eat (from the turtles) whether it was pulling out the intestines or opening up its throat, they would talk about it. “When we do this, we pull the insides of the throat out.” When they removed the guts, they would show us what they were doing as they roasted it, cooked it one side then turning it over to cook the other side. And they taught us why they used to slice along the backs of goanna or any kind of djanay, and about other things too. They would do it all, cutting the animal in half, we would have expected it to stay as one body, but they would halve it. Cutting right down the middle.

3 And the men used to teach the teenage boys how to stalk. This is back when they speared things, but also now, doing whatsaname, killing the animals with a rifle. But they still have to stalk the animal, I mean they creep up on it. All sorts of things they used to teach them so they would know how to prepare a kangaroo for cooking. They used to roast them in the fire, and they would, whatsit, teach them sometimes how to cut it up to roast it properly in the ashes. That’s the sort of things we used to do all the time. And whenever they made fishing spears, they would teach them: “This is what you do.”

4 And a child – a child maybe would have gone along and sat and watched what they did, so that’s what they learnt, its what they grew up with. “Is that okay?” “Yes.” And they in turn would go along and do it all. That’s what they used to do. And then their children, when they grew up and had them, the grandchildren of the earlier generation, well they would teach them too. And we women did exactly the same sort of thing. We continue to teach. They went hunting at times. Nowadays there are some people who are too scared: they’re scared of leeches, so they don’t go out poking around for long necked turtles or looking for eggs. They’re scared by

leeches and they're scared of snakes, and whatever. In the old days that wasn't what happened, adults just went out and into the wet and collected food. But they are frightened of crocodiles now. They just get scared, so they won't go out into the wet. [*Is that right?*] No way. That's it. Um, Okay to leave it there?

**5 SE: *What about talking about school?***

6 School, well, that's about white business. In the early days we used to go – when the missionaries, as they called them, had arrived. Our mothers and fathers used to put us there. So we went to school. They used to say to us, “Its settled. You just go so you will know that white business, so you can read everything.” So we went all the time. And its still the same now. We (inc) tell the children, “I'm telling you to go to school so you will know things, so you will learn about the law of those white people. Because those white people have a lot of law.” And that is specifically why we want to arrange for our children go to school.

7 But some of them just don't go. Some of them just stay at home. They'll say, “I don't want to. I'm not going to school. Its too hard when I go to school. And I'm not learning anything.” This is not so. Other, different things have changed their minds, those kids. They're not really thinking. All they think about, some of them, is going to “the school” at night, and just doing whatever their bodily appetites force them to do. That is exactly what is upsetting us as mothers and fathers. When they do all these terrible things - they go sniffing (petrol) and doing all kinds of things. That's how it is, and what are we (exc) going to do to help each other teach them the proper things, so they will do the right thing at school, when they're working, writing or reading, and all those things? That's what they'll do so they can learn the white business. If not, well they'll probably just fail to grasp that law. (I'm talking about) those other kids who want to do that.

**8 SE: *What about you, when you were small, did you go to school here?***

9 Yes, I used to go when I was small, I went right through until I had really grown up and then I left it. And now, we also want to teach them Christianity, gently. We can see it. I can see it does bring peace, so we (inc) can start again. But that's it. It's

Christianity we should continue with, what we knew as we (exc) grew up. That was what they used to teach us, those very first white people who came. And our mothers and fathers used to teach us. Sometimes we would go to Church and we would pray for the children, and we know that lots of white people help us, Church leaders, as we all go along together as a Church. When we look at things, we say that God the Father alone is at work, who gave us very good things.

**10 SE: Did you go to Kormilda?** [No. I didn't go.] **You didn't go?** [Not us, no I didn't go there. What else?]

**11 SE: Did you send your children?**

12 Yes. The two...two of them went. Boy and girl. Off they went, but they then left it. They didn't like it. Maybe it was just that they found out it wasn't any good, or it may have just been too difficult for them. I don't really know. But they both left.

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

14 Yes, I went.

**15 SE: You went as an adult?**

16 Yes. I did go there. But not now. I don't want that. It was for training as a Health Worker that I went. But I said I'd had enough.

**17 SE: It was difficult when you went?**

18 Well, it was okay when I was going there, but in my case, my husband, in fact that's always...he collapsed that one time, you remember? Well I left because of that, and he was sick for a long time. Yes, but it was good there, and I was learning. That white business about what you do working in hospital. It was good the way that lecturer used to teach us and help us, the whole lot of us who were in the course.

19 They used to teach them in the ceremonies, which we are still teaching the women. We explain the idea to them so they won't talk about Duwa moiety people when anyone from the Duwa moiety is around. And they learn what women do in our own way. We explain how to do things, so when they do things themselves, for example, when their children are going through the ceremonies the mother won't share that same food, but they will observe the food taboo. Later, when he makes his second ceremony, then that means they can both eat if there is a large animal hunted. Others will look at them and assess whether they are observing those food restrictions or disregarding them. That's why they teach a child, and his mother too. The mother will also organize him, supervise him all the time, at night when she and her son are both following the ceremony. And in the case of the Yirridjdja people, it's the same when that child sees the ceremony. They can both start eating food without restrictions together when that djarnbinj, that painted up stage finishes.

20 They'll (2) maybe want to go into two or maybe three (ceremonies). Then after that they can both eat from that animal. When that happens, the men for their part will praise that teenage boy when they see that he's observant of the restrictions. Well the men say in their context, as the women do in their context, "Yes. She's a good woman. She hasn't eaten any of those things. She's just gone through with it. So consequently her son has graduated, gone through seeing everything. That's really good."

21 But those who teach well, they'll just explain things again if someone gets upset, or gets angry with them. They would say, "Why did you observe that ceremony with all its laws there, and then keep doing the wrong thing by those elders?" You know, they say that to the mother and the child. "You've both done the wrong thing." And, listen, they'd be very angry. And they'll have to learn it together again, another go. So they would explain everything again because of that. That's what they do. So they can see if maybe he'll learn or if it's a woman, whether maybe she'll learn.

**22 SE: *In the past, I mean, what's name, when the adults taught you, did you actually watch what they were doing when they worked, or did they really teach you, [Yes.] make it clear to you?***

23 We did watch how they did things. We watched what they did, and they taught us, they would say to us, "Do it like this." [*Ah, yes.*] That's precisely how we kept it in our brains. [*Yes.*] Because we didn't write it down on paper. But still, that's the way we went along and we grew up with it.

**24 SE: And you learnt well?**

25 Yes, well, we still know it! And this was before books - there were none. What we did was we just held on to it then we went along to adulthood. And then in turn we teach our children, and then they do it. I've been thinking just about that girl of ours (inc), our daughter. She's got it. She hunts. She get animals. She cooks it herself. She spears fish, she's like a man. [*She knows.*] And she learnt it by watching what her father did when he was making fishing spears or whatever else he was doing. Then she would always do it. She was the only one who would help us (2) when we went hunting. Some kids are like that. Maybe quite a lot of them. But others are just too lazy, do you know what I mean? They don't want to do anything else, they just want to listen to white (music) so they can dance to it. But another kid will have different ideas, so he'll just go hunting. He'll go and get some game. That's what he does. Kids like that don't just want to learn about ideas, they've got practical knowledge, so they go gathering food and getting antbed for cooking with stones, kangaroos, and other stuff. All different kinds of meat - buffalo, emu. [*So he won't go hungry out in the bush?*] No. He won't be hungry, that man, because he knows how to get food, yes, and to bring it back.

**26 SE: What about your children? Did you send them up to the ceremonies, to the ceremonial place?**

27 Yes. I sent one, my boy and I went, we went together, then after that I stayed behind. You know that one I call Morlah? He went, and all us women went together. [*Was this here?*] Yes, here. Then after that it was just up to them and they went themselves. Those two went and so in the end they completed all the ceremonies.

**28 SE: So they're growing up. [Mm.] Do they like it? [Yes. I guess.] What about Kundembuyh, Kundebi and Kunbalak? Do you teach them?**

29 Yes, I teach them. So our son and I talk together using Kundebe. Sometimes he says to me, “Teach me some more.” I teach him that. [*He wants you to?*] Yes. He wants to sit with me and have me teach him. So I tell him, for example, “Nakeyward”, “Nababba”, what else? Whatever else. So I teach him, but he also wants to learn Kunbalak. So I do teach them that, well, I just tell talk to them in that, you know? I just speak Kunbalak and then I say it over again. If I see that they’re not coping I tell them in Kunwinjku. It’s the same with Kundebe. If I use Kundebe to talk to them about somebody, someone I’m talking about, they will understand. They’ll say, “Hey, we’re doing it.” Then they’ll say it again for themselves, so they’ll learn. But I’ve heard some who say, “We’re ashamed because we don’t know that (Kundebe).” And I’ve said, “It’s so we won’t be ashamed. That (language) is so you (s) won’t just call people by their name, do you know what I mean? When you (pl) use peoples’ names, you’re doing the wrong thing.” [*Yes, I see.*] That’s the message I tell them. We (inc) black people do not just call people by name, either men or women. Women will show respect whenever there is a male present, especially a son-in-law or a group of them, then in that case we (women) don’t even address each other using our names. [*Mm.*] That’s when we would use Kundebe. I teach them that too, so they will know it. Although, sometimes they forget. I hear some who don’t speak Kunbalak very well. But just wait, we (inc) will explain it all to them again, so they’ll all know it.

**30 SE: At the school, do they teach Kunwinjku – literacy, in a bilingual programme?**

31 Not now. They don’t teach that.

**32 SE: Yes, they’ve stopped that.**

33 They stopped doing it.

**34 SE: Would you like it to start again at the school?**

35 Yes. If they started it again it would be good, and I'd like to teach. We (exc) would teach short lessons for example about language so they can speak well, because some of them are speaking their own new kind of Kunwinjku. Maybe you've heard them?

**36 SE: What else would you like to talk about?**

37 Let me think, what else?

**38 SE: Think about this: with Balanda, when Balanda children are learning, sometimes they just copy the adults. Do black children do the same thing?**

39 Yes. They do exactly the same thing. Kid will watch things as they grow up and then they'll do it themselves. We'll say that about a child learning, who really knows things, "Oh yes. That's what his mother used to do, and she is very clever, so he can hunt all kinds of things." That's what I'm talking about. That child will know how his (parent) does things. For example if his father is a great hunter, then he will take after him, doing the same things. The child in turn will become a good hunter, he just goes and gets an animal, and he never comes back empty handed. He knows exactly what his father used to do to as he was looking for an animal, and how he killed it. Or how his mother used to collect food. Or what his aunty used to do.

**40 SE: You remember your father used to teach me. Once he took me with him.**

[Where did you go?] *We went in the car, and I was taking him to Jabiru. One day*

[Ah.] *And we were talking. And he was teaching me. About, whatsit, hunting.*

[Yeah.] *About hunting. I asked him, "Why don't you have spears?" This was when*

*I first came to [Yes.] Kunbarllanjnja. No spears, they had rifles. [Yes.] I asked him*

*and he explained it. He said, "For example, kangaroos have good hearing [Yes.]*

*and so we can't get close up to them." [] This was a long time ago, maybe in 1977.*

41 And (kangaroos) can feel things with the fur on their legs if someone is creeping up slowly. [*Like radar?*] Yes. Then he feels it and off he goes. And they take off very fast too. I've heard them talk, and that old man was used to say, "Don't creep up slowly, or he'll hear you. But when that, maybe it's a korlobarr, looks towards you,

they reckon he can only see his own eyelashes. He's got long eyelashes. So when he looks straight ahead, although you might think he sees you, he can't see you, so then you can run. But if he turns around, turns his body around then he'll see you from here, what we call the corner of the eye. He'll see you and that's why he'll go." But if he turns around, so they could see him straight on, then the man would run up, he'd get there fast on tiptoe. Then he would spear it with a spear. With a spear or maybe also using a rifle, its all the same, except it will go further. But anyway they say they see people from the corner of their eyes.

42 For emus, they used to break of some branches and carry them along. They do that. We do it in fact. Nowadays [] they'll follow the tracks of kangaroo, oh, I mean the emu's tracks. But then see them, she has very clear vision as they say. She doesn't see any spots. You know? So she can see them, and so when they've broken off the bunches of leaves, then they'll carry them along as camouflage, so they could then kill the emu by spearing her.

**43 SE: Nabangardi used to teach me that. He used to take me hunting up north.**

[Yes.] **For emus.** [I saw you there.] **And buffalo. And it was hard work!** [Yes.] **Now, you didn't work at school, but you did work at the hospital?** [Yes. I worked at the hospital.] **Did you work there over a long period?** [Yes.] **How old were you when you started at the hospital, here I mean,** [Nineteen.] **At nineteen you started. So do you still work there sometimes?**

44 Yes, I still work there, but for the present moment, no, I'm not. They ask me and I tell them, "Hang on." And for me to register would cost twenty dollars if I wanted to work again, so I've said, "That's enough." Maybe later I will. But for now I've said I'll just think about it.

**45 SE: Okay, so what would you say to this? Do you want Balanda teachers to copy Aboriginal adults when they teach kids? I'm talking about a Balanda teacher who come here to work.** [Mm] **Should he watch the adults teaching (Aboriginal people) and do the same thing? Or maybe he should just do things in a Balanda way?**

46 Well I notice at the moment, probably because its getting hot, they're taking them hunting a lot. The adults are taking them from here, I mean those Ngalbangardi women and that Ngalbulanj. They're taking the teenage girls to teach them how to collect pandanus leaves and make baskets. They have to cook the colour through from mandjurndum that some of them collect, and wirdilwirdil and windilk. They get this and cook it then the kids make baskets or whatever. And the men in turn are teaching dancing, just as the women do. They teach them to dance. This is our (exc) culture, Aboriginal culture. And they also teach how to cut and make didjeridoo, and sometimes how to make spears, and fishing spears and how to paint on bark. *[There's a lot.]* Yes. What else do they teach them? And those kids who attend school, we involve them too. For one week they sometimes hold that, "Cultural Week", you know? That's what they call it.

**47 SE: Culture week.**[Mm.] *What about books? If a child looks at a book, looks at the book, does he learn anything?*

48 Yes, he learns something. And *[He learn for himself?]* Yes, he can learn by himself, he in his own way or she in hers. He'll be looking at it, then, you know? A white lady or white person who's there will read aloud for him that story from the book. And he'll go and find a book and tell him about it. That's how he reads that English language.

**49 SE: So, a long time ago, when there were actually no books, when they painted on bark, did they teach them while they had the bark there, did they tell the kids to look at the bark?**

50 [[Laughs]] I don't know.

**51 SE: Maybe they did that?**

52 No. Sometimes they were painting, maybe a "djang", those people. And sometimes they would ask them, we would ask them, and they would talk about it, tell a story or something.

**53 SE: I heard Nakodjok, that old man Nakodjok, and he put the bark painting on the ground, and told a story. [Yes.] He talked about what he had painted. [Mm Mm.] Did other people do that in the past?**

54 Yes. A long time ago they used to do that, and they also taught us about djang. They would tell us stories in the late afternoons when they made fires. They would tell stories about djang, and sometimes about what the first people did.

**55 SE: About country?**

56 Yes. They told us about that! But nowadays we don't do that, or they don't do it.

**57 SE: Did they show you the country?**

58 Yes. And they also told stories about where the djang were, and where it came from and where it went and put itself. They told us about all of that.

**59 SE: Were they, those adults back then, strict?**

60 Yes. They were strict, and they would sometimes say, "This is restricted food for you, so don't eat it." They used to put us women under that restriction. Goanna, Bandicoot, we didn't eat either of those, or djarnay. They would say, "Don't eat that."

**61 SE: Nowadays, should teachers be strict or not? Is it okay if they hit kids or tell them off?**

62 No. They shouldn't hit them. Some of them are very hard on the kids, and sometimes they punish them, so they say. [*Balanda?*] Yes, the white people. But with English, you know? Maybe they'll get to know it eventually but they do make mistakes, maybe with spelling, and they reckon nothing is done, (teachers) just leave them to it. That's not good as I see it. As I see it, in the olden days they used to teach us how to write English properly, I mean we used to produce what you call sentences, properly. They would help us and as a result, we learnt. Now though,

children will write a story, he and others about six or seven years old, this child who is writing, you know? And he'll muck it up, it will be all mixed up. Adults do that too, and its happening, they reckon, with the post primary students. No one helps them.

**63 SE: *Have a look at my finger. Just here.*** [[SE Shows GN scars form high school caning on his finger.]] [Mm.] ***They caned me.*** [Your teacher?] ***Someone blamed me for something and I got caned.*** [Yes.] ***I hadn't done any homework.*** [I see.] ***He was a hard man. Hey, this tape is finished.***

[[TAPE TURNED OVER AND REWOUND TO START AT 000. TEA BREAK.]]

**65 SE: *You didn't get elected to the school council?***

66 No.

**67 SE: *Do you want to talk about anything else?***

68 There was something else, what else? Hang on. I'll think. The other Council, the actual Council, with that, yes, I am in fact a member when we have a meeting to talk about our homes here. So sometimes that's right, I'm a member.

**69 SE: *Okay. Do you want to talk about it?***

70 Well, I'm a member of that (council), to talk about this community.

**71 SE: *This is the "Community Council"?*** [Yes.] ***Do you (pl) ever talk about the school at the council meetings?***

72 No. The school has its own council. The School Council. Its separate. But about your question, if they have a problem, they could bring it to the main council and we would talk about it. They can ask us.

**73 SE: Now about kids, why is it that some kids learn quickly and as you know, others more or less learn only slowly?**

74 With some of them we (exc) say they think well, they are clever, and with others, its like they can't think well, they don't know much, its as if they get confused.

**75 SE: What about a teacher, a good teacher, I mean who does good for the kids, so they really learn a lot, what does a good teacher do?**

76 He gives the kids some help, he really teaches them. But some just don't. He'll just not bother with the class. He doesn't help them very much. And that really confuses the kids. So some of them consequently just stay at the one point, and think, "They're all better than me, they write properly, and they can talk (English). But I just don't understand. I'm right behind." And he'll say, "I don't want those other kids saying to me, 'Ah, he's no good!'"

**77 SE: Well what about a child who maybe does something wrong, who spoils things for the other kids?**

78 That happens now. And I notice they don't get very angry at the kids. They might get that one and put him in the corner, or they might make him wait outside, so I'm told.

**79 SE: I've found another question here. Who learns better, Balanda or Aboriginal?**

80 I don't know. I really don't know. Maybe the blacks. [[Laughs]].

**81 SE: Yeah, I don't know either. What I think is, I'm slow. Only slowly do I learn Kunwinjku.**

82 Yes. Well, it's the same. You know some are clever. And some learn fast, English. And some just don't among the kids, I mean the ones listening to rock and roll music, going to disco, all that, maybe going to dance. That's all he'll learn about.

That's no use. Its nothing. We'd (exc) call it rubbish. If he started doing some writing we'd look at that and approve. If he can do English properly, they'll say to us, "Okay then. Maybe this child is good." That's where we're heading. That's the way we adults see it: If someone can't write, he's brainless. He just listens to rock and roll music, which he can identify. [*You mean at school, or whatsit?*] At home too.

**83 SE:** *Should we all meet together later on, all you interviewees?* [Yes. Good.] *It would be good for you to discuss things.*

84 Yes. Good. We'll meet together and talk about it.

**85 SE:** *And there's another reason. You all might want to tell me something.*

86 Yes. Good.

**87 SE:** *I'll interview some others.* [Yes.] *Kakkali, you might be coming tomorrow? Ngalwakadj and Ngalbulanj too. But there are no men. I want to listen to some others, men. Maybe next week I'll finish this and A\_\_\_ Nabulanj and I will work together and write it out. It could take six weeks for us to do that.* [Yes.] *After that it would good to have that meeting. I'll give you all the written versions to look at.* [Yes.] *In two languages.* [Yes. Good.] *Will it be okay to ask you things later on? Something?* [Yes.] *Maybe briefly?* [Yes. Good.] *Well that's it. I won't ask you anything else. But, oh, you've talked about everything. You mentioned morals, hunting, school. That must be the lot, eh? Oh, hang on, there is one other thing. You know when some teachers teach kids they'll make it clear, explain things to them [Mm Mm.] and they (the kids) will practice, they'll practice doing it. But some just leave it up to the kids to just learn for themselves. Is this good or bad?*

88 Yes. I see them, some who ask about what they see in the books, and they'll say to them, "Do this, write this way." Maybe. But what about those who just say to them "Here you go. Here's a book and here's a pen. Grab them and write for yourself." Well, the ones who are clever will then go ahead and write whatever they've seen. They'll say, "Oh, right. I'm doing this!" Then when they've written it

all, maybe finished it, they'll ask her, "Come and look at this. I think I've done this right." But the others who don't ask, well, they are just left, the ones who don't know are just left. But some (teachers) will explain things, "This is how you write it." Both white and black, some of them when they take the kids and explain things to some of those kids.

**89 SE: That's great. Those people from Manmoyi have come to Oenpelli and they've been pressuring me. They want to really know how to read. So they can read (Kunwinjku). [Yes.] So we've been teaching them in the mornings and afternoons every day. Its good they're coming. Those Ngalkangila ladies, and that old Ngalwakadj lady. [Yes. She's their mother's mother.] Ngalwamud. Its great. And Nangarridj. [Mm.Yes.] I'm happy with them. [[Talking to NN who has arrived.]] Okay, listen, Kakkali, do want to (do the interview) today or tomorrow? [NN: Leave it till tomorrow.] Tomorrow. Okay, have a think about it. I don't want to keep on asking you questions. [GN to SE: Tell her about it.] If you can just talk about whatever you want to yourself. About nowadays, the old times, Aboriginal stuff, Balanda stuff. Anything about how children learn, or adults learn. School. [NN: Hang on a minute. Have you two finished already?] Yes, just now. We're just finishing.**

90 Yes. We've been listening to each other already. So that it and tomorrow he'll give us (the tape). [[Speaking to NN]]. He won't give you that tomorrow. He'll record you. And when you finish then after that... And think about it beforehand, about whatever you used to do with the old people. [NN: (Inaudible)] Yes, that would be good. [NN: What we did in the old days.]

**91 SE: If you like, it's up to you, but if you like I can ask you lots of questions.**

92 GN: [[To NN]] Is that okay, if asks us? Okay?

93 NN: Mm Mm.

**94 SE: I'll ask you for example if you went to school. Talk about that.**

95 NN: I went to school and it was really horrible! [[All laughing.]] Yes.

**96 SE: Okay, that's it.** [NN: So, tomorrow?] ***Tomorrow after whatsit, like maybe three o'clock. That's right. Because at three I finish with teaching them and I come here.***

[[Some personal discussion – not transcribed.]]

TAPE OFF.