

2 Okay. In the past, in the old people's time, as I grew up my mother taught me. My father taught me too. The adults used to hand us over to the old people who would teach us: my mother's mother, Kakkak, Ngalbangardi, she was Ngalwurrik clan, well, she taught me ideas. She was an elder, and in fact she gave me a lot knowledge, she kept on giving me an education. Actually, I could lose eventually, but it will keep going for a long time, so we can really know those ideas like the old people did while they were still alive. Some of them are still alive, but now the white man's world has arrived in a big way.

3 As for the children – I haven't visited the school, I haven't been to see what they do with them there, but the school is good. But, about what you were saying, we (inc) are teaching them, so the kids will get hold of the most important part of education. And the Mardayin ceremony is getting a bit less important now, and so I'm thinking of changing ceremonies, I'm talking about which ceremony. Mardayin has almost died out. The Lorrkkon is dying out but the older people who are still around now used to maintain the Lorrkkon. Kunabibi, its okay, its still going as is the Yabburlurrwa, where we are just now teaching the young men. Yabburlurrwa we teach them and Kunabibi, and also they're teaching some Mardayin. Lorrhkon, only a little while ago they had that, when I was young. My father taught me the Kunabibi. It was the first ceremony. Then later on, later, I watched the Yabburlurrwa and the elders took me through that. They taught me about it.

4 So I got that, and I'm hanging on to it. I've still got it now. I've still got it now and we (inc) will teach the kids, both sexes, young men and young women. In fact, we're teaching them now so they will have a firm hold of that teaching of ours. They'll really have hold of "hard" Kunwinjku. There's "soft" Kunwinjku. but we (inc) speak "hard" Kunwinjku.

5 SE: *Keep on talking.* [[SE talking briefly to visitor out of microphone range.]]

6 Yes, in the past, the adults used to take them and show them how to make spears, how to straighten them. They went hunting for kangaroo and speared them. Nowadays they use rifles. And grog is affecting us badly, so it could be we're not teaching the children properly. And some of them really want to learn. I mean, when

I was at school I used to see the old people coming from my family, my uncle, or my mother's father, they used to come to the school to teach us how to cut bark for painting and peel it off, or how to straighten spears. And they used to teach us whenever we went anywhere, if we got muddled up a bit, so we would know what to do in the bush. They taught us how to twirl sticks to make a flame and how to make shelters to camp in.

7 Nowadays I just don't see this happen at school, as I used to see it before. There are some Aboriginal people, elders, now, who are interested in teaching. Like what used to happen when we (exc) went to school. They used to come and teach us the dances, so we could dance. And the women used to come and teach them their stuff, how to collect pandanus and make dilly bags. And it was the same with us. Those people who taught us, well, they are all gone, finished. Now there is only that Nabangardi, Mandjurlngunj clan. The adults see him there now and they ask him about the teachings, or about the old people - where they came from. Or where their grandparents came from - their Doydoy (Mother's mother's mother), or their Mammam (Mother's father).

8 And now, what we're teaching about now is Kundebi. That is a very important thing for children. Kundebi is when we say things like, "Berlohkwarre", "Nakurndjewarre". That is really the real you and I show good manners, for example if you and I say, in reference to someone, "Ngorrkbelko Namaninjkali, where is he?" What I just said I gave as an example. [*Mm.*] Yes. I'll explain about Kundebi. That's the one, that's our language, put there for us by our Djongok and Mawah forefathers. That Djongok, as I call him, he's not my father but his father, that's how he's related to me. Now the relations between that Djongok and Mawah as I call them - Mawah was that Djongok's father. They all fit together like parts of the one tree - it goes along, goes round and round - what people call in English "The Family Tree". So that's where we come from but nowadays its coming apart slowly - which is why you are tape recording me now - making that book so we (inc) can teach children. So they can really understand it, and say "Yes, we're going back, we'll get right back."

9 Now, for example, my family, my children and I live with their grandmother, my mother. I tell them stories, and I say to them, "Learn Kundebi. Yes, you make sure

you get that Kundebe and keep it. It's wrong if you just go along and use people's names, or you just say 'Where is he?' - well that's the wrong way to do things. The old people didn't do that, they didn't teach us that way. That's wrong." Old people nowadays, we ask them using Kundebe. If we don't use Kundebe, the old person won't understand us. If (I'm talking with) an older person, for example that Namarndjurlngunj brother of mine, or that Djalama brother who is Narrongalkki as they say, well if I use Kundebe he will know who I'm talking about. Or I can also refer to someone by their clan name, for example I say, instead of "Where did Dad go?" "Where did Nabalengarrku from Ngalingbali clan go?" In that case he will know who I'm talking about. Or for example, if I say, "That brother, the same skin as me, the Marndjurlngunj man", well he would know who that is too. "Oh, I know who you mean", he would say. "There's that Namandjurlngun bloke here." He would know who it was. We (dual inc) don't go and use peoples' names - that (behavior is) "Debiwarre" - "Where did he come from?. "Who taught him?" "Who taught him law?" That's the law they taught us, those elders. It was good.

10 We used to go to school a bit. They (the elders) used to come there when I was at school, this was in my school days, [[To SE]] before you arrived here Nabulanj. The elders used to come and be there for us, not only did they teach us about spears, bark painting, making fire, tracking animals (Wiribbarra Manbolh they call that) but we also went the right way. They used to teach us the right thing to do: they would say to us, "Don't argue with each other - that's wrong." [MmMm.] Those elders used to do that back then. [**But now**] they swear at each other about fights they've already had.

11 (Back then) when they did that, they didn't just come without teaching us, I mean, oh, I've already talked about them teaching us bark painting. And the women teaching (the girls) how to make mats. No. They also used to come and give us moral teaching. That's it. I'll stop there and see if you want to ask me something.

12 SE: Okay. You, when you were little, went to school here? [Yes]. So who was your (pl) teacher?

13 My teacher was called “Miss Charnock”, but I don’t know her first name. [Dorothy.] Yes, Dorothy. In those days we didn’t say their names, for example we would have called you, Nabulanj, “Mr Etherington”. [Yes.] Or you, “Mr Manakgu”. Yes, “Mr Wurrkgidj.” That’s how it was. We used to put that (title) “Mr” on the name. Nowadays I hear them using first names. Sometimes.

14 SE: When I first came arrived in Kunbarllanjja, Dorothy Charnock worked there at the school. We (2) worked there for one year then she left. [Yes, I was still going to school then.] **Yes. When I and Nabulanj used to work together there -you know? Yeah. Now, about ceremonies - did you go to the ceremonies when you were young?**

15 When I turned thirteen. [Yes, was that the first one?] Yes, I went to it. Now, I won’t talk about this in Balanda way. [Okay, good.] In our (inc) way - do you understand? [Yes.] I went to that, and got that education. That was because they really taught us - my father and his father taught me there. “This business really disciplines you. Don’t go and just muck around any more!”, they told me. That was at the Kunabibi. [At the Kunabibi?] Yes. Kunabibi. That was the one I saw first.

16 SE: And your children, you send them to school (to learn) about Balanda business?

17 Yes. I send them. They go some time. Sometimes they don’t want to.

18 SE: Do they like it or not?

19 They like it. One of the girls likes it very much and she always goes.[] but I guess, the whole lot. And the youngest boy, the last one, [S___?] Yes. He likes school - he likes that school about Balanda stuff. [Really?] But he also comes home and learns the Aboriginal way.

20 SE: When you teach them at home?

21 Yes. For example, like, we go hunting together, when they want to, we go hunting together. Nowadays of course we use rifles where in the old days we were taught about spears by our fathers and grandfathers, or our uncles would teach us about it. In fact I still want to know how the old people did things. I'd still like to know how to use a spear to hunt. But there's no longer anyone here who can throw one properly - and that's a bit of a problem that is. The old people didn't [] forever.

22 SE: *And your children, you will send them so they go up to the ceremony, later on, in their turn?*

23 Yes, when he's older - the two of them when they grow up can go together. Might they'll both go up. This can happen to them when their whiskers begin to sprout and they start shaving.

24 SE: *You do that whatsitsname, Yabburlurrwa, you're (pl) holding, so have you been teaching the young men [Yes.] at that?*

25 Yes. I've got that Yabburlurrwa ceremony. I call it my "Mother". Mother. I run it. They call me "Djungkayinj", [*Mm.*] which means "Boss" as I would say it. [*Yes.*] It belongs to you and me, its ours (inc). Its for the Yirridjdja so we run it for them, we Duwa moiety men. With our (inc) own ceremony, my business, I as Nakodjok - the people in charge of that are like Nawamud or Nawakadj [*Yes.*] or Nakangila - my uncles. But now this ceremony of theirs, belonging to Duwa moiety, oops, I mean Yirridjdja, sorry - this Yabburlurrwa - it belongs to Nakangila, Nawamud - all of them, so that's why I run it. Naburlanj, Nakodjok, we all run that ceremony. Now, we can discuss the ceremony because a little bit of this is public knowledge, [*Yes.*] and we are the same Moiety. But to take it any further, we (inc) couldn't discuss things with someone unless I had sent them through my ceremony myself, you understand? Then he'd see it.

26 SE: *When you teach the young men do you act strictly towards them?*

27 Yes. More or less. I don't act tough towards them, but sort of, like in a Balanda way. Yeah, something like that. Its not like a get tough. The ceremony itself has

taught us from before. The old people had a long time ago - those first people, we (inc) don't really know, but they created it earlier. And we (inc) continue to follow it wherever. There's a lot of other men too, your sons that you've come up with to the ceremony. – and his son will go up and so on. It just keeps going , it goes on and goes on. Until we die maybe. I don't know.

28 SE: *If they don't get it right, then you'd go crook at them maybe?*

29 Yes. Yes. If they get it wrong I go crook at them sometimes. That old peoples' business is quite difficult. We must keep that Yabburlurrwa running permanently. We keep it running, but while its on we'll say, "Take notice of this!" If I see someone being silly, if I see him, well he'll have to try a second time. We "rewind", we take it back [*Yes*] so he runs through again. Never mind that he's already seen it, still he goes back again and runs through it. [*Mm.*] He runs through another time. It's a hard law, so he does it little by little.

30 SE: *Do some of them learn well?*

31 Some of them learn well, yes.

32 SE: *You know what I mean, some really learn well - some don't, only slowly.*

33 Some of them. Some of them, it might be three or four times and they might really get it. To some extent that was the case when I learned that law from Dad - my father. I've got it. So just once I ran through it and they taught me, those old people, and I got it. Fine. Some people are clever - you know what I mean? And some are not. [*Yes.*] The clever ones who have good brains, they learn quickly. For example with kids, when we are teaching them, (we say) "You say 'Nangarrkkang'", or "You say 'Djongok'" or "You say...". And he gets it quickly, well that means we know he gets it quickly, he does, or she does. Or again, with Kundebi when we (inc) teach them, we might sit down and teach a child all day long for one day. We teach him and he learns fast. He learns it so the next day we don't have to teach it again. And we would say, "Yes. He's intelligent." Or "She's clever – she learns fast." And also

with women - women are, well, a bit clever. So therefore they learn things even if no one teaches them.

34 You know what happens now if a child goes to school. He goes there and the teacher says, “This book, look at this book. And we write this like this. We write like this, look. Look at this as you and I are talking, we’ll stay together, do you understand? We’ll go through it twice.” [*Yes.*] This is like...what do you Balanda call this? You (pl) say, “Repeat”. Know what I mean? [*Mm*] Yes! That’s right. Yes. “You repeat just what I say.” “I’ll say it, then you say it.” Just like the old people used to do. They used to talk back and forth among themselves. That’s just what happened with my father Nabulanj. He spoke, then I would speak. [*Yes, that’s good.*]

35 [[Tape off. Tea break and personal discussion.]]

36 SE: *Yes, now I’ll start again. Okay.*

37 Yes! That’s what I’ll talk about. We used to copy one another’s words, or follow each other’s speech. That’s what the old people used to do before. They did that. For example, my grandfather Nabangardi when we lived together - well, Nabangardi used to talk about things when we were together. It was just like in the English language. He would talk about hunting kangaroos for example. He would say, “I went...” and I in my turn would say “You went...”. “I went” - “I went”; “I went and looked” - “I went. You went and looked.” That kind of thing I’m thinking of. That’s how it works and maybe even now. The kids think, “We should copy them.” Kids think like that.

38 Now, with some of the young men, when older people haven’t spent the time teaching them law, or they’ve died without giving them any teaching, they’re saying to us (inc), “Why don’t you talk to us?” Would the old people have said, “Why are you copying what I say. Stop. it. Listen to me! Oh, you don’t know about that?” Is that what the old people used to do? Okay. That’s what I mean.

39 SE: *Great. What you’re saying is really good. You know years ago, like Nangarridj, ah, that old man Lazarus, [Nawarddjak]. Yes! He used to take me*

hunting [That's interesting.] *and he would teach me.* [Yes!] *We used to go quite a way, the two of us. He would take me a long way with him - after kangaroo. We would climb up the whatsit, rocks.* [Yes.]. *And there he would be teaching me, all the time. It was good. He didn't tell stories, but I just watched him. I watched what he did.* [Ah, you watched what he was doing as you went along.]. *So, is that what kids do? Or young men or young women? They just watch what people do.?*

40 Young women - I don't know about that. Young woman are women's' business. But I know about the young men. Yes. They watch us just as with you and that Nangarridj. The same way, yes. About learning the law - they watch us when we go hunting and we also teach them. We say, "Cook it this way. This is the way you cut it up and cook it. [Mm] And don't eat it all yourself. [Oh yes.] You all eat it that animal, you eat it - say five of you. Five people eat it. (it could be ten!) - a group of men together should eat it. Not just you alone eating. You cut up the leg that way, you cut it up thus into little pieces. Small pieces. And the whole group shares."

41 That's the sort of thing we teach the young man [*Good.*] who wants to know. He says out loud what he wants, he say, "Yes. I want to go along. I want to see so I can learn all the time. Then in my turn might be one day I'll have a son, and I'll teach him.

42 SE: Yes. That's what I'm on about. Now, that mother of yours, well she goes to Church, and I've been wondering if she used to teach you Yiwarrudj, you know, about Church? [Yes.] *When you were small?*

43 Yes. That was when they were here, when the missionaries arrived here and stayed. That was the Yiwarrudj. Yes, Sunday School also I really liked that, and they used to tell us stories about that Yiwarrudj.

44 SE: You went to Sunday School? [Yes, we used to go to Sunday School.] *But now they don't have it?*

45 No, they don't have it. Fellowship night - they used to have. They used to do that for us, and we would make it happen, and what we used to say was, "Yes, for the

choir...[]"We (inc) used to sing. Every time we would go we used to go in the lead, out the front, to where they had the guitar. We used to sing there, us kids. I think about those days back then, they were happy days then. It's all gone now. It's over. Half those old people have left us now and gone one.[MmMm].

46 SE: Okay. I'm finding a question to ask you. I've written some questions. Did you go to Kormilda? [I went.] You did go? [Yes.] Was it good?

47 I went there. When I first went, the first time I went, the very first, well it was the very first time I went. I didn't want to because of my mother and my mother's mother - she was the main one that Kakkak. I left them here and so I just kept thinking about this place, here. So I didn't want to be there. Earlier on I had wanted to. But (when we were there) we just had to do things only the white way - you know what I mean? [MmMm.] We didn't go any other way, not like here (in OenPELLI). Here I could go two ways. Two ways I used to go, white way and black way - that was (what happened.) Here, mostly I preferred here.

48 SE: And Kormilda - did you go by yourself, or did you all go together?

49 A bunch of use went, yes.

50 SE: What date was this, 197...

51 1974, just before that whatsaname hit us, before it hit them [Cyclone?] Yes.

52 SE: And you had come back here for Christmas. You know at the school they used to have, in the past, they had that Bilingual Programme, you know? When they taught them two languages? [Yes.] That's why I came in the first place to Kunbarllanjja. I worked there. And...they stopped it happening, they left it. So, would it be a good idea if they started again?

53 I would say yes. It would be good if they start again. In that way, the children will not lose hold of the songs which belong to us (inc) black people. Both, they should learn and they should have them both together - white and black. They won't lose

their grasp of it. Some nowadays are letting it slip, I mean the older ones among the young men and women.

54 SE: MmMm. Also a lot of Kunwinjku men and women work there.

Ngalkamarrang, you know? [Yes.] Actually, she's become the deputy principal.

They gave her the job. [That Ngaldjalama lady?] Yes, her. And they put her in that

important job as the Deputy Principal. What I mean is Jan is the boss, the

Principal. But Ngalkamarrang is second. ["...in charge" as they say.] I have

worked with her, oh, we used to work together, lots of Kunwinjku people - we used to all mix in together there...

55 What if I ask you something...can I have a turn and ask you? **[Great!]** Now, when you came originally, you know, when you came did you just come to that job originally when you first came, because I heard that you just learnt (Kunwinjku language) very quickly – you just started talking.

56 SE: Yep. So why do you ask?

57 Oh, just that, that's all. I just wanted to ask if you learnt this Kunwinjku really quickly.

58 [[GW gestured for the tape to be switched off so he could suggest a strategy for dealing with questions about some aspects of ceremonies.]]

59 SE: Oh, right. Okay then. Hang on, I'll press this.

60 [[Discussion between SE and GW with tape off followed about protocols for dealing with questions on ceremonial issues.]]

61 SE: Yes. About ceremonies, when they teach them, those old people, what do they do?

62 When the young men are sent up to the ceremony, the initiates, do you know what I mean? What happens is, we, we settle them down, because they are old enough, so

the old people will say (to a boy), “Quit playing around. You’re a big bloke now. You’re no longer a little kid. You’ve grown up. You go up to the ceremony. It will ‘devour’ you and that’s the thing that will stop you fooling around.” That’s to grow them up, so they become adults. The ceremonies, when they send them up to the ceremony, [MmMm], when they send them up to it, its to make them take things seriously. Early on when they send them up they talk to them and look to see if they are okay, but that is to start with. People have died in it, those old people, they used to fight over it. It was very strict law. Now they’ve stopped that, but they want to see more children being born and more families coming into being. That’s it.

63 SE: Okay, well now, is there anything else you yourself want to talk about?

64 Yes. Hang on. Let’s do a bit more about ceremony. Yes. I’ll tell you some more about this. I only tell people a bit about this, whatever is allowed, and they hear about it, women or initiated young men, you know? You of course have seen this business here.

65 SE: Yes, I’ve seen it. For my part, I don’t talk about it, and I don’t write about it.

66 Now, those old people (put it) there long ago...but young men are not being sent up now for us (inc), for (the ceremonies) our own (inc) old people put there, what they put there, those first people. As well, not only that, but they should stop treating life as a joke, those bigger ones, I’m talking about those old enough to grow whiskers, a young man, young blokes. They still go to school, but they should be still teaching them that other business too, I mean they should teach them the ceremonies, and by that, they would stop and put an end to them taking life lightly. They still play games - I’m thinking of football which they play, but that’s fine. The other kinds of playing around in our terms... “Don’t keep on clowning around” they tell them. That’s the thing its all about. That’s it.

67 SE: You know when they learn, I mean about men and women, like who marries who, or about reciprocity, or about sex education too? Well, who should teach them that now? Should Aboriginal adults or white people or who?

68 No idea. I don't know but, I see them now going with each other in the wrong way, just going with each other wrongly. **[MmMm]** I talk about this with my, my wife, that Ngalkamarrang who I live with. This business is from the grandparents' generation. My Kakkak, (mother's mother brother) (had) my aunty, and then she, my father's sister, had a child, a girl. She had a child - that one I call mother-in-law. I treat her with correct avoidance. Well, she gives me her daughter, me, her "nephew". **[Mm]** So the one I call Father, his sister, my aunty, she had a daughter who goes along - this aunty has that girl, she is then my Ngalbolkdjamo **[Ngalbolkdjamo]**. Mother-in-law. And she has a daughter who is my wife.

69 That's how the two systems are different, that Kakkak way. They call it Kakkak way but they don't see that now, not at all, because nobody tells them about it. But if they would go that way, and do that... That's the way I went - straight. But now it's the mistaken way. It's all wrong. Why did those adults abandon that law? They didn't put it there for them. Well if it was like that, so we could teach them, like earlier on you were saying, who will go back and teach them about language? You have to do both. **[Good, good.]** That's what is good. That's what is good.

70 SE: Okay. Let's keep going, just a sec. Righto, later on maybe, what if we have a meeting? Is it okay if we all get together, you who I've tape recorded, when you can talk about it with each one taking part? Is that okay? [Yes.] This would be later on you can get together, when you can ask me something or tell me something or warn me about anything? [Good.] And maybe all right if later on I ask you something again, like if when we write this, my brother and I will write it out, and is it okay if we think of something to ask you? [Yes, that's good.] Maybe one or two things. Okay, that's it. I'm happy. I'm happy with that.

TAPE OFF