

2 Why don't you ask me a question?

3 SE: Okay. I'll start off talking about the school. Is the school doing well enough? Is it doing well or not?

4 Well, some is good and some bad – it's a little bit hard for those teachers, you know? It could be their own problem or the kids making it hard for them to work with books. They might be not very happy teaching the kids. They (the kids) argue with each other there downstairs at the school building. The kids go there so the teachers can build them up, but the kids don't follow when they are teaching them. It could also be that some of the kids make trouble for themselves. Some of them just throw papers around and if the teachers hit them they just pick up their things and walk away. So they don't learn properly what they are taught.

5 Some of them, when the teachers send them out for recess, they send them out at that time and some (kids) just don't come back, they just stay away. Well, what should happen? We made a rule about this earlier, the School Council, that the kids would stay at school - right through till school finishes in the afternoon and then go home to stay.

6 [[Tapes and microphones re-organized.]]

7 SE: Okay. So, do they have these problems because, ah, teachers don't speak English, I mean Kunwinjku? Or English? I mean if there are more and more Kunwinjku teachers there, will things improve?

8 Yes, it will improve. But I'm noticing, for example, in one classroom, you know? there are two people working together there - one lady who speaks Kunwinjku and one who speaks English. And that seems to be a good situation. If it was just the white lady speaking only English, then a little boy or girl might not understand her. If that Balanda also spoke Kunwinjku, even a little bit, you know? Then someone could explain the complicated ideas. That would be good, and the child would probably learn.

9 What else was I thinking, to do with school? Maybe it was last year, I went to the school for two weeks. I was talking to the kids and looking at their books. It was good. I was able to go into several classrooms. I had a look at what they were doing teaching them about computers. I went and had a look at the very little kids doing their work. It was good.

10 SE: What about the others, the elders?

11 I went with other adults and we looked at kids classes, teenage girls and boys. It was good, but they're saying the kids argue among themselves. A child might only attend for two or three days, so he doesn't learn what they're teaching, because he will have missed that day. They end up going backwards, whether small children, or older boys and girls. They miss out on learning because they don't attend school. Why is this happening? Is it the mothers and fathers, or what? Those mothers and fathers don't push them. Or maybe the kids don't have enough food to eat.

12 SE: So the children, do the children want to learn?

13 I don't know. They do want to. They want to go to school, they want to be attenders, but the main thing is the arguments among the children. That spoils it for some of the kids.

14 SE: What about those two grandsons of yours? What classes are they in?

15 Oh, where do they go? One of them, R___, did you know his teacher is also R___, they're both R___. She takes close care of him. What about that other boy, who's his teacher? I don't know.

16 SE: Do they like school?

17 Yes, they both like school. They both want to go.

18 SE: Now, what about, um, the mothers and fathers? Some of them go to the School Council meetings, but others, what do they think? Do they not want to or don't they know about it or what? [You mean the...] Parents.

19 Yes. Some go and some don't. Yes. No, maybe some just don't want to. I say this because they don't go and see (the children) or look at their schoolwork. You know what I mean? Because we on the school council have set days for people to go to the school, it might a Friday or a Monday or even a couple of days, so parents could go and look at their children's work at school, at what they have written. But, I don't know, I still haven't seen parents doing it. Maybe they don't want to go and look at their children's' work.

20 SE: What do they want the school to teach the children? Do they want the school to teach English, or Kunwinjku as well, or, you know, maths or, what do the parents want children to learn, what subject areas?

21 Yes. Early on they should learn to write, so I'd really approve of that, for example with my two grandsons, they want to learn so they can write. And other parents are the same in this, they want them to learn to write first, then after that, to learn all the other things.

22 SE: What about the Bilingual Programme for example? So they could learn to write Kunwinjku.

23 Yes.

24 SE: They could learn that at school.

25 Yes.

26 SE The teachers would have to be Kunwinjku people?

27 Yes.

28 SE: *Here in Kunbarllanjja there are probably fifteen or maybe twenty people who've worked in the school previously. [Yes. Yes. Yes.] But they work in other jobs now, they're doing other work. Nawakadj for example, the Council President.*

29 Aboriginal people. The ones who worked there before.

30 SE: *If they were running the school, I mean if Kunwinjku people were running the school for themselves [Yes.] rather than the Education Department system... Wouldn't there be a lot of Kunwinjku people who know how? They wouldn't be new at it.*

31 Yes. At the moment how many are working there? [*At present there's Ngalkamarrang, Ngalbulanj and Ngalwakadj, and that's all.*] Only three. Only three who are real teachers [*Yes.*] And there's Nangarridj Alex, maybe he'd be another one. [*Mm.*] Maybe he's working part time at his new job.

32 SE: *And other young people, maybe in their twenties or thirties, what about them working at school? [Yes.] Teaching?*

33 They could be teachers.

34 SE: *A long time ago when it was Aboriginal people and there were no Balanda, back then, what do they do? I mean, did they, were there teachers, Aboriginal people? [Yes.] I'm talking about before there was a school, way back then, was it traditional culture [Yes.] Did they have, did you have teachers? Who used to teach the kids?*

35 Maybe only the Balanda introduced that, maybe they didn't go to school like we do now, but they just did what we used to do. [*Mm.*] Right back then, to start with, children only this high [[Indicates with hand a child's height in early teens.]] would get jobs and for that it was just English, they just taught them English so they could maybe do the work.

36 SE: *What about now, when they attend ceremonies, and they are teaching them there some of the time.* [Yes.] *Different things.* [Yes, I know about that.]

37 [[Tape off briefly for tea break.]]

38 SE: *Do you think Balanda and Aboriginal kids, do you think they both learn in the same way? Should people teach them the same way?* [Yes.] *The same kind of ideas?* [Yes.] *Because some Balanda, some, I mean the people I talk with, some of them reckon Aboriginal people have a different brain so they think differently, so you have to teach them a different way. But I don't agree with that, I think they think like everybody, they're the same, but we have to teach them different things.* [Yes.] *I used to be a teacher near Sydney, Balanda kids, and then after that I came here, and I heard the kids talking, I noticed what they used to say, and I watched what they did. It was the same. They too had ideas.* [Yes.] *What about punishment? What do you think about teachers being really tough, in straightening them out* [The kids?] *Mm. Should the teachers be strict or not?*

39 Yes. It will be the same as what I see happening with parents, if the teachers are too easy on the kids.

40 SE: *When you used to go to school, back then, did the teachers hit you?* [Yes.] *I got hit by a teacher, here.* [[SE shows JB scars on his own fingers from a high school caning.]] *I was about fourteen years old.*

41 Yes. Sometimes the teachers didn't hit us, but Aboriginal people did, sometimes parents, and sometimes that old man A_____ (A missionary at that time). I saw him here today. What I see nowadays is that the teachers take the kids on holidays once a year. [*To other places?*] No, they just stay here for school holidays, and that's all. They don't take the kids for holidays. When we were children the teachers used to take us on holidays - it could have been to the waterfall or other places. They used to take us and the teachers would probably learn about our ways. Now this doesn't happen - the children only know about school and then they just stay at home. [*Mm.*] They just take them for excursions and that's it.

42 SE: Do the parents, or the old people teach the children at home? Or not?

43 Yes. Maybe they tell them stories sometimes, maybe they tell them the old stories. [*Mm.*] Creation stories for example, sometimes my grandchildren want that, and they'll say, "Tell us a story while we go to sleep." So I'll tell them a story, maybe something like the Ngordyabok story, a funny one, so they can go to sleep, they can laugh and go to sleep. Sometimes. Sometimes they just keep playing.

44 SE: What about um, Kunbalak or Kundebi?

45 They don't teach those at school. Probably nothing like it, they don't teach them that. [*Well, Balanda can't teach that.*] Yes. [*Maybe they learn at home?*] Maybe they teach them at home. But in some cases no. [*You've heard the kids?*] I've heard them.

46 SE: In the past the school has kept the teenage boys separate from the teenage girls. But the little kids were mixed together, the littlies. [Yes.] [[Tape problems caused the loss of approximately two minutes of sound, including some responses from JB.]] ...

47 SE [[continuing]] *Aboriginal people at the school. Those others I am also interviewing will talk about school and then I'll write it all down.* [Yes.] *Is it okay if we all meet together and I can read aloud what you've all said and you can hear each others ideas and if you want to, you can come up with any ideas about school or children or anything like that.* [Yes.] *Maybe August or September, later in the year we could do that.*

48 [[Most of the sound for the following paragraph was lost. The following is reconstructed.]] Sometimes I tell (my grandsons) stories of long ago. They want that when they go to sleep: "Tell us a story, one of those ones about a long time ago - a funny story." So they lay down to sleep laughing, then they just go to sleep. They don't teach any of that at school. Maybe people teach some of this at home, but not very much.

49 [[End of interview. Personal discussion follows to the end of this side of the tape.]]